# Recommendations of the SETC Improvement Project

## Summary 2022

### Process and Summary of Recommendations:

In Summer 2021, the Vice-Provost, Learning and Teaching, with the Learning Experiences Assessment and Planning (LEAP) group launched the

improving the student learning experience.

x   Engage explicitly with students about the purpose of the program to improve response rates.

x   Investigate the concerns expressed by instructors, including concerns about the questions and the potential for bias in student responses.

LEAP considered SET frameworks across Canada, consulted with instructors, students, and Associate Deans, and examined SETC student responses to both understand which aspects of their learning experience are important to them as well as for signals of bias

More specifically, we recommend the following for implementation in fall 2022

<u>Recommendation 1</u>: Explicitly define the purpose of SETC
At present, there is not a clearly defined purpose for the SETC program. Without defapld purpose of SETC

Discipline

Common Core

Course Context

Instructor
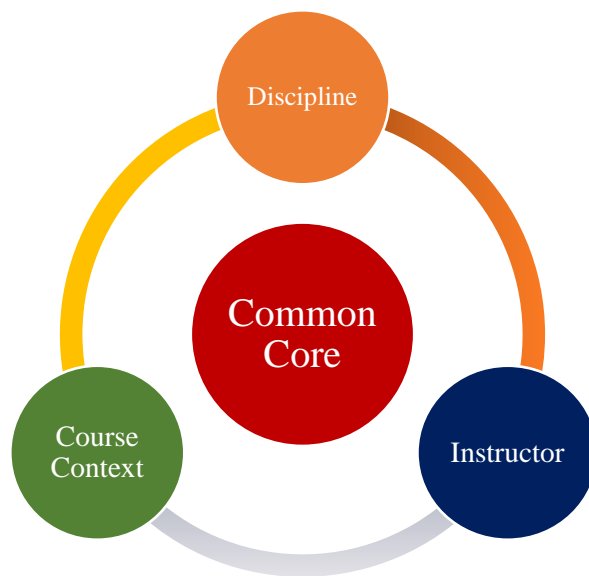
Recommendation 6: Create and implement a communications plan aimed at students
Raise the profile of SETC by working with Student Services to publicize the purpose of SETC, the effects of implicit bias, and how to provide constructive feedback.

Recommendation 7: Review common core questions to include aspects of the learning experience that are important to students
By asking questions that are relevant and important to students, the surveys will connect with their experiences and provide more meaningful information and better quality feedback.

# Recommendations for Fall 2022 implementation

## Recommendation 1: Explicitly define the purpose of SETC

In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in the purpose of SETs from evaluating teaching effectiveness to capturing student experience. Consensus has been building that students are not best situated to evaluate instruction as their knowledge and experiences are limited. "Evaluation implies judgement of worth and requires relevant expertise or credentials….Considering student ratings as data

- gather responses which lend themselves to meaningful, actionable, and important feedback about teaching practice or course design
- value student time by asking questions for which there is no other source of information

Our definition of "learning experience" refers to an educational interaction in which the goal results in learning (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2013). Learning experiences include how, when, where and why a learner interacts with information, develops skills or expertise, engages in practice, application and reflection, etc. This interaction is not fixed to a space and can occur in traditional academic settings (i.e. classroom), or non-traditional environments (i.e. online, field school). Nor is this interaction limited to exchanges between instructors and students; they occur between students or learners and interactive software programs, applications, games, equipment etc.

A well-designed learning experience generates positive emotional states, such as accomplishment, connection, and confidence. It can be a truly transformative experience and alter the learner's attitudes, conceptual understanding, and nurture the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities.

## Recommendation 3: Support Educational Goals assessment using means other than SETC

There is a clear need across campus for Educational Goals assessment support. To this end, LEAP can support programs during their self studies and other program-level assessments by collecting data and feedback from students. LEAP has the capacity to employ methodologies such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, etc., to capture this much needed and useful information. Using a course-based survey, such as SETC, is not appropriate in assessing student perspective about program-level educational goals achievement.

## Recommendation 4: Change to a module framework

SFU currently uses a cascatmed42 (r)

- The implementation of the cascading framework is inconsistent across SFU.  SFU's academic units are organizationally diverse and not all SFU Faculties are departmental. Therefore, some forms have three levels, while others have four. Likewise, professional or specialized programs want to select their own questions. These discrepancies lead report viewers and leadership to be confused about their role/responsibilities in the SETC program.
- A common issue brought up by Deans and Associate Deans is that the Faculty SETC reports are very difficult to act upon. Aggregated scores across diverse courses from various academic units are challenging to interpret and determine a "reaction".
- Faculty level questions that are applicable to all courses, yet precise to the learning experience, can be difficult to craft. This item set often ends up vague and simil2ag2.4 (,n nds)-2.5p(v)0.5 (t)-4.8( i)-1
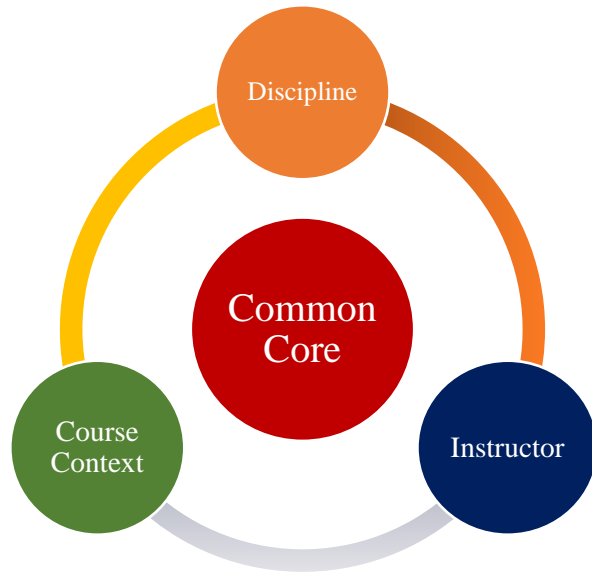
Figure1

Figure2: SETC Response Rate by Faculty since Fall 2019

Note: SETC was not administered in Spring 2020; BUS (Beedie) joined SETC in Summer 2020.

use of computing and communication infrastructure. This request may be sent to a person, as is the case at the [University of Saskatchewan](#) where it is sent to the Vice-Provost, Teaching, Learning and Student Experience, or at the [University of Alberta](#) where it is sent to the Vice-President, Academic. Or the request can be sent to a committee, as is the case at [Dalhousie](#) where it is sent to a review committee comprising the Vice-Provost Equity and Inclusion, the Vice-Provost Student Affairs, the Associate Vice President Human Resources, the Chair of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee, and the University General Counsel (or their designates). If the request is accepted, the comment and the entirety of that student's feedback is removed and the student is notified. The nature of the comment could be such that disciplinary action is considered.

This type of a process is consistent with SFU's [Bullying and Harassment](#) policy and work towards a more inclusive and equitable work environment. It

related to student experience, such as lacking the skills to provide constructive feedback (Nederhand et al. 2022; Berk 2012). On the other hand, motivational factors include rewards, such as a bonus mark, having a strong opinion (Hoel and Dahl, 2019), and feeling that the feedback is valued.

To encourage higher response rates, instructors could be encouraged to provide class time for completing the survey, although motivation to do so would likely vary among instructors. Staff could attend classes to provide class time for survey completion, similar to what used to occur with paper forms; this has the benefit of not relying on individual instructors but is a cost in terms of staff workload.

A SIMS Pathway, referred to as a "grade pathway" in the literature, is a common approach to motivate students to participate in online course surveys. A digital pathway is built in which the grade release date is dependent on whether the student has completed all their course surveys so students who complete the surveys get their grades earlier. Student may have the option of opting out each term from filling out the survey, to reduce the grade pathway introducing bias in student responses.

Since the action would be taken through SIMS, the implementation is centralized and automated. The inconsistencies and gaps that occur when the responsibility for increasing response rates is distributed across many stakeholders (i.e., instructors, Chairs, Department Administrator, LEAP) is reduced. Similarly, the functions of SIMS allow for many students to be reached simultaneously through one action every semester. The voice of all students, regardless of demographic profile, will be captured. Implementing such a pathway would require technical support, resources, and prioritization from ITS.

We updated a literature review we conducted in 2016 about SETs and response rates with a particular focus on grade pathways. There are several American universities that use this approach. For example, in 2016 the University of Louisville introduced priority grade access to address low response rate problem. At this institution, students who either completed all SETs or completed an "opt out" form were able to view their grades before their peers who had not done so. A similar approach is also taken at the University of Texas Permian Basin. Washington State (2019) indicated that to address low response rates, they may begin to consider giving students who have completed all evaluations priority access to see their grades either a few days or a week before their peers. Outside USA the Holy Spirit University of Kaslik also used grade pathways in eXplorance Blue to incentivize response rates.

time to provide feedback. The students who did not want the survey to be open into the exam period were only concerned that response rates may decrease as students will go on holidays.

The desire to push the survey period into the exam period is mirrored by many instructors who attended the SETC consultations. They would like to be able to gather student opinions on end-of-

# References

Benton, S. L., & Li, D. (2015). *Response to A Better Way to Evaluate Undergraduate Teaching, IDEA Editorial Note #1, IDEA Center.* Retrieved from http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/editorial-notes/response-to-wieman/.

Berk, R.A. (2012). Top 20 Strategies to Increase the Online Response of Student Rating Scales.