

## QUESTION DEVELOPMENT & SELECTION GUIDE DISCIPLINE MODULE

This guide aims to help departments, schools, or programs develop or select questions for the Course Experience Survey. The Discipline Module is one piece of the [4-part CES module framework](#). It reflects items about teaching approaches and course delivery (i.e., discussion, problem-solving, case studies) that are unique to a discipline.

### ITEM INCLUSION

For the purposes of instrument validity, the items that appear on the surveys must:

- relate to the student’s learning experience in the course
- use simple and clear language to avoid broad/complex concepts with multiple or ambiguous definitions (e.g., no jargon, vague terms, complicated sentence structures)
- be relevant and meaningful to students
- inquire about only one aspect of a student’s experience
- be reasonably answerable by the student at the present time (i.e., within their experience and expertise)
- be applicable in all learning contexts in which it will be used (e.g., year-levels, course concepts)
- 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 can 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, and conceptual understanding, as well as nurture the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities.

## ITEM EXCLUSION

Questions aimed directly at student perspectives about program-level academic achievement or educational goals are not appropriate for this type of a course-based learning experience survey. Applying student responses to an entire program would create confounding results for reasons such as treating responses from students who have varying levels of experience with the program (i.e., there would be a difference between students who are majors and those who are taking the course as an elective) or the same student (i.e., responses from multiple courses) as equal.

Items will only be added to the survey after careful consideration of the purpose of gathering such information and on approval/recommendation by the AVP, Learning and Teaching. Collecting information without a clear use violates SFU privacy guidelines. Questions that do not adhere to the purpose of the survey also add to confusion for the respondents, which may in turn contribute to low response rates.

## RATIONALE DOCUMENTATION

Rationale documentation for survey items needs to be provided to LEAP. We will collate this information and make it available to the SFU community. Rationales guide interpretation of response information, help students and instructors understand the importance and meaning of your questions, and set the stage for question development iteration.

Each item would need four parts:

**Question** – these can be either closed-ended or open-ended in format.

Example of closed-ended: “I felt encouraged by the course instructor to participate in research opportunities outside of the course.”

Example of open-ended: “What did the instructor do to encourage you to participate in research opportunities outside of the course?”

**Response Scale** – closed-ended questions require a set of response options that a student can select, while an open-ended question provides a textbox.

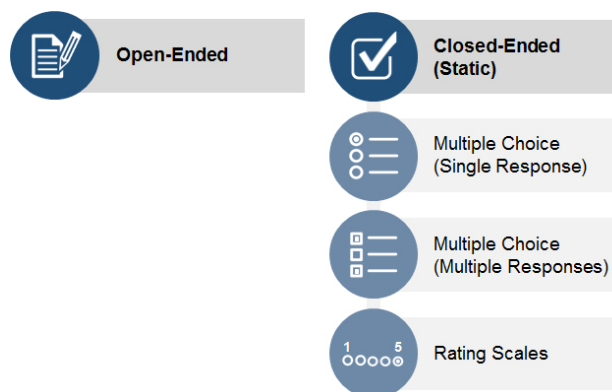


Image adapted from: <https://measuringu.com/survey-question-classes/>

**Question Rationale** – The question rationale bridges the question statement and its corresponding response scale back to the purpose of the survey. Developing rationales is key to constructing useful questions.

**Score Guidance** – Score guidance indicates possible interpretations of the responses. It can also include constructive suggestions for score improvement. Academic unit might want the benchmark to be as high as possible (i.e., the average to be “strongly agree (5)”) or set at another point depending on the rationale.

The following matrix provides one example of how to present this documentation.

Question & Response Scale	Rationale	Score guidance
<p>I felt encouraged by the course instructor to express my thinking about the course content.</p> <p><i>1= Not at all</i>  <i>2 = A little</i>  <i>3 = Somewhat</i>  <i>4 = Much</i>  <i>5 = Very much</i></p>	<p>It is important to our department that students feel comfortable expressing themselves during the course. Learning how to debate from multiple perspectives using effective rhetoric is a key skill in our discipline. Not only will this help students develop their communication skills, but it will provide critical feedback about how the students are learning back to the instructor.</p>	<p>A good score for this question would be a 4 or a 5 on average. If the score is lower, the instructor may need support in developing strategies and tactics to create a more open learning environment.</p>
<p>How helpful to your learning were the assigned problems?</p> <p><i>1 = Not at all helpful</i>  <i>2 = A little helpful</i>  <i>3 = Somewhat helpful</i>  <i>4 = Helpful</i>  <i>5 = Very helpful</i></p>	<p>It is important in our department that students learn to solve problems. Learning how to work through a set of problems helps students develop skills and knowledge that are important in this discipline. As such, it is important that the assigned problems fall into the zone of proximal development (i.e., not too difficult, not too easy).</p>	<p>A good score for this question would be a 4 or a 5. If the score is lower, the pace of concepts, organization of problems, and the number of assigned problems may need to be revisited.</p>