

## ONLINE STUDENT EVALUATION OF TEACHING (SEOT) ABSTRACT

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The administration of the online SEOT is guided by policy. This policy consists of principle positions which are in tandem with best practices, developments and standards at top ranking Universities in leading countries internationally (*for example*, UBC-University of British Columbia, John Hopkins, UCL-University College London, and ANU-Australian National University); particularly from a Quality Assurance, Institutional Accreditation and Effectiveness standpoint. These policy positions are based on and are consistent with modern, well established, conventional and institutionalised Higher Education Quality Assurance standards. The five (5) foremost policy guiding principles are that:

1. *The University (all its courses/programmes and the responsible faculty) must be subject to monitoring and reporting mechanisms that are integral to the means of enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and optimal student experience.*
2. *Student feedback is a vital aspect of these abovementioned mechanisms; with the primary modern and most pragmatic method for receiving student feedback being online surveys.*
3. *The University will gather and report on student feedback using confidential, ethical, reliable, systematic and transparent processes (and procedures).*
4. *Student evaluation of teaching should be student-centered (ultimately improving the learning experience) and it must provide a mechanism for receiving reliable and valid data from students on a range of topics related to their learning experiences.*
5. *Faculty is the primary stakeholder group responsible for student participation encouragement.*

The University of Trinidad and Tobago (UTT), in seeking to achieve instruction of the highest quality so that students learn to their maximum potential, conducts through The Learning Centre (TLC) an evaluation by students for each offered course (Certificate, Diploma, Undergraduate, Graduate) per semester/term. As active participants in the teaching and learning process, students' perspectives and their thoughtful input on the organisation and effectiveness of curriculum and courses are critical. Therefore, the online SEOT is extremely essential to the overall teaching experience, and in addition, should incorporate self and peer assessments, along with supplementary forms of assessing the teaching and learning process (thus informing administrators on the overall quality of courses and instructor performance, including faculty assessment for merit/performance awards, promotion and institutional recognition). A web-based enterprise database called CourseEval is the software application used to conduct the online SEOT survey. This online system provides for:

- Faculty and administrators receiving their results virtually immediately on demand.
- Student confidentiality guaranteed to a much higher level (no handwriting scrutiny possible).
- Data processing is computerized and reliable, making accurate data analysis readily available.
- Mitigation of immense cost, labour, storage space and time spent on preparing, handling, processing and storing paper forms.

Despite several studies that have shown no correlation (or even inverse correlation) between the results of student evaluations and student learning, online SEOTs are globally accepted, by way of research and practice, as one of the best measures (and can be made more useful when used in conjunction with other established measures) for measuring teaching effectiveness at institutes of higher learning. It is therefore imperative that the process be as substantiated, well-organised and error-free as much as possible, in order to get the full benefit from and give full credence to its use/utilisation.

**Note:** *It is understood that some evaluation data sets may be skewed, in particular, for the following:*

- *Classes consisting of very small numbers of students.*
  - *Evaluations with very low response rates.*
  - *First-time courses given on an experimental basis.*
  - *Instructors in their first year of teaching.*
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