

Hello,

As one of the UTMOST project evaluators, I would like to invite you to join us in using the Sage SALG-M to investigate students' learning gains and their perceptions of the learning supports in your classroom. The data gathered will help us evaluate Project UTMOST and Sage. When you collect your data file from the SALG site, please email a copy to me (susan.lynds@colorado.edu) so that we can use it in the overall project evaluation. Many thanks to those of you who have sent me your SALG data for the last few terms!

The Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG) instrument is a well-developed survey for measuring students' learning gains from college courses. A special version of the SALG for undergraduate mathematics courses was developed--the SALG-M. This instrument focuses exclusively on the degree to which a course has enabled student learning--what do students gain from the course, and what course elements helped them learn. We have customized a version of the SALG-M for the use of Sage instructors but you can use it for any course and modify it as you like.

The SALG instruments are housed on the salgsite.org web platform. A suite of online tools enables you to customize and administer the survey and gather anonymous responses from your students. Through the platform's database tools, survey results are available in both summarized and spreadsheet formats.

The SALG was developed for formative assessment—understanding how your students are responding to your course—and as an alternative to traditional end-of-course evaluations. It has also been used for more formal, summative assessment, such as in a recent study of a four-campus initiative on inquiry-based learning in undergraduate mathematics. It may be used with any teaching style but may be particularly useful for those using or experimenting with innovative classroom methods.

How it works

Step-by-step instructions are provided for accessing and setting up the UTMOST Sage SALG-M instrument and using it with your own students. When the survey end date (which you set) has passed, your own student data will be available to you and several statistical analyses already computed.

You do not need IRB approval to gather course-related data for the purpose of improving your own teaching or evaluating a change to your course. (You do need it if you plan to use SALG in education research.)

To encourage your students to participate, we suggest the following:

- Explain that the purpose of the tool is to understand student learning and how your course design choices affect their learning.
- Assure students that their responses are anonymous; you can tell whether they have answered, but not what they answered.
- Explain that their candid feedback is useful to you in improving teaching and learning.

- Allow time for students to respond, either by providing time in class (reserve a computer lab or have them bring laptops) or by allowing several days outside class, and reminding students. A week or so before the end of the term is about the right timing.
- You may wish to offer a small incentive to students (such as extra credit) for completing this. This is OK as long as it is not coercive – a small incentive only.

This instrument is not just for use in classes with Sage; you can use it for any class whenever you like. Feel free to experiment with this instrument and discuss it on the Listserv. If you have questions, please contact me at susan.lynds@colorado.edu or 303-492-1714.

Best wishes,
Susan

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