

University of Toronto

Policy on the Student Evaluation of Teaching in Courses

Preamble

The University of Toronto is committed to ensuring the quality of its academic programs, its teaching and the learning experiences of its students. An important component of this is the regular evaluation of courses by students. At the University of Toronto, course evaluations are conducted for the following reasons:

1. To provide formative data used by instructors for the continuous improvement of their teaching.
2. To provide members of the University community, including students, with information about teaching and courses at the institution.
3. To collect data used in the summative evaluation of teaching for administrative purposes such as annual merit, tenure and promotion review.
4. To provide data used by departments and divisions for program and curriculum review.

Course evaluations are part of an overall teaching and program evaluation framework that includes regular peer review, instructor self-assessment, cyclical program review and other forms of assessment, as appropriate. As part of this framework, course evaluations are a particularly useful tool for providing students with an opportunity to provide feedback on their own learning experiences.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this policy document is to outline the principles and parameters that guide the evaluation of courses at the University of Toronto. The specifics of how the course evaluation process will be structured and administered in particular contexts will be outlined in the *Provostial Guidelines for the Student Evaluation of Teaching in Courses*. The Provostial Guidelines and this course evaluation policy, in addition to divisional guidelines on course evaluation, will form an institutional framework for the evaluation of courses.

Principles

Any course evaluation framework at the University of Toronto should:

1. Reflect institutional teaching and learning priorities.
2. Recognize the diversity of teaching priorities and strengths across the institution.
3. Gather information from students about their learning experience.
4. Provide opportunities for both summative and formative feedback on teaching.
5. Be equitable, consistent and transparent in the collection, use and interpretation of data.
6. Protect the anonymity/confidentiality of student respondents.
7. Provide reliable and meaningful data to instructors, administrators and students.

Administration of course evaluations: scope and access

Scope

Each undergraduate and graduate course will be evaluated each time it is offered. It is left to divisions to make provisions for obtaining student feedback by alternative means in courses of an individual/independent nature (e.g. independent study courses, music studios, practica) or courses with very small enrolments as defined by each faculty/division.

In courses with teaching assistants or multiple instructors, evaluations will also assess the individual contributions of these members of the teaching team.

Access

Data for a course will not be released until the official approval of final grades. Data from course evaluations will be made available as follows:

Instructors

- Instructors will have full access to all quantitative and qualitative data from course evaluations conducted in each course they have taught.
- Instructors may elect to release data from instructor-selected questions to academic administrators.

Academic Administrators

- Academic administrators will have access to data except from instructor-selected questions.
- Only statistically significant data should be used for summative purposes (e.g. personnel decisions).

Students

- As the general norm, course evaluation data will be shared with students. (These data may include numerical data and/or written comments.) Individual instructors may opt not to release data for their course(s).

Responsibilities

All members of the University of Toronto community have an important responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that acknowledges the importance of course evaluations to the excellence of the University's programs and that enhances the effective and full functioning of this critical process.

Institution: The University has a responsibility to:

- Oversee the implementation of this policy.
- Provide education and support to students, instructors and academic administrators about the use and importance of course evaluations.

Divisions/Faculties: Each division/faculty has a responsibility to develop its own guidelines in line with the institutional framework.

Academic Administrators (Dean/Chair/Principal/Director): Academic administrators are responsible for:

- Reviewing course evaluation data including quantitative and qualitative data, as available, as one component of the assessment of teaching effectiveness;
- Understanding the guidelines for interpreting course evaluation data.

Instructors: Instructors are responsible for:

- Understanding the role of course evaluations at the University of Toronto;
- Explaining the importance of course evaluations to students;
- Reviewing their own course evaluations regularly;
- Discussing these results with their division/department head.

Students: Students have a responsibility to:

- Participate in the evaluation process and to provide constructive feedback;
- Approach the process with appropriate seriousness, recognizing the importance of course evaluations.

Process

The *Provostial Guidelines on the Student Evaluation of Teaching in Courses* provide additional details on the administration, use and interpretation of course evaluations at the University of Toronto. Additional guidelines developed at the divisional level will indicate the specific approach taken to course evaluation within an individual division.