Production of scores in the Student Experience Survey (SES)

The Student Experience Survey (SES) reports on key focus areas using a simple and accessible metric: the percentage of students who rated their experience positively.

This document explains how these percentage positive scores are calculated at both the focus area and individual item levels. It includes an example of a scored student record and selected SPSS syntax used in the scoring process.

Extensive consultation with the higher education sector in the early days of QILT revealed a strong preference for reporting percentage positive results rather than average scores. This approach was considered easier to understand—particularly for users who may not have technical expertise—and more practical for institutions to replicate and use for benchmarking. As a result, percentage positive results are used consistently throughout SES reporting.

1.1. Focus area-level scoring

To begin calculating focus area scores, all underlying survey items are rescaled to a 0–100 scale:

- **Four-point scale responses** are recoded to: **0, 33.33, 66.66, and 100**
- **Five-point scale responses** are recoded to: **0, 25, 50, 75, and 100**

Columns B and C in **Table 1** illustrate this initial rescaling process. An example of the SPSS syntax used to perform this recoding is shown in **Figure 1**.
Note: In the SPSS syntax, rescaled variables are identified with an 'r' suffix.

Next, a score for each focus area is calculated as the **mean of the rescaled values** for its constituent items.

Note that a score for each focus area is only calculated if the respondent has provided a minimum number of valid responses for that area:

- **6 items** in *Skills Development*
- **4 items** in *Peer Engagement*
- **8 items** in *Teaching Quality and Engagement*
- **5 items** in *Student Support and Services*
- **5 items** in *Learning Resources*

Column E of **Table 1** shows the calculated focus area score (i.e., the average of the rescaled values in Column C) for an example respondent. The SPSS syntax used to generate these scores is provided in **Figure 2**.

To determine whether a student gave a **positive response** for a focus area, a binary variable is created:

- A value of **1** indicates a positive experience (defined as a focus area score of **55 or higher**)
- A value of **0** indicates otherwise

These binary variables are labeled with a '**SAT**' suffix. In **Table 1**, Column F shows the binary score for the example respondent: since their focus area score (Column E) exceeds 55, the binary score is set to 1. The corresponding SPSS syntax is shown in **Figure 3**.

For more detailed information on the SPSS syntax used to generate scores for each focus area in the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ), refer to the **SES Data Dictionary**.

Finally, the **percentage positive score**—used throughout SES reporting—represents the proportion of students who achieved a focus area score of **55 or greater**, indicating a positive experience.

1.2. Item-level scoring

At the individual questionnaire item level, a **positive rating** is defined as a response in one of the **top two categories** of the response scale—whether it is a four-point or five-point scale.

For each SEQ item, a binary variable is created to indicate whether a student gave a positive response:

- A value of **1** indicates a positive response
- A value of **0** indicates a non-positive response

These binary item-level scores are **not included** in the final analysis file. However, **Column D** of **Table 1** shows the item-level binary scores for an example respondent. The SPSS syntax used to generate these variables is provided in **Figure 4**.

The **item-level percentage positive score** represents the proportion of students who rated a specific item positively. It is calculated as:

(Number of students selecting one of the top two response options) ÷ (Number of students providing a valid response)

Note: Valid responses exclude "Not applicable" selections.

Table 1 Example of Teaching Quality and Engagement focus area scoring for one SES respondent

COLUMN A	COLUMN B	COLUMN C	COLUMN D	COLUMN E	COLUMN F
Survey Variable	**Raw Value**	**Rescaled Value**	**Item-Level Binary Score**	**Focus Area Score (TEACH)**	**Binary Focus Area Score (TEACHSAT)**
OVERALL	3	66.66	1	63.64	1
QLTEACH	2	33.33	0		
STDSTRUC	4	75	1		
STDRELEV	5	100	1		
TCHACTIV	4	75	1		
TCHCONLR	3	50	0		
TCHCLEXP	3	50	0		
TCHSTIMI	3	50	0		
TCHFEEDB	4	75	1		
TCHHELP	4	75	1		
TCHASSCH	3	50	0		

Figure 1 Example of how to use SPSS syntax to rescale SEQ items

```
RECODE STDSTRUC STDRELEV TCHACTIV TCHCONLR TCHCLEXP TCHSTIMI TCHFEEDB TCHHELP
TCHASSCH
(1=0) (2=25) (3=50) (4=75) (5=100) INTO
STDSTRUCr STDRELEVr TCHACTIVr TCHCONLRr TCHCLEXPr TCHSTIMIr TCHFEEDBr TCHHELPr TCHASSCHr

RECODE QLTEACH OVERALL
(1=0) (2=33.33) (3=66.66) (4=100) INTO
QLTEACHr OVERALLr.
```

Figure 2 Example of how to use SPSS syntax to compute SES focus area scores

```
COMPUTE TEACH = MEAN.8(STDSTRUCr, STDRELEVr, TCHACTIVr, TCHCONLRr, TCHCLEXPr, TCHSTIMIr,
TCHFEEDBr, TCHHELPr, TCHASSCHr, QLTEACHr, OVERALLr).
```

Figure 3 Example of how to use SPSS syntax to compute SES binary focus area scores

```
IF NOT MISSING(TEACH) TEACHING_SAT = 0.
IF TEACH GE 55 TEACHSAT = 1.
```

Figure 3 Example of how to use SPSS syntax to compute item-level scores

```
RECODE TCHACTIV (1=0) (2=0) (3=0) (4=1) (5=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO TCHACTIV_SAT.
```

1.3. Freedom of Expression scores

Freedom of expression scores are calculated using the same method as focus area scores.
The SPSS syntax for calculating the **overall freedom of expression score** is shown in **Figure 5**, while the syntax for generating **item-level scores** is provided in **Figure 6**.

Figure 4 Example of how to use SPSS syntax to compute the SES freedom of expression score

```
RECODE FOEXA FOEXB FOEXC (1=0) (2=25) (3=50) (4=75) (5=100) INTO FOEXAr FOEXBr FOEXCr

COMPUTE FOEX = MEAN.2(FOEXAr FOEXBr FOEXCr).

IF NOT MISSING(FOEX) FOEXSAT = 0. IF FOEX GE 55 FOEXSAT = 1.
```

Figure 5 Example of how to use SPSS syntax to compute item-level freedom of expression scores

```
RECODE FOEXA (1=0) (2=0) (3=0) (4=1) (5=1) (ELSE=SYSMIS) INTO FOEXA_SAT.
```