
5 MINUTE TEACHING DEVELOPMENT

Student Evaluations of Teaching: Student Ratings

What is it?

Student ratings serve several purposes in assessing teaching effectiveness. They can help faculty improve their teaching, be used as criteria for promotion, tenure, merit, teaching and awards selection criteria, University-wide program review, and student course selection when applicable. Ratings of effectiveness are moderately correlated with independent measures of student learning and achievement of course level objectives.

Why is it important?

Research has shown that anonymous student ratings reflect several different aspects of teaching. Student ratings should provide constructive feedback as it relates to the following key course components: organization and planning, clarity and communication skills, teacher student interaction (rapport), and self regulated learning. Learners may lack the experience and expertise to provide quality feedback of course rigor and workload, and course assessments. No single source of information, including student ratings, can provide sufficient information to make a valid judgment about instructor effectiveness. It should, therefore, be one component of a triangulation approach to generate data, which includes peer observation, self-assessment, and student ratings.

What are the Constructs?

Student Views of Effective Teaching

- Students may assign more importance to:
 - Instructor speaking skills
 - Instructor engagement
 - Instructors focus on outcomes of instruction

Instructor Views of Effective Teaching

- Instructor typically place more emphasis on:
 - Challenging students
 - Motivating students
 - Setting high standards
 - Fostering self-directed learning

Elements to Emphasize During Orientation

- Cover course material clearly and concisely, establish rapport, find opportunities for students to answer their own questions, display personal interest in student learning, relate how each topic

fits in the course, demonstrate importance of subject matter, encourage student engagement, foster student collaboration in teaching methods, and provide classroom structure.

- Show that you value student feedback. Consider reviewing key points from your teaching and course evaluations from last year and how to you plan to make changes this year according to learner feedback.

Key Reflective Questions to Create a Development Action Plan

- What does this data say to me? What did I hope to accomplish in this class?
- How will I modify my assessment strategies and teaching methods to be consistent with meeting course objectives?
- In what 2-3 ways can I increase student awareness about course objectives?
- Can I identify a colleague, mentor or administrator who can assist me?
- What other resources are available to me? What is my plan of action?

Quick Tips

- **Tip 1:** Set aside time in your schedule to review and not rush through the process.
- **Tip 2:** Determine how best to trend the information (numerical rating and comments) into groupings or categories (e.g., organization and clarity, challenge/engagement, interaction with students, course content, enthusiasm). Also compare with focus group findings when applicable. Be sure to place emphasis on strengths to retain and areas for improvement.
- **Tip 3:** Identify a mentor or colleague who can provide a first phase review if you internally have sensitivity to reviewing student comments. Consider use of a highlighter or visual picture of the student response patterns.
- **Tip 4:** Consider sharing programmatic course changes with the students when you begin on the first day of class.
- **Tip 5:** Consider soliciting mid-semester formative feedback for appropriate changes to be made during the semester. Three key questions to ask: 1) What do you like best about this course/instructor? 2) What do you like least? 3) If you were the instructor, what would you do to improve the course?
- **Tip 6:** Consider adding specific course-related questions to the institutional rating form if possible. Consider a one-minute evaluation at the end of teaching to determine what students consider the relevant and main ideas of the content.

More Information

1. Benton SL, Cashin WE. (2014). Student Ratings of Teaching: A Summary of Research and Literature. IDEA Research and Papers No. 50 Available at: <http://ideaedu.org/research-and-papers/idea-papers/50-student-ratings-teaching-summary-research-and-literature> Accessed on January 27, 2015.
2. McKeachie WJ et al. (1998). Teaching and Learning in the College Classroom. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
3. Vanderbilt Center for Teaching and Learning: Teaching Guides – Gathering Feedback from Students. Available at: <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/student-feedback/> Accessed on January 27, 2015.
4. Vanderbilt Center for Teaching and Learning: Teaching Guides – Student Evaluations. Available at: <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/student-evaluations/> Accessed on January 27, 2015.. Accessed on January 10, 2015.
5. Felder RM, Brent R. (2004). How to Evaluate Teaching. North Carolina State University. Available at: <http://www4.ncsu.edu/unity/lockers/users/f/felder/public/Columns/Teacheval.pdf> / Accessed on January 27, 2015.
6. Speaking of Teaching. Using Student Evaluations to Improve Teaching. (1997). Stanford University Newsletter on Teaching. Available at: http://web.stanford.edu/dept/CTL/cgi-bin/docs/newsletter/student_evaluations.pdf / Accessed on January 27, 2015.