

**REPORT TO THE PROVOST ON MODIFICATION OF UMIs
FOR USE IN FUTURE STUDENT-EVALUATION ADMINISTRATIONS**

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August 21, 2008

Background

As a result of our research with, and report on, the use and performance of the UMIs developed for use in the fall, 2007 and spring, 2008 student-evaluation administrations, we identified several instances of items needing some wording revision. This became our first order of business, since the final wordings had to be completed in time for individual faculties and departments to plan their module items around the UMIs that would be used going forward.

The Process

The revision of the items was preceded by the public forum where the initial report on the module's implementation was discussed. This report indicated that whereas the UMIs generally performed well and were consistent with similar instruments used at other institutions, there was some room for refinement of these items. A website to welcome further feedback on the UMIs was announced at the forum and the plan was presented to schedule focus groups with both faculty and students to solicit suggestions for improvements to the existing UMIs. In addition, the possibility of adding several new items was to be considered and discussed in these focus groups. Once the focus groups had been conducted, we were to present our findings to the SEoT Standing Committee for final consultation before drafting recommendations to the Provost.

Some insights and suggestions were received at the time of presentation of the report in March. More were received at our website shortly after the report presentation. Following this, two focus groups were conducted with faculty—on June 25 and 26. Attempts were made to include faculty members for a wide range of faculties and departments. The numbers of faculty who agreed to attend were slightly lower than we had hoped, with seven and eight attending each meeting, respectively. The diversity vis-à-vis fields of study, however, was quite good, with faculty members from Arts, Science, Applied Science (both Engineering and Nursing), Medicine, Forestry, and Dentistry in attendance.

More difficulty was experienced in getting student volunteers for a student focus group. After several weeks of attempts to solicit student participants, we finally conducted a focus group consisting of only three students on July 9. However, after this meeting, an online survey was set up by Marianne Schroeder and sent to nine additional students for their opinions on the items as they stood at that point. These students were asked to comment on the item wordings, give their preferences when two or more possibilities were suggested for a particular item/theme, and to make general suggestions about the UMIs.

The feedback obtained from all of these sources—focus groups and responses to our website and student survey—was synthesized and then presented, for further discussion, to the SEoT Standing Committee at three meetings on July 16, 17, and 22. Recommendations for re-wording of the items were presented along with a suggestion of possibly increasing the number of UMIs to nine. A revised scale was also presented based on the feedback from the focus groups. As part of these discussions, the three potential new items were considered, and the Committee recommended maintaining at this time the existing small number of UMIs to allow Faculties more room to develop their own questions without making the overall survey too long. Thus, the final result of this committee’s deliberations was a set of the six reworked UMIs that the committee felt confident represented the best possible expressions of the underlying themes captured by these items—taking into account all suggestions for revision provided by the various feedback sources. Individual faculties and departments will be encouraged to develop their own, more specific, items around these six UMIs.

The Final Six UMIs

I am therefore recommending the following revised six UMIs. Each is set up to be responded to on a 5-point Likert scale, as follows: 1=Strongly Disagree 2=Disagree 3=Neutral 4=Agree 5=Strongly Agree. This response scale itself represents a revision of the former response scale that asked students to rate the theme entities on a 5-point scale running from Very Poor to Excellent. The change in response scales and format was made to make the items less awkward and more direct—being in a form consistent with how the themes would be discussed by students and faculty. Here are the items:

UMI 1: The instructor made it clear what students were expected to learn.

UMI 2: The instructor communicated the subject matter effectively.

UMI 3: The instructor helped inspire interest in learning the subject matter.

UMI 4: Overall, evaluation of student learning (through exams, essays, presentations, etc.) was fair.

UMI 5: The instructor showed concern for student learning.

UMI 6: Overall, the instructor was an effective teacher.