

The Priorities Survey for Online Learners

The Priorities Survey for Online Learners (PSOL) is appropriate for students in online distance learning programs. The PSOL is similar in structure and design to the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) but the items have been modified and crafted to be appropriate for online learners.

The PSOL gives the institution an opportunity to examine the priorities of their online learning students as a unique group. The data help you to identify what matters to your online learners and how satisfied these students are. With this information, institutions can target areas most in need of improvement in order to retain these students.

The Priorities Survey for Online Learners asks students to respond with a level of importance and a level of satisfaction. A performance gap is calculated by subtracting the satisfaction score from the importance score.

Versions of the PSOL

There is only one version of the Priorities Survey for Online Learners. It is appropriate for administration to students who are completing online programs as their primary interaction with an institution, or as a supplement to on-campus courses. The norm group includes online learning students who have completed the PSOL.

Item Structure on the PSOL

There are 26 standard items rated for importance and satisfaction on the PSOL.

The PSOL includes ten items which may be defined by the institution and rated for importance and satisfaction.

The survey includes seven items that assess sources of information for the student. These items only ask for an importance rating and do not include satisfaction or performance gap scores.

The survey includes 11 items that assess pre-enrollment factors. These items only ask for an importance rating and do not include satisfaction or performance gap scores.

Three summary items are included the survey:

- So far, how has your online experience met your expectations?
 - 1 - Much worse than I expected
 - 2 - Quite a bit worse than I expected
 - 3 - Worse than I expected
 - 4 - About what I expected
 - 5 - Better than I expected
 - 6 - Quite a bit better than I expected
 - 7 - Much better than I expected
- Rate your overall satisfaction with your online experience here thus far.
 - 1 - Not satisfied at all
 - 2 - Not very satisfied
 - 3 - Somewhat dissatisfied
 - 4 - Neutral
 - 5 - Somewhat satisfied
 - 6 - Satisfied
 - 7 - Very satisfied

- If you had it to do over, would you enroll in this program again?

1 - Definitely not

2 - Probably not

3 - Maybe not

4 - I don't know

5 - Maybe yes

6 - Probably yes

7 - Definitely yes

There are 13 standard demographic items on the PSOL.

The PSOL includes one optional demographic item with up to six responses (students may only select one response). Consult your survey administrator for details on the items requested by your institution.

The survey also includes an optional demographic item to capture the students' major or program with a four-digit numeric code. Again, consult your survey administrator for details on the corresponding major or programs.

The Scales

The items on the PSOL have been analyzed statistically and conceptually to form comprehensive scales. A description of the scales follows.

PSOL: 5 scales

- Institutional Perceptions
- Academic Services
- Instructional Services
- Enrollment Services
- Student Services

Description of Scales

Institutional Perceptions: assesses how students perceive your institution.

Academic Services: assesses the services students utilize to achieve their academic goals. These services include advising, course offerings, technical assistance, online library resources, and tutoring services.

Instructional Services: measures students' academic experience, the instructional materials, the faculty/student interactions, evaluation procedures, and the quality of the instruction.

Enrollment Services: assesses the processes and services related to enrolling students in the online program, including financial aid, registration, and payment procedures.

Student Services: measures the quality of student programs and services, including responses to student requests, online career services, and the bookstore.

The items which contribute to each scale can be reviewed within your campus report. The HTML electronic report includes the items within the scales on the scale report; when you select the scale name it will expand to show the items. In the paper report, there is a section which provides the scales alphabetically and the list of items within the scale.

Reliability and Validity

The PSOL was derived from the Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory™, which has shown significant reliability and validity over time. In statistically valid terms, student satisfaction can be associated readily with numerous measures of institution success, including retention, graduation rates, and loan default rates. In a pilot study using 1,315 students, the scales for the PSOL show acceptable reliability, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.77.

A prior study on the validity of the Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) demonstrated convergent validity by correlating satisfaction scores from the SSI with satisfaction scores from the College Student Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSSQ), another statistically reliable satisfaction instrument. The Pearson correlation between these two instruments ($r=.71$; $p<.00001$) is high enough to indicate that the SSI's satisfaction scores measure the same satisfaction construct as the CSSQ's scores, and yet the correlation is low enough to indicate that there are distinct differences between the two instruments.

Because the PSOL is a relatively new instrument, the measures have not yet been associated with any criterion variables. Like its sibling inventories, the PSOL demonstrates significant statistical reliability.

The Inventory Development

The Priorities Survey for Online Learners was modeled on the Student Satisfaction Inventory. The text of the items was modified and crafted by Noel-Levitz to be appropriate for distance learning student responses.

The PSOL was available beginning in 2001. As of 2009, it has been administered by more than 130 institutions and completed by over 105,000 students.

Interpreting Your Results

For guidance on interpreting your results, please refer to the General Interpretive Guide or contact Noel-Levitz for additional assistance.

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