

Creating a SENCER-SALG

Advance Planning:

The best way to start creating a SALG for your course is to begin with your course objectives. There are often many levels of course objectives and/or learning outcomes: those mandated by the department or program for which you are teaching, those which derive from specific tracks or programs within a department, those which come from the course itself, and those which come from your personal theories and biases about teaching. Once you have a list of course objectives, you will want to divide that list into goals related to gains in understanding/knowledge, gains in skills, affective/attitudinal gains, and gains in integrating course material into the students' lives. You will then want to make some hard decisions about whether this objective is primarily directed toward affecting students' understanding, skills, attitude or habits. Many people find that they spend most of the time creating a new SALG on this step. Ideally, you will end up with a list that has no more than ten items in any category and no more than thirty items overall. Fewer is generally better because it allows you to ask more focused and detailed questions.

Overview of the Process:

Creating a SALG consists of 7 basic steps:

- 1) Choosing a base instrument from which to start.
- 2) Filling in basic information about your course: name, institution, course title, number of students, etc.
- 3) Optional: Copy questions from another instrument (one you have used previously or one you admire) into your own.
- 4) Edit the instrument to adapt it to the specifics of your class.
- 5) Announce the availability of the survey to the students.
- 6) Wait for the students to fill out the survey.
- 7) View and analyze the results.

Customizing an Instrument for your Class:

If you have not yet created an account for yourself, you will need to do that first. Go to <http://salgsite.org> and choose *New user registration*.

- 1) Log in. This will take you to your home page.
- 2) **Home page:** At the bottom of the box below your name is the instruction Create a new.... Choose *SALG instrument*. This takes you to the Select an Instrument page.
- 3) **Select an Instrument page:**
 - a. In the center of the page is a list of default instruments. (Ignore these for now.)

- i. The Full version is designed for instructors who use a variety of teaching techniques. It asks specific questions that prompt instructors to think about the details of their own pedagogy and course goals.
 - ii. The basic version is a stripped down version designed for use in very traditional classes that consist solely of lecture and discussion.
 - b. Choose *list of user-created instruments*; this will take you to the View Instruments page.
 - i. **View Instruments page:** This list includes all SALG instruments previously used to collect data about student learning. The only exceptions are those instruments whose authors chose to make them private.
 - ii. Select *Advanced search*. To find the current SENCER template, enter “carroll” in the Instructor box and “sencer” in the Description box. You should get the SENCER SALG 3—Revised SENCER SALG instrument. Click on the *view* link to preview the instrument. Then choose *Reuse this instrument*. This will take you to the instrument dashboard.
- 4) **Instrument Dashboard page:** The top section of the box displays the status of your instrument. (The small green box with the question mark in it next to the status indicator is a link to a help screen. If you move your mouse over it, a pop-up screen will tell you what the various statuses are and what they mean.) The bottom section provides access to the various actions you will need to complete to make the survey ready for your students. To avoid complication and confusion, complete the actions in the order they are listed.
 - a. The first link allows you to *Preview questions*. All this section does is allow you to look at the questions on your instrument. You can’t make any changes from this page—it is just here to allow you to confirm that you selected the right instrument.
 - b. The second link is *Edit the course name, semester and other information about your course*.
 - i. Some information has already been filled in from your user profile.
 - ii. Enter the name of your course in the Course box.
 - iii. Enter the term in which the class is being offered in the box that says Semester.
 - iv. Enter a description of the course in the Description box. This description will appear in your list of instruments and on the list of user-created instruments (if you choose to allow your instrument to appear there), so the more precise your description, the better. You can edit this description at any time, and it will never be seen by students.
 - v. Choose an access type.
 1. “Authenticated” means that the instructor enters a list of email addresses and only students with those email addresses can take the survey. The instructor can see who has filled out the survey and who has not.
 2. “Not authenticated but not anonymous” means that any student can take the survey and the instructor can see who has filled out the survey.

3. “Anonymous” means that anyone can fill out the survey and the instructor cannot see who has filled it out. (WARNING! Only choose this option if you don’t want to know who filled out the survey. All surveys are anonymous in the sense that you cannot tell which answers belong to which student; this survey takes anonymity one step further by erasing all records of who filled out the survey. It is intended for classes so small that even knowing who filled out the survey might compromise students’ privacy.)
- vi. Enter the number of students in the course. (Err on the side of too many rather than too few, because the system won’t allow anyone to login to the survey once the number you enter has been reached.
- vii. Enter a password—this is especially important if you have selected any option other than Authenticated, because it will make it harder for students who aren’t in your class to fill out the survey.
- viii. Make your survey public, anonymous or private.
 1. If you choose Public, after your survey closes, your instrument will be added to the list of public instruments so that others may use it, copy questions from it, etc. Your name will be listed on your instrument in the View Instruments page.
 2. If you choose Anonymous the instrument will be available on the list of public instruments as above, but your name will not appear on the list.
 3. If you choose Private, the instrument will not appear on the list of public instruments at all: no one else will be able to use it or copy questions from it.
- ix. SAVE YOUR WORK! Click on the Save button.
- x. Below the Save button, you will see a section called Other Actions. This section affords various ways of modifying your instrument and the option to delete it.
- c. The next step is to *Edit the questions*:
 - i. One way to edit questions is to search for questions to copy. This option allows you to search for questions used in other people’s SALGs. You may search on any key word you wish.
 1. Click the *Search* for other questions to copy link. (Assuming that you are doing this before you have edited any questions, you may ignore the warning about unsaved work.) This takes you to the View Instruments page. (See 3ci above for directions on using this page.)
 2. Once you have located the instrument you want, choose *Copy questions from this instrument* from the menu at the top of the page.
 3. This will show you a copy of the instrument with a Copy button next to each question. You can only copy one question (or group of questions) at a time.
 - ii. The usual way to edit the questions is individually. This option allows you to add, edit and delete individual questions. Below the main text box, is a copy of your instrument

5) Edit Instrument Questions page:

- a. Restrictions: You may not delete any of the ten basic question stems that comprise the SALG instrument. You may not change the scales for these ten basic questions, and you must ask at least one question under each question stem. These restrictions ensure that the SALG retains its basic identity and purpose. (See Overview of the SALG at the top of this page.)
 - b. To add a question under a stem, click *Add a Sub-question* to the right of the stem-question.
 - i. The new question will appear at the bottom of the list of sub-questions under that stem.
 - ii. Type in your question and click on OK. If you don't click on OK, your question will not be saved when you try to save your work and you will get an error message prompting you to fix the problem.
 - iii. Select a scale for your question. There are four choices:
 1. Help Scale (or Gains Scale) continues the scale common to the other sub-questions under this stem.
 2. Long Answer allows students to enter narrative responses. They can enter up to (Number?) words.
 3. Group allows you to include sub-sub-questions. See question 2.6 in the base instrument for an example. To add sub-sub-questions, repeat the steps from 5b above.
 - iv. If you don't select a scale, your changes to this question will not be saved when you try to save your work and you will get an error message prompting you to choose a scale for your question.
 - c. To edit a question, click on the *edit* link to the right of the question you want to edit. Type your text in the box, and click OK. If you don't click on OK, your question will not be saved when you try to save your work and you will get an error message prompting you to fix the problem.
 - d. To reorder the questions, click on the up or down arrow between the question you want to move and the delete button.
 - e. You may delete any question so long as there remains one question left under each stem. Click on the delete button next to the question you want to remove.
 - f. You may add questions and stem-questions to the original ten stem-questions. Click on Add Question Group at the bottom of the page. Follow the procedures for adding a question under 6b above. Note that you can use different scales in these new questions, including custom scales that you create yourself.
 - g. **SAVE YOUR CHANGES FREQUENTLY** as you go by choosing *Save and continue*. When you are finished, click on *Save and done*.
- 6) Once you have finished editing the instrument, you should choose View student list if you have selected Authenticated as the way for students to log in. Paste a list of student email addresses into the box provided for this purpose. List one email address

per line. If you have selected another option for students to log in, you can skip this step.

- 7) Set the Start Date and End Date.
 - a. **WARNING!!!** Once the start date arrives it is no longer possible to edit the instrument, so it is a good idea to set the start date at least a few days in the future. That will give you plenty of time to edit the instrument before it locks itself. Once you finish editing you can always set the start date closer to the present, but once the start date comes, the instrument is locked. If it is not ready at that point, you will need to start over—usually by copying this instrument and filling out new course information and start/end dates.
 - b. The start date is the first day that the students will be able to log into and fill out the instrument. The end date is the last day that they will be able to log into and fill out the instrument.
 - c. You will not be able to collect any feedback or run any analysis until after the end date.
 - d. Many people choose not to set these dates until they are finished editing their instrument.
- 8) Announce the survey to students. On this page is a sample text that you can cut and paste into an email to your students: the SALG has no ability to send email notifications to students. This page include the url, course number and password (if applicable) that students will need to log into the SALG site and take the survey.