WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

Best Practices for Using Student Evaluation of Teaching

The following are a list of best practices that the 2N SET committee has put together for the use of student evaluations of teaching (SET). These suggestions are aimed to improve the information provided on the SETs as well as for their use in the evaluation process.

Administration of Forms

- Communicate to students in advance when forms will be distributed or available online.
    - Instructors should tell their students why it is important to complete the forms.
    - Reassure students that their responses are anonymous to the instructor.
- Evaluation should not be conducted on the day of a test or quiz.
- To preserve student anonymity, the instructor should leave the classroom while evaluation is taking place.
- If you are teaching an evening class, make sure to work with the department to ensure that forms can be easily dropped off by the student proctor.
- Some instructors incentivize the process to increase the response rate for online evaluations (example below)
    - Giving extra credit to all students if a certain response rate is achieved (e.g., 80%)

Interpretation of Reports

- Student ratings from different course levels and types should be appropriately contextualized. For example, elective courses in the major and courses with small enrollments tend to receive higher ratings than required courses and courses with large enrollments.
- Consistent patterns observable over a number of semesters should be identified. Results for single courses that do not align with overall trends should not be unduly emphasized. This holds when the outlier is high or low relative to other data.
- The evaluation of courses with a small number of students is less reliable. However, when multiple iterations of a course are considered together, they can provide useful information.
- One should realize the error and biases that are inherent in student evaluations - academic field, course type, instructor characteristics, expected grade.

References and Useful Links

- Advice from Lafayette University
- University of Washington Teaching Resources
- Constructive Criticism
- Hanover Research Council Research on Best Practice
- Nulty. The adequacy of response rates. 2008.
- Wayne State University Office for Teaching and Learning. Improve Response Rates and Comment Quality 2020.

Wayne State University 2N Student Evaluation of Teaching Committee, 2019