



Implementation Guidelines for the Second Year Student Assessment™

Part of the Retention Management System *Plus*™ from Ruffalo Noel Levitz, a suite of motivational surveys and analytics designed for early-alert and intervention.

To help you in your decision to implement this early assessment and intervention tool, we have assembled information below on several common implementation questions. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need additional or different information.

Who Should Complete the SYSA?

The Second Year Student Assessment (SYSA) can be used with second-year students and with transfer students to receive feedback including their level of engagement, commitment to college, and receptivity to assistance from advisors, academic support offices, career counseling, and other campus services.

Getting Started

To order the Second-Year Student Assessment (SYSA), simply estimate the number of students who will need access to this assessment and indicate this preliminary number on our [SYSA order form](#). Note that you only pay for the number of surveys that are actually completed. [View samples](#) of all assessments and resulting reports.

Inventory Completion Times

Students need approximately 20 minutes to complete the Second-Year Student Assessment.

When to Administer the SYSA

The Second-Year Student Assessment can be administered prior to, during, or immediately following the first term of the second year of college or at the end of the freshman year.

How to Administer the Inventory

The SYSA is administered through email invitations generated through our system with customized links to the assessment. This online assessment may be administered in computer labs, through second-year seminars, classes, residence halls, or other places where students have access to a computer. Students may complete the SYSA survey via our mobile interface.

Our assessments can be delivered through **Blackboard Learn**™ Building Blocks. Contact our help desk at RMS.Tech@RuffaloNL.com for more information and instruction to use this service.

Students can complete the web version of the CSI on any personal computer or Smartphone. Individualized (personal) links can be provided through email or a general link can be provided to all students. Some schools even use a combination of both.

Retention Data Center™

Administrations and report retrieval are accomplished through the Retention Data Center. This secured site serves as the location to:

- Set up administrations
- Establish permission rights for your colleagues' access to the data
- Access individual and summary reports
- Send personalized email communications (for both student invitation purposes as well as support for assessment and intervention activities.)
- Filter data to tailor your outreach initiatives

Customization and Branding

The Data Center allows you to customize your web administration by applying your campus logo and adding supplemental campus-defined questions. Your logo will appear on each page of the survey along the top banner and custom questions appear at the end of the standard items found in each inventory.

You are also able to insert up to 500 characters on the Student Report that outline the services and resources you have on your campus.

Convenient Scoring

Your reports are immediately available online once the student completes the assessment.

Resulting Reports

Two individual reports are provided after each student completes the CSI –an Advisor/Counselor Report, and a Student Report.

You may access aggregate Summary and Planning Report(s) for your entire group and subgroup reports for particular classes, majors, or advisors. Subgroups may be identified by using a customized drop down menu offered to students completing at the web.

Student Information Systems (SIS)

Raise flags and alerts. Pre-defined data exports are available for partnerships Ruffalo Noel Levitz has with Hobsons' Retain™ and Starfish Early Alert™. You may also find creation of your own templates will allow you to move data collected from the CSI into your local student systems.

How to Use the Findings

An extensive Coordinator's Guide and a detailed Advisor's Guide are available at the client community site as part of your order and can be downloaded and distributed as needed. In addition, we'll direct you to additional resources for interpreting the reports and discussions with students. To get the most value from the SYSA, we recommend intervening at both the individual and programmatic levels. Below are some examples of how the findings are used in educational practice:

- The Academic Motivation scales serve as a springboard for dialogue between the student and the advisor about confidence in academic ability, engagement in the learning process during the previous year, and the level of commitment to completing a college degree and/or program of study. The Social Motivation scale provides an opportunity to explore untapped leadership potential with the student, while the Coping scales provide a window through which the student shares the non-academic challenges he/she is experiencing.
- SYSA results are incorporated into advising or course selection appointments.
- Advisors interact with students on a more personal level to determine their thinking around the current college plans they have indicated: 1) plan to complete my degree or program here, 2) plan to transfer, 3) do not plan to continue, or 4) undecided about plans.
- Share reports with academic counselors to ascertain the potential relationship between the student's plan to transfer and the availability of the desired major.
- The "major" question provides an excellent opportunity to determine how committed students are to their current academic program or how close they are to making a decision.
- The section on the SYSA reports entitled, "Students' Needs and Interests" is used to assess the utilization of student support programs during the previous year and determine where services are needed this year.
- The Students' Needs and Interests section provides insight on the impact of first-year student support programs and document the need for new, expanded, or continued services for the second year.
- Students who indicate a desire for assistance or additional information can be targeted for special outreach through advisor collaboration with appropriate offices.
- The Summary and Planning Report may be used as a component of the program assessment for student support services for the first year, and as a projection of need for services during the second year.
- The composite data from the Summary and Planning Report can be incorporated into internal assessment processes. These data provide additional information that can help to illuminate the student's GPA and academic progress via Academic Motivation scales, as well as study plans, work plans, and institutional impressions.
- The Summary and Planning Report may be used to compare results across groups within the second-year student population using custom-defined items such as advisor, residence hall, major, etc.
- Administer the SYSA through residence halls and have residence hall staff conduct one-on-one meetings with the students.

- Think of the SYSA as an opportunity for the student to reflect on the first year of college and re-assess his/her strengths and challenges within the context of the second-year academic demands.

Think of the Summary and Planning Report as a campus “reality check” for all areas referenced in this student assessment. Below are some guiding questions:

- What do students’ responses indicate about the previous integration of their needs and interests in relation to existing programs and services?
- What patterns are observed in academic motivation, social motivation, and general coping skills? What might these suggest?
- Do the students’ responses in Institutional Impressions suggest hypotheses about current re-enrollment plans?
- Does the demographic information provide additional insights relating to student motivation, needs and interests, and institutional impressions?

Setting Goals for the Second Year

The Second-Year Student Assessment provides you with a tool to evaluate student progress at a very important juncture in the educational experience. Because the second year of college continues to be a time of uncertainty for many students regarding future re-enrollment, SYSA results may serve as an important measure for advancing student success.

Other Common Measures of Student Success that may be Considered Include:

- Relationship of GPA, academic progress, and student motivation
- Persistence, progression, retention, or completion rates
- Quality, quantity, and timeliness of focused interventions for different second-year populations
- The number of second-year students on probation, as well as those who effectively recover their academic standing
- Satisfaction with level of interaction with advisors, faculty, and other students
- The use of support services on campus, including the frequency and quality of referrals
- The level of commitment and focus across your campus in proactively addressing the needs of second-year students
- Qualitative feedback from advisors or mentors, referral offices, and students

Measuring the success of your interventions will facilitate and inform subsequent plans for addressing your students’ needs throughout the second year. With more precise information, you are positioned to (re)engage and (re)integrate students into your campus community with greater confidence.

Engaging Advisors and Student Services Colleagues in this Initiative

The most common strategy for maximizing the impact of the SYSA initiative is the direct involvement of the advising and student services staff. Engaging them as soon as possible is key to their ongoing and active involvement in second-year student success. Accordingly, advisors, mentors, student success coaches, and student service offices should be notified early on that second-year student reports will be made available to them.

Also, consider involving administrators and the retention committee in this new initiative by enlisting their creative ideas and support for using the data, especially the composite data from the SYSA Summary and Planning Report.

To launch the initiative, most institutions plan an initial training session that focuses on uniting the efforts of advisors and student service providers. You'll want to explain the overarching goals for the effort, such as enhancing student success and retention at the programmatic level, as well as the value of the individual reports in providing a current view of students' strengths and challenges within the context of their interests and needs.

Please also highlight: i) the value of the action plan in the Needs and Interests section of the Student Report, ii) the College Plans lists in the Summary and Planning Report, iii) the aggregate data in the Summary and Planning Report, valuable for prioritizing and justifying services in relation to student needs, iv) as well as other accountability data provided in the report.

A Ruffalo Noel Levitz trainer or consultant is available to assist with launching the initiative, interpreting the findings for individual students, and using the aggregate findings in action plans at the programmatic level. Please contact us for details.