Student Evaluation of Teaching

SIR II vs. the current ECS SET form: Which form should ECS use?

A Summary of Results & Concerns from the Study of SET forms conducted by the ECS Academic Council
Outline

• Introduction
  – Problems with the current ECS form for the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)

• Academic Council study of SET forms

• SIR II Pilot Study
  – Overview
  – Results

• Questions Asked

• Conclusions
Problems with the current ECS form

• The current form used by ECS for the student evaluation of teaching (SET) provides few details
  – The current form has only 7 very general questions
  – Faculty would benefit from having more detailed information to improve their teaching
  – RTP committees could use more information for reviews
  – Many students don’t feel all their concerns are heard using the current form
Academic Council study of SET forms

• Discussed possible SET forms for ECS with the Dean’s Student Council (Assoc Dean Oldenburg)

• Examined SET forms from other departments, colleges and universities

• Discussed possible changes to the ECS form with Dr. Kimo Ah Yun, Director, CSUS Center for Teaching and Learning

• Conducted a Pilot Study using the SIRII form from Educational Testing Service (ETS)
Academic Council study of SET forms

• Why consider SIR II for student evaluations?
  – SIR II provides far more useful, detailed information than the current SET form used by ECS
  – SIR II is backed by years of research by ETS, the same organization that provides widely used national exams such as the SAT and GRE
  – ETS provides comparison data for similar universities
  – Realistically, it would take years of effort to develop our own SET form for ECS, and in the end we likely wouldn’t create a better form than SIR II anyway
SIR II Pilot Study

• A pilot study using SIR II was conducted by volunteers during the Spring 2009 semester
  – All 4 departments in ECS tried it in 4 classes/labs:
    1 upper division class, 1 lower division class,
    1 graduate level class & 1 undergraduate lab
    for a total of 16 classes and laboratories

• The results were kept anonymous using code numbers on the forms
  – The Council members who analyzed the results didn’t know which form came from which class, just the type
    (e.g., upper or lower division, graduate or lab)
SIR II Pilot Study

• After the SIR II results were received from ETS:
  – The faculty volunteers who participated in the study were provided the results for their classes, and their feedback on SIR II was requested
  – Results from similar questions on both the SIR II form and the existing ECS form (which was used in parallel with SIR II during the pilot study) were compared to look for correlation between the answers
  – Excellent correlation was found between similar questions on SIR II and the current ECS form
Question comparison - 1

Knowledge of Subject

Perfect agreement line

CSUS #1

SIR II #3

Lower Div Lab
Lower Div Lec
Upper Div Lab
Upper Div Lec
Grad Lec
Question comparison - 2

Preparation for Class Period

Perfect agreement line

CSUS #2

Lower Div Lab
Lower Div Lec
Upper Div Lab
Upper Div Lec
Grad Lec
Question comparison - 3

Use of Class Time

Perfect agreement line

CSUS #5

SIR II #4

Lower Div Lab
Lower Div Lec
Upper Div Lab
Upper Div Lec
Grad Lec
Question comparison - 4

CSUS #6: Overall opinion of instructor's teaching ability
SIR II #40: Quality of instruction in this course as it contributed to your learning

Perfect agreement line
SIR II Pilot Study

• A question was added to the SIR II form to survey student opinions on it:

   Assuming that I’d have the chance to make free-form comments on either form, in general:
   5. I greatly prefer this new form
   4. I somewhat prefer this new form
   3. I am neutral about which form to use
   2. I somewhat prefer the existing form
   1. I greatly prefer the existing form

• A similar question was asked of the faculty participants in the pilot study
Results from the SIR II Pilot Study

Student preferences (%)

- 57% strongly preferred SIR II
- 34% somewhat preferred SIR II
- 23% neutral
- 10% somewhat preferred CSUS
- 8% strongly preferred CSUS

Faculty preferences

- 5/7 either greatly preferred or somewhat preferred the SIR II
- 2/7 either greatly preferred or somewhat preferred the CSUS form
Questions Asked

• Will SIR II take too much class time?

Answer:

– Based on the pilot study, it does take somewhat longer to complete than the ECS form. In the future, this additional time will get shorter as students get familiar with SIR II by using it in multiple classes.

– If students need an extra 15 minutes to fill out the SIR II form compared to the existing ECS form, this amounts to less than 1% of the time spent in a class which meets twice a week for 75 minutes. This is a small price to pay for all the valuable data it provides!
Questions Asked

• Will students still be able to write comments?

Answer:

– Students will have an opportunity to give free form written comments with SIR II, the same as they do with the current form used by ECS.

– These written comments are highly valued by faculty today, since the current ECS form provides so few details. However, this will be much less true with the wealth of data provided by the SIR II form.
Questions Asked

• How will SIR II affect me for RTP?

Answer:

– Both the ECS Personnel Board and Department RTP committees were asked for feedback regarding SIR II, and the Personnel Board has stated that probationary faculty can continue to use the current ECS form if they prefer until they are awarded tenure. (Note that ECS only has a small number of probationary faculty at the present time.)

– New hires will begin using the SIR II form right away
Questions Asked

• Some of the questions on the SIR II form don’t apply to my class, or need to be rephrased. Can we change them?

Answer:

– Unfortunately, no. The SIR II form must be used “as is”, and cannot be changed without violating copyrights.

– Almost all SIR II questions have “not applicable” or “not used” answers.
Questions Asked

• Can’t ECS just create its own form for SET?

Answer:

– In theory, yes. However, as a practical matter, this would likely take years of effort and very likely not result in a better form than SIR II. For example, Nursing took over 3 years to develop their own form. The Council members believe that adopting the SIR II form provides a better solution for ECS.
Questions Asked

• Will switching to the SIR II form cost more?

Answer:

– The cost difference between ECS using the SIR II form and our current form is negligible, since:
  
  • Purchasing the SIR II forms costs about the same as the amount ECS spends on our current forms
  
  • The SIR II forms can be scanned here on campus, same as the forms currently used by ECS
Questions Asked

• What’s the procedure for adopting the form?

Answer:

– The UARTP policy gives responsibility to the department:

• “The department is responsible for the development and administration of evaluation questionnaires, and for ensuring that the distribution and collection of questionnaires maintain student anonymity.” (5.05 E.1.c.1)

– A standard form for all departments is a long tradition in ECS, since this has significant advantages
Conclusion

• The following recommendation to our Dean was approved by the Academic Council on 12/11/09:

“After considerable study, the Academic Council believes that the SIR II questionnaire is a better instrument for the student evaluation of teaching (SET) than the current questionnaire, and it therefore recommends that SIR II be adopted as the standard SET instrument for the college.”