

Operational Guidelines for Implementing eSFQ at PolyU

Background

1. The Working Group on Teaching Evaluation Practice (WGTEP), at its meeting on 18 March 2014, endorsed the recommendations from the eSFQ Project Team to change the current paper-based SFQ at PolyU to an online SFQ (eSFQ) system, and to conduct a full-scale pilot of the eSFQ for all GUR and DSR subjects in 2014/15. The recommendations have received subsequent support and approval from the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) at its meeting held on 14 April 2014.

Operational Guidelines

2. A number of problems/operational issues have been identified by the eSFQ Project Team in the development and piloting of the eSFQ, including:
 - Accuracy and updatedness of AS record
 - Categories of staff to be included in the eSFQ exercise
 - Frequency for conducting eSFQ
 - Arrangements for team teaching situations
 - Arrangements for service teaching
 - Choice of mode of eSFQ administration (in-class vs. out-of-class)
 - Survey period
 - Protocol for in-class eSFQ administration
 - Strategies to promote student participation

Clear operational guidelines need to be established to address these issues and to ensure uniformity in practice across Faculties and departments before a full-scale pilot of the eSFQ system can be planned for September 2014.

3. The WGTEP, at its meeting held on 4 June 2014, deliberated on these issues. This paper lists the issues or problems identified, and presents the operational guidelines recommended by the WGTEP to address them in order to streamline the administration process, ensure uniformity in practice across Faculties and departments, prevent questionnaire fatigue of students, and improve students' responses to the survey. The guidelines have been approved by the LTC and the Academic Council for implementation.

Operational guidelines for implementing eSFQ at PolyU

Problem/Issue details	Guidelines	Justifications
A. Accuracy and updatedness of AS record		
<p>a. Administration of the eSFQ is primarily based on the AS records regarding teaching assignments and student enrolments. Any inaccurate or incomplete information shown in the AS records will lead to problems in administering eSFQ, two of which are described in points (b) and (c) below.</p>	<p>1. Department should make every effort to ensure that the teaching assignments and student enrolment in the subject and class components (tutorials, seminars, laboratories and studios in particular) are accurate and regularly updated on the AS system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure data accuracy • To minimise errors in assigning an eSFQ of the wrong subject/teacher(s) to students
<p>b. It is difficult to administer eSFQ for subjects that involve multiple teachers each supervising a small sub-group of students in a class (e.g. studio class, FYP) as such individual teaching assignments are often NOT indicated in the AS records.</p>	<p>2. For subjects that involve multiple teachers each teaching/supervising a small sub-group of the students in class, only Part I (About the Subject) of the eSFQ should be administered, i.e. no eSFQ will be administered for the individual teachers concerned on Part II regarding their teaching.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To simplify/enable the eSFQ administration for such teachers/classes • Feedback results from a few students will be highly unreliable for judgmental purposes
<p>c. Students may receive an eSFQ inappropriate to their class group as student enrolments shown in the AS system are not always the most updated (e.g. students switching to another tutorial group without undergoing proper class registration procedures will not be reflected on the system).</p>	<p>3. Students who would like to switch to another seminar/tutorial group must seek approval from their subject teachers, who should then notify the department for the administrative staff to update the student enrolments of the class records accordingly via the AS system.</p> <p>4. Under the eSFQ system, subject teachers will be required to check and confirm student enrolment before deploying the eSFQ to students.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To minimize the risk of sending to students an eSFQ form that is inappropriate to their class group
B. Categories of staff to be included in the eSFQ exercise		
<p>Different practices regarding the types of teaching staff to be included in the eSFQ exercises are observed in different departments.</p>	<p>5. ALL PT and FT staff teaching on PolyU award-bearing programmes with a valid PolyU Net ID will be included in the exercise, and all their SFQ results should be included in the computation of the departmental SFQ mean.</p> <p>6. TAs employed under the TPS Scheme or research students who are required to teach should be excluded from the eSFQ exercise (cf. Guidelines for Evaluation of TA under TPS Scheme (VPAD, 2012).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure uniformity in practice across Faculties and departments, as well as fairness in the use and interpretation of eSFQ results for evaluating teaching

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C. Frequency for conducting eSFQ		
<p>Different policies and practices are observed in different departments in this regard, e.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Faculties/Schools require SFQ be conducted for all teachers and subjects • Some other Faculties/Schools require a staff member be surveyed with at least one subject per semester. 	<p>7. Standardised requirements across faculties should be stipulated as they are crucial to the fairness regarding job performance appraisal or the making of other personal decisions, if the eSFQ results are to be provided /considered as one of the documented evidence for judgemental purposes. It is therefore recommended that the eSFQ be conducted for all staff in all of their subjects/classes that they have a major teaching responsibility for (see also point 8 below).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure uniformity and consistency in evaluation practice
D. Arrangements for team teaching situations		
<p>Questionnaire fatigue – students may have to complete 3 or 4 eSFQs for a single subject under a team-taught situation.</p>	<p>8. No eSFQ should be conducted on the teaching of the staff members if their teaching contribution to the same component of the same subject is less than 6 sessions (roughly 45%), unless otherwise deemed appropriate by the Head of Department.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The evaluation results will be rather unreliable if the teaching contribution of the staff member is not very substantial • To avoid questionnaire fatigue/overloading
E. Arrangements for service teaching		
<p>Ambiguities as to which department should be responsible for administering the eSFQ and which eSFQ form to use arise when a subject offered by one department is taught by a staff member from another department.</p>	<p>9. The eSFQ should be conducted by the subject offering department using its faculty-based eSFQ form regardless of the teaching staff's affiliated department. Head of the staff's affiliated department can request the staff member concerned to submit the eSFQ report of the subject if needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To simplify/streamline the administration process • To ensure proper QA of the service teaching by the subject-offering department and programme
F. Choice of mode of eSFQ administration (in-class vs. out-of-class)		
<p>Staff's feedback is divided with regards to whether the eSFQ should be conducted in-class or out-of-class:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Some staff opined that in-class administration is a waste of valuable class time, and gives insufficient time for students to give serious, thoughtful comments, On the other hand, some staff expressed concerns about the response rate if the eSFQ is to be conducted out-of-class. 	<p>10. By default, the eSFQ is conducted out-of-class, but teachers may opt for in-class administration with approval from their DLTC. In-class administration is recommended for classes with low student enrolments (e.g. 30 or below) in order to boost the response rate.</p>	

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G. Survey period		
<p>a. Currently, teachers can choose to administer the eSFQ any time during the term which creates problems in carrying out effective publicity work.</p> <p>This may also cause a lot of confusion to students on the start date and end date of the surveys. Some students may receive numerous invitation and reminder emails throughout the semester!</p>	<p>11. All out-of-class eSFQ should be conducted in the standardised survey periods as prescribed by the University such that publicity/ promotional activities (e.g. email and SMS invitations and reminders) can be done more efficiently and effectively in a concentrated period for maximum impact</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To make publicity work more manageable and effective • To prevent unnecessary email and SMS flooding and creation of confusion among students from such regarding when to do which eSFQ for whom
<p>b. Staff members have different opinions on an appropriate duration for the eSFQ exercise, ranging from a few days to 2 weeks:</p> <p>i. Currently, the standard survey period is 2 weeks (Weeks 6-7 for mid-term SFQ; Weeks 13-14 for end-of-term SFQ), to allow more time to follow up on the non-responses</p> <p>ii. Some staff suggested that conducting the SFQ exercise during the last week of teaching is more appropriate as students will by then have a more complete learning experience that would allow them to give more reliable and valid feedback on both the subject and the staff's teaching</p>	<p>12. For Semesters 1 and 2, all <i>out-of-class</i> eSFQ will be conducted during the standardised 2-week survey periods, as follows:</p> <p>a. For staff members whose teaching is completed by Week 7: Weeks 6-7 of the semester,</p> <p>b. For staff members whose teaching ends after Week 7: Weeks 12 -13</p> <p>For Summer Term, there will only be one standard survey period (Weeks 6-7).</p> <p>13. For classes approved to conduct the eSFQ in-class, staff members can decide on the start date of the eSFQ exercise (normally on the date of the in-class administration). By default, the end date of the eSFQ exercise is the last day of the nearest standard survey period (Sunday inclusive) i.e., last day of Week 7 or last day of Week 13. However, staff members can alter it to another date they deem appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To allow sufficient time to follow up on non-responses and ensure a satisfactory response rate
H. Protocol for in-class eSFQ administration		
<p>a. Who will give the in-class eSFQ instructions to students?</p>	<p>14. All <i>In-class</i> eSFQ should be administered by administrative/support staff assigned by the department. The staff responsible for conducting the eSFQ in class should make an announcement to students on which subject, part(s) of teaching and teacher(s) the students are providing feedback on. A standardised annotated PowerPoint presentation containing in-class eSFQ instructions will be developed for departments' use. The teaching staff concerned should leave the room/hall during the eSFQ exercise.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To standardise the eSFQ administration procedures and instructions to students • To avoid unnecessary problems caused by teacher's presence during the eSFQ exercise

Problem/Issue details	Guidelines	Justifications
H. Protocol for in-class eSFQ administration (cont'd)		
<p>b. Some students may not have access to a mobile device during the in-class eSFQ exercise</p>	<p>15. No spare mobile devices will be provided to students without access to a mobile device during the in-class eSFQ exercises.</p> <p>Those students will be asked to complete their eSFQ as soon as they have access to a computer or mobile device. Such instruction will be given in the PowerPoint presentation mentioned in point 14 above.</p>	<p>Providing sufficient spare mobile devices are impractical and cost ineffective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concurrent sessions of in-class eSFQ exercise happen frequently during the survey period. Providing sufficient spares would require tens, if not hundreds, of them especially for large classes • Transportation of spare mobile devices could possibly be a problem • Mobile devices maintenance e.g. regularly charging the devices and checking if they work properly
<p>c. Email and SMS invitations and reminders for in-class eSFQ</p>	<p>16. For in-class administration, <u>only one</u> email reminder will be sent to the non-respondents the day after the in-class administration, unless the designated survey period overlaps with the standard survey period.</p> <p>It is recommended that the designated survey period (set by staff) be at least <u>2 days</u> to allow sufficient time for non-respondents (absentees in particular) to complete the eSFQ had they not done so during the in-class administration.</p> <p>Staff members are welcome to encourage students to participate in the eSFQ exercise via explanation in class and follow up on the response rate by means of personal emails to students <u>if they so desire</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prevent unnecessary email and SMS flooding • To avoid creation of confusion to students from receiving multiple emails and SMSes

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<p>I. Strategies to promote student participation</p>		
<p>Some staff have concerns about the potentially lower response rate to the eSFQ</p>	<p>17. Continue to adopt and enhance the current strategies for promoting student participation via multiple media and channels, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System-generated invitation and multiple reminder emails • System-generated SMSes to invite and remind students to complete the eSFQ • Multiple access to the eSFQ system via links embedded in emails, LMS, SMSes and student portal • Banners and posters on campus immediately before and during the standardised survey periods • Videos of teachers telling how SFQ will help them improve their teaching broadcasted on campus TV. <p>A new information sheet on eSFQ will be developed and distributed to new students in the orientation to introduce them to the value and importance of SFQ, and how to complete them.</p> <p>18. The WGTEP has also considered the following strategies suggested from the staff survey to boost student participation/response rate, but do not support any of them for implementation, at least at this stage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making completion of the eSFQs a subject requirement • Upon completion of <u>all</u> eSFQ required of the student: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prizes (e.g. coffee coupons) be given to <i>all</i> of them ○ Prizes (e.g. iPad) be given to a selected few by means of a lucky draw ○ Early release of results ○ Early enrolment in subjects/classes for subsequent semester/year ○ Extra marks/credit 	