
SJSU April 12, 2006

Online Student Ratings of Instruction

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Purposes and Uses of Evaluation of Teaching

Formative and summative evaluation

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Formative and summative evaluation:

"When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative." (Robert Stake)

Purposes and Uses of Evaluation of Teaching

- Formative evaluation is for:
 - Feedback on teaching
 - Course & program revision
 - Instructional improvement

- Summative evaluation is for:
 - Accountability
 - Decisions regarding promotion, tenure, salary, etc.

Purposes and Uses of Evaluation of Teaching

- Student rating results can be used for both formative and summative purposes.
- Often summative purposes are emphasized. For a moment consider instead formative purposes of student ratings.
- How can you use your student rating results more effectively for **FORMATIVE** purposes?

Student Ratings of Teaching: Important Issues

- Reliability (consistent, useful)
- Validity (logical, robust, meaningful)
- Appropriate use (access, interpretation, formative, summative)

Guidelines for an Effective Evaluation System: Four Areas

1. Planning/preparing for an effective evaluation system
2. Implementing an effective evaluation system
3. Fine-tuning the evaluation system to increase its effectiveness
4. Effective use of evaluation results

Adapted from Theall, M. (April, 2006). *Online student evaluation of teaching: Emerging practices*. Presentation at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

1. Planning/Preparing for an Effective Evaluation System

- Include all stakeholders in decisions about evaluation process and policy.
- Establish beforehand the purpose of the evaluation and the uses and users of ratings.
- Keep in mind a balance between individual and institutional needs.
- Build a real *system* for evaluation, not a haphazard and unsystematic process.
- Publicly present clear information about the evaluation criteria, process, and procedures.

2. Implementing an Effective Evaluation System

- Protect confidentiality of student responses.
- Use multiple sources of information from several situations.
- Establish a legally defensible process and a system for grievances.
- Establish clear lines of responsibility/reporting for those who administer the system.
- Provide resources for improvement and support of teaching and teachers.

3. Fine-tuning the Evaluation System to Increase its Effectiveness

- Invest in the system and evaluate it regularly.
- Use, adapt, or develop instrumentation suited to institutional and individual needs
- Archive the ratings data and use it to validate the instruments.
- Produce reports that can be easily and accurately understood.

4. Effective Use of Evaluation Results

- Educate the users of ratings results to avoid misuse and misinterpretation.
- Keep formative evaluation confidential and separate from summative decision making.
- For summative purposes, compare teachers/courses on the basis of data from similar situations.
- Consider the appropriate use of evaluation data for assessment and other purposes.
- Seek expert, outside assistance when necessary or appropriate.

BYU Student Rating System: History

- 1996-2000—Redesigned the student rating form
- 1997-2002—Conducted four pilots
- Fall 2002—Online student ratings available campus-wide
- Fall 2003—All college deans agreed to use the online system for rating all courses/teachers
- Summer 2006—Add features to the online rating system (e.g., flexible rating form, downloadable data, links to instructional improvement resources)

BYU Student Rating System: How the System Works

- Every course/teacher rated every semester
- Ratings during the last three weeks of the semester, ending the last day before finals begin
- Publicity campaign and email reminders to encourage students to complete online student ratings
- Students login through the secure portion of the University Website with their university IDs and passwords.

BYU Student Rating System: How the System Works (cont.)

- Rating reports available online to teachers and administrators *after* the deadline for submitting grades
- Each faculty member or administrator has unique accesses privileges to rating reports through their own university login ID and password.
- All data stored for easy retrieval (e.g., for promotion and tenure files)

SJSU Survey of Faculty: Online Student Rating Issues

- Security
- Paper vs. Online Ratings
- Response Rates
- Costs
- Demographics
- Online Reporting of Results

Security—Data Collection

- Students use their university IDs and passwords when logging into the online rating system.
- Only students registered for a course can rate the course, and they can only rate it once (determined by student login).
- At time of submission, student identification is permanently separated from student responses.
- No problems with students abusing this type of system; works well

Security—Data Access & Storage

- Data storage for online ratings is not more or less secure than storage for paper ratings, i.e., in both cases, results are stored electronically.
- For online reports, faculty members and administrators must login to the system using their unique IDs and passwords. Appropriate access is based on ID and password.

Online Ratings vs. Paper Ratings

- Are online rating results typically higher or lower than paper rating results?

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- Are online rating results typically higher or lower than paper rating results?
 - Short answer: Overall there is no significant difference.

Online Ratings vs. Paper Ratings: Brigham Young University

- **Study 1** Paper and Online Ratings Administered in 74 Course Sections
 - The online results were on average 0.1 point higher than the paper ratings, even though the online response rates were typically lower.
- **Study 2** Paper and Online Ratings Administered in 91 Course Sections
 - High correlation between paper and online results (0.87, 0.89), even though the same students didn't necessarily complete both forms.

Online Ratings vs. Paper Ratings: Northwestern University

- **Study 1** 5,112 course sections—about half used paper ratings and the other half used online ratings.
 - On average paper ratings were .25 of a point higher than online ratings
- **Study 2** 26 courses (274 sections) taught by the same instructors over time
 - 11 courses—average online results were higher than average paper results
 - 12 courses—average paper results were higher than average online results
 - 3 courses—mixed, some items rated higher using paper ratings and some higher using online ratings

Hardy, N. (2003). Online Ratings: Fact or Fiction. In D.L. Sorenson & T.D. Johnson (Eds.) *New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Online Student Ratings of Instruction*, 96.

Online Ratings vs. Paper Ratings: University of Washington

- **Study** 18,212 on-campus courses and 65 distance education courses
 - Online students gave overall evaluations similar to classroom students
 - Inter-rater reliabilities and underlying scale structures of the data obtained were comparable for online and paper ratings

McGhee, D. & Lowell, N. (2003). Psychometric properties of student ratings of instruction in online and on-campus courses. In D.L. Sorenson & T.D. Johnson (Eds.) *New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Online Student Ratings of Instruction*, 96.

Response Rates and Rating Results

- Are overall ratings affected by response rates?

Response Rates and Rating Results

- Are overall ratings affected by response rates?
 - Short answer: Differences in response rates result in little or no difference in overall ratings.

BYU Study 1 Paper and Online Ratings Administered in 74 Course Sections

- For *online* ratings, correlations between response rates and overall ratings were .09 for the course and .10 for the instructor.
- Note: For *paper* ratings, correlations between response rates and overall ratings were .41 for both course and instructor.

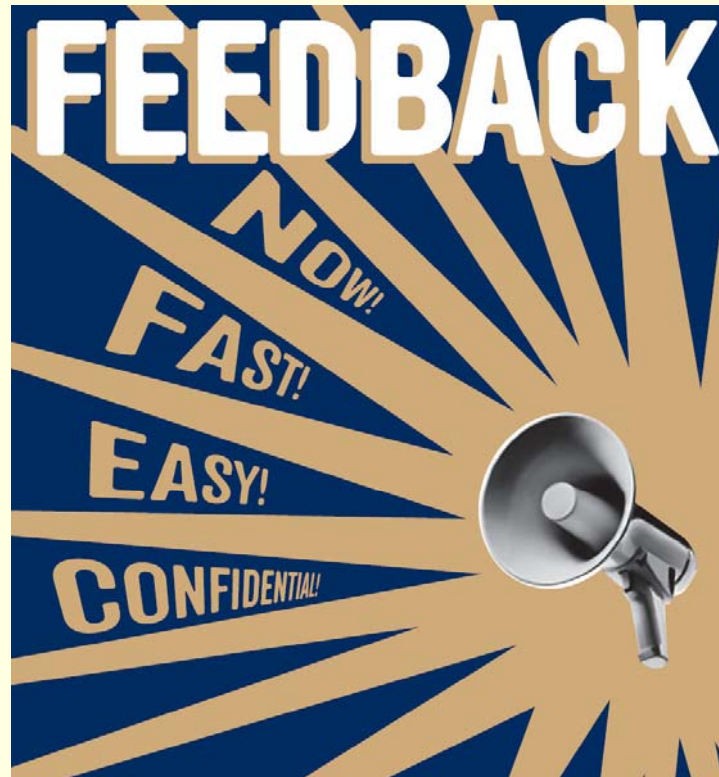
BYU Study 2 Paper and Online Ratings Administered in 91 Course Sections

- For online ratings, the correlation between response rates and overall ratings was not statistically significant.
- For online ratings, point estimates suggest that it would take a reduction in the response rate of about 40 percentage points to lower the overall course or instructor rating by 0.1

Increasing Rating Response Rates: Some Effective Strategies

- Instructors encourage students to complete the ratings and let students know that they are interested in and use rating results.
- Student who complete ratings are entered into a prize drawing (e.g., iPods, laptops, bookstore certificates).
- Campus-wide advertising/publicity campaigns

Current BYU Publicity Design



STUDENT RATINGS OF INSTRUCTION

Make a difference • Voice your opinion

Online via  now thru the last reading day

(NOW! NOT DURING FINALS!) Questions? See studentratings.byu.edu

Increasing Rating Response Rates: Some *More* Effective Strategies

- Students who complete their ratings can view their grades early online.
- Students who complete their ratings can view the rating results for all courses online.

Cost Comparison: Online Ratings vs. Paper Ratings

- Online ratings have high initial development costs.
- Online ratings tend to save money over time.

Bothell, T.W. & Henderson, T. (2003). Do online ratings of instruction make sense. In D.L. Sorenson & T.D. Johnson (Eds.) *New Directions for Teaching and Learning: Online Student Ratings of Instruction*, 96.

Demographics

- Student factors that generally do *not* influence rating results:
 - Age
 - Gender
 - Class level (e.g., freshman)
 - GPA

Cashin, W.E. (1995, September). *Student ratings of teaching: The research revisited*. IDEA paper no. 32 from the Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development at Kansas State University.

Demographics

- If demographic information is requested from students, they must be confident that it cannot be used to link their identity to their responses:
 - Report results by demographic information *only* when there are more than five students responding within a demographic group.
 - On reports, do *not* include demographic information that is linked to individual student responses, including student comments.

Reporting Rating Results Online

- Developing and implementing **online reporting** of rating results is challenging; it also provides important opportunities.
 - Access
 - Online help—interpretation, policies, navigation
 - Links to instructional resources
- Reporting in the BYU rating system:
<https://studentratings.byu.edu>

Additional Resources

- OnSET Website: <http://Onset.byu.edu>
- Information on the BYU student rating system, including frequently asked questions: <http://fc.byu.edu/New/tpages/feedback/onlinestudentratings.html>
- IDEA paper #32, Student Ratings of Teaching: The Research Revisited: http://www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_32.pdf