Below are some common questions regarding Online Student Evaluation of Teaching. Please note that any reference to the AFUM contract pertains to the 2019-2021 contract. Policies and procedures will be modified, if necessary, to comply with the new contract when published.

Q. What is the software used for the online evaluation process?
A. UMaine uses Explorance Blue (https://explorance.com/solutions/course-evaluations/)

Q. When are students asked to complete the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) form?
A. The AFUM contract (Article 10, Section B2b) states that SETs should be completed during the last two weeks of the course, unless by mutual agreement of the faculty member and administration. Students receive the first prompt email the Monday of the second to last week of classes. Reminder emails are then sent periodically throughout the two-week period. SETs close at midnight on the last day of classes.

Q. Can I set my own evaluation dates if using the online system?
A. At the moment, standard evaluation dates are being used for online SETs as describe above. However, flexibility may be provided in the future, provided it stays within the two-weeks before the end of classes.

Q. If conducting the evaluation online, can I still administer it in class?
A. Yes, in fact we encourage you to do so. This is a potential method for raising the response rate.

Mode and Forms

Q. Are units/faculty permitted to use customized forms and/or questions?
A. The AFUM contract states that academic units may develop or revise their own evaluation form or procedure (Article 10, Section B2). Consequently, instructors must use the form or forms identified as standard by their academic unit.

Q. What forms are available in the Online SET system?
A. The default form is the short form for UMaine and the 12-item form for UMM, but academic units are permitted to use their own forms, as long as the form is used for the whole unit, per the AFUM contract. Further, faculty have the option of adding seven Likert and three open-ended customized questions through a Question Personalization process.

Q. How many academic units are currently using online evaluations for face-to-face courses?
A. As of spring 2020, all academic units are using online evaluations.

Q. Can students complete online evaluations using their smartphone or other mobile devices?
A. Yes

Q. How does the online SET system handle courses taught by multiple instructors?
A. Students evaluate each instructor and instructors receive the report for their own evaluation. The online forms are designed with a common set of questions relevant to the course and individual sets of
questions for faculty. **Instructors must be listed as one of the instructors of record in MaineStreet in order to be evaluated in the online SET system.**

When the course is taught by multiple instructors, students will see the screen below. They then can select one or multiple instructors. Subsequent screens will present them with items pertaining to the instructors, followed by items pertaining to the course.

**UMaine Online Student Evaluation of Teaching – Fall Session Setting_0990**

*Please Select Your Instructor*
- A. Artesani
- Danielle Polieter

**Q. What are the benefits of using the online SET system?**

A. The online SET system has a number of benefits:

- Faster turnaround time for instructor and departmental reports
- Custom questions can be included in the evaluation
- Online SET allows students more time to provide feedback

**Q: How can I make use of the enhanced capabilities of this system?**

A: The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment can provide ongoing support and training for faculty on how to add questions and, if interested, analyze results for supporting teaching and learning.

**Data Storage**

**Q. Where are the SET data stored?**

A. Raw data from paper evaluations prior to spring 2020 are stored in two places: (a) OIRA password-protected computers and (b) OIRA’s FERPA-compliant OneDrive folder for use in creating the college- and departmental-level norms and other aggregate analyses requested by administration or academic units. The online SET raw data are also stored in the Explorance Blue evaluation system. Access to Blue through the portal is implemented through UMaine’s authentication service and the Blue hosted data center is SOC 2 Type 2 certified.

**Access to Data**

**Q. Who has access to the SET results?**

A. The AFUM contract is silent on this topic. Currently, the instructor, academic unit chair, administrative staff, and OIRA staff have access to SET reports. When requested, reports are also shared with deans.

**Q. How can instructors access their old SET reports?**

A. Instructors contact their Chair’s office for SET paper reports. In the event reports cannot be located, faculty may contact OIRA. For online SET instructor reports, faculty should log into the Blue Course Evaluation System (accessible through the UMaine Portal). Online SET instructor reports prior to 2020 are also stored in OneDrive and shared with the Chair and administrative staff for the academic unit.

(UMaine Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 1.11.20)
Q. Who has access to the signed and unsigned comments?

A. The AFUM contract states that unsigned comments are not to be included in the personnel file, unless by mutual consent (Article 10, Section B2d). Students completing the evaluation online can indicate if they would like to sign their comments. If so, the signed comments are included in the instructor reports that are shared with the instructor and unit. If not, the unsigned comments are sent to the instructor in a separate report that is only distributed to the instructor.

Response Rates

Q: How does the response rate for online evaluations compare with paper forms?

A: Preliminary response rates by instruction mode:

- 2018-2019 Face-to-face (lectures and seminars) with >= 5 students:
  - Mean: Fall - 77% paper, 58% online; Spring – 75% paper, 53% online
  - Median: Fall - 79% paper, 56% online; Spring – 76% paper, 50% online

There is evidence that providing student’s class time to complete the online SET can yield higher response rates. The Office of Institutional Research and Assessment conducted a survey in January 2020 to collect information on methods used for encouraging students to complete SETs (e.g., providing class time, sending email reminders). We found that instructors who provided in-class time for students to complete their evaluations yielded a 15.1% increase in response rates compared to those who did not.

Q. If using the online system, can I track response rates throughout the evaluation period?

A. Yes, response rates can be tracked in the Blue Course Evaluation System. Access to response rates are available for six days after the course ends so that instructors have time to review their final response rates.

Q. How can response rates be improved?

A. There is an abundance of literature on increasing online SET response rates. Instructors can increase this by communicating with their students about the importance of the SET–and critically–how they use the results to improve their teaching.

General tips:

- Remind students of the evaluation deadlines and the importance of feedback
- Provide in-class time for completing the evaluation
- Assure the students that the evaluations are confidential
- Perhaps offer a class incentive (e.g., extra credit assignment) based on the class response rate

A summary of suggestions for improving response rate can be found on the OIRA website at: Strategies for Increasing Response Rates

Q. Is there a minimum response rate that must be achieved for results to be considered for promotion and tenure?

A. No, however the AFUM contract (Article 10, Section B2g) states:

(UMaine Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, 1.11.20)
“When either fewer than 10 students respond or the response rate is less than 60% the following language shall appear on the response survey: “Care should be used in evaluating teaching effectiveness utilizing these results when fewer than 10 students respond or the response rate is less than 60% for an individual class”.

**Process for Including Courses** (Details available in the SET Policies, Section V)

**Q:** Will administrative personnel need to identify courses to be included in the SETs?

A: No. Administrative personnel will no longer need to fill out the “evaluate list” sent from OIRA each semester prior to the winter 2022 session. Departments can request an exception to the SET policies by filling out the SET Departmental Inclusion Requests form.

**Q:** Can an instructor request that their section(s) be included in SET even if they don’t meet the criteria described in the SET policies?

A: Not directly. The “SET Departmental Inclusion Requests” form is designed to fulfill requests at the department level, but in the rare case that a section-level exception is necessary please reach out to OIRA for guidance.

**Q:** Can instructors or departments request exclusion from the SET process?

A: Instructors may not request exclusions from the SET process. Generally, all courses (except those excluded by the SET policy) are to be evaluated in accordance with the agreement between the UMS and the faculty bargaining unit. In rare cases, departments can request an exception. Please contact OIRA to discuss your request.