



BOISE STATE UNIVERSITY

University Policy 4300

Student Course Evaluations

Effective Date

July 1986

Last Revision Date

January 23, 2023

Responsible Party

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, (208) 426-1202

Scope and Audience

This policy applies to all student evaluations of instruction. It applies to all academic and administrative faculty with teaching responsibilities, including graduate assistants and adjunct faculty. This policy does not address feedback for non-instructional personnel or activities, or for faculty who are primarily assigned to continuing education and public service activities.

Additional Authority

- University Policy 4290 (Annual Faculty Evaluation)
 - University Policy 4220 (Adjunct Faculty)
 - University policy 4490 (Clinical Faculty)
 - University Policy 4690 (Student Course Evaluation Redaction Policy)
 - University Policy 5010 (Research Faculty)
 - University Policy 4340 (Faculty Tenure and Promotion Guidelines)
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1. Policy Purpose

To outline the principles and parameters that guide student course evaluations by providing guidelines for determining the aspects of instructional design and delivery that students are well-positioned to evaluate, providing parameters for the administration of course evaluations, and guiding the appropriate use of data from course evaluations.

2. Policy Statement

Boise State University recognizes that understanding students' perspectives on their individual learning experiences provides valuable insight into the extent to which the university is fulfilling its primary educational mission. Course evaluations provide an avenue for students to communicate feedback on those experiences to instructors and university leadership.

Student course evaluations are designed to solicit feedback from students about their learning experiences to inform faculty efforts to improve instructors' course designs and pedagogy. Because a central goal of administering course evaluations is improvement in curriculum design and pedagogy, student course evaluations will not be written solely for the purpose of faculty evaluation.

Evaluation of faculty performance necessarily considers the performance of multiple responsibilities, including teaching effectiveness, the quality of research and scholarly activity, and/or service, among other duties. Therefore, in no context is student course evaluation data to be employed as the sole measure of a faculty member's teaching performance, as a threshold or a majority measure for assessing teaching, or as the sole measure of the value/quality of a course. That data is to be used as one element of a multi-faceted, comprehensive faculty evaluation protocol in which multiple measures of teaching performance are reviewed. Research indicates that students are well-positioned to speak of their experiences in a course (e.g., ease of navigating course materials and content, learning environment, opportunities to demonstrate learning; responsiveness to students' learning needs, etc.) but are much less capable of assessing an instructor's teaching quality, effectiveness, and breadth of knowledge and scholarship or the structure, relevance, or method behind the course content. Therefore, end-of-term evaluations shall be consistent with current best-practices and research (see [information for instructors on course evaluations](#)).

3. Definitions

3.1 Assessment

The process of gathering and analyzing information from multiple and diverse sources to make a judgment about course design; the learning progress, skill acquisition, or the educational needs of students; and/or the effectiveness of instructional methods. The process culminates when Assessment results are used to improve course design and subsequent learning.

3.2 Formative Assessment

An instructor's ongoing reflective process of gathering information about their teaching (e.g., classroom observations, mid-semester student feedback, patterns in students' performance on assignments, and so on); reviewing it within the context of the institution, students' needs and abilities, course and program learning outcomes, and evidence-based practices for effective instruction; for the purposes of identifying the instructor's strengths in teaching as well as areas for growth and development.

3.3 Summative Assessment

The evaluative process that occurs for an employee on a predictable basis with the purpose to summarize one's performance in a particular area of responsibility (teaching, in this case), often in the form of a merit score or a descriptive label (e.g., "Meets expectations," "Exceeds expectations," etc.). The purpose of a Summative Assessment is not to improve the effectiveness of teaching and of student learning, but instead to note an employee's progress toward certain goals and criteria.

4. Faculty Responsibilities

- a. The Faculty shall be meaningfully involved in any systematic effort to solicit student opinions for the purpose of improving instruction or evaluating faculty performance, including involvement in determining the components and processes for evaluating instruction. In this role, the Faculty shall work toward the use of valid and reliable evaluative methodologies that are consistent with the mission and needs of departments/schools/colleges and the institution.
- b. Anyone teaching a course at Boise State is responsible for familiarizing themselves with the policies and expectations related to student evaluation of teaching.

5. Supervisor/Administrator Responsibilities

Supervisors are responsible for adhering to these guidelines when reviewing student course evaluation data during faculty performance reviews, including tenure and promotion and post-tenure review.

6. Administration of Student Evaluations of Instruction

The Office of the Provost/Division of Academic Affairs, through the Assistant Provost of Academic Leadership and Faculty Affairs, maintains overall authority for the course evaluation system.

- a. The Assistant Provost creates and manages policy and guidelines regarding course evaluations, including the application of this policy to the course evaluation process.
- b. Learning Technology Solutions (LTS), in conjunction with the Office of Information Technology (OIT), administers the course evaluation system.

6.1 Procedures

- a. All students will have the opportunity to provide feedback on their courses. Course feedback must be provided for every section of every course, every semester (including summer). Exceptions to this requirement are courses of an individual/independent nature (e.g., independent study courses, special research projects, thesis, music studios, etc.).
- b. Students will be able to participate confidentially through an on-line system. To ensure confidentiality, in courses where enrollment is fewer than five (5) students, the instructor will not have direct access to those evaluations. Only in limited circumstances will exceptions to confidentiality be permitted, such as in the event of a University investigation and in compliance with relevant laws and policies. In such circumstances, the Provost may determine that the student evaluator's name may be revealed to the relevant parties.
- c. Instructors may choose to allot class time to the completion of student evaluations of instruction (For example, evaluations could be completed during the last ten (10) minutes of a class session). Should the course be in-person or delivered synchronously, the instructor must not be present during this time.
- d. Course evaluations must be accompanied by an informed consent statement, which provides context about the use of data and the extent of confidentiality for the purpose of guiding appropriate and constructive participation.

- e. Concerns about the evaluation process will be reviewed by OIT and resolved either by OIT/LTS or, when appropriate, by the Provost's Office.

7. Use of Information Resulting from Evaluations

7.1 Use of Data to Inform Faculty Efforts to Improve their Course Designs and Pedagogy

Student feedback may be used for Formative Assessment to continuously improve the student's learning experience. Therefore, this feedback provides the faculty member and the University with longitudinal data which will be used to:

- Assess how effectively its learning environments and teaching practices facilitate student engagement with the curriculum and learning outcomes;
- Improve student learning experiences;
- Assure and enhance the quality of courses and teaching, and;
- Support faculty in the scholarship of teaching and learning (with Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, as needed).

7.2 Use of Data for One of Multiple Factors that may Inform Faculty Performance Reviews in Teaching

Student feedback will be used to inform a Summative Assessment of a faculty member's performance in conjunction with, and not as a substitute for, other methods of evaluating teaching. Accordingly,

- a. Numerical scores may be considered but cannot be used as a minimum requirement to achieve a particular ranking or merit score in faculty evaluations (e.g., "a mean score of 4.5 is required to meet expectations" cannot be used)
- b. To mitigate against bias in course evaluations, they should not be used to make direct comparisons between faculty members
- c. Student course evaluations cannot be used
 - As the sole piece of evidence for assessing teaching or as a deciding factor in that Assessment

- As the sole piece of evidence in which to base a personnel action (e.g., hiring, promotion, denial of promotion, contract renewal, contract non-renewal, merit awards, or disciplinary action)
Revision History

8. Related Information

Information for Instructors on Course Evaluations

<https://www.boisestate.edu/academics-deptchairs/course-evaluations/>

Revision History

February 1999; January 2008; February 2016; January 23, 2023