
Making the Most of Your Three-Week Evaluations

Overview

The three-week evaluations are administered to students after they have completed three full weeks of the semester in order to give you a baseline understanding of how students are experiencing your course thus far. More specifically, the three-week evaluations are given to make sure that your class is meeting students' expectations, that the content is relevant to their professional needs, and that you are using teaching practices that reach the diverse population of students at SPS. Here are a few tips on how to get the most out of this feedback:

- **Make sure you are interpreting the results properly.** It is quick and easy to only look at the mean (average) scores, but this can be misleading, particularly if the response rate is low or if there is a lot of variation in responses. See our guide (below) for tips on how to read and interpret your results.
- **Collect additional information from your students.** Whether your results were good, bad, or mixed, this is a great time to conduct follow-up surveys, focus groups, or hold conversations with your class. For example, perhaps all your ratings are excellent, but week after week, you notice students coming to class not having completed the readings and unable to participate in discussions. A follow-up survey asking specifically about the readings (Have you completed the readings assigned for this course? Why or why not? What would make you more likely to do the readings in the future?) will help you determine a course of action.
- **Follow up with your students!** Sharing the results of the evaluations with your students is a highly recommended practice. It indicates to students that you take their feedback seriously and are invested in their education, and it gives them an opportunity to share more feedback with you. Be sure to tell them (in a neutral and non-confrontational way!) some of the trends you noticed and let them know a) what changes you will make as a result of their feedback, b) what changes you can't make now but will try to make in the future and c) what changes you aren't able to make at all, and why.

For further information:

Lewis, K. (2001). Using midsemester student feedback and responding to it. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 87, 33-44.

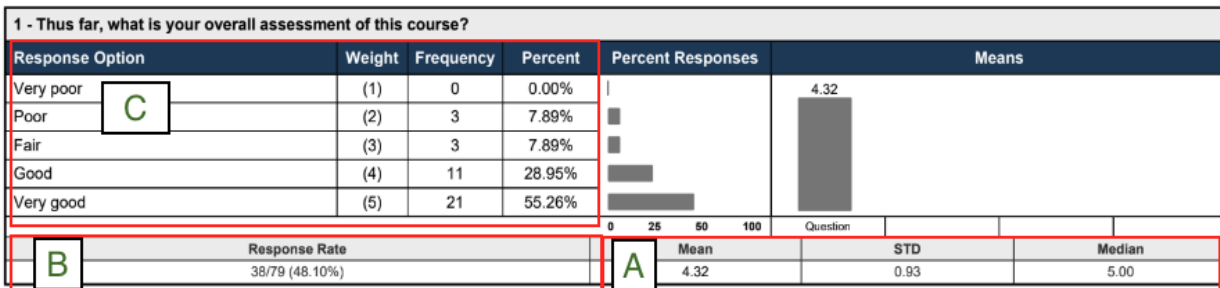
Richmond, A., Boysen, G., & Gurung, R. (2016). *An evidence-based guide to college and university teaching*. New York, NY: Routledge

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Reading Your Three-Week Evaluations

Interpreting the Quantitative Data

The evaluation report gives a few important pieces of information to look at. Here is a screenshot of a sample question:



You will see one of these tables for each question on the survey.

- **Box A** gives you a quick scan of the data: The Mean (average), Standard Deviation (how dispersed student responses are), and Median (the middle value). This is good for a quick peek, but it might be hard to determine what this information means.
- **Box B** gives the response rate; how many students responded to the survey compared to how many are in your class? A response rate of 60% or higher is strong, but keep in mind that if you have a small class or a small number of respondents, then drawing generalizations from the findings is more difficult and ill-advised.
- **Box C** provides a breakdown of how many students chose each option. This is especially important because it can show you how much variance in opinion there is in your class. For example, if you have a group of students who give a very high rating and a group of students who give a very low rating, that might give you a very similar average score to a situation where most students rate you somewhere in the middle. But what you might do with the data is quite different.

Interpreting the Comments

At the end of the survey, students also respond to a number of open-ended questions. The comments can provide context and support for the quantitative results. However, it is important to remember that the comments may not always be indicative of the feelings of the entire class. When reading the comments, ask yourself: Do they support the quantitative results? Are multiple people giving the same types of feedback? If so, this may indicate that action is needed.

The comments can also indicate areas in which you may want to gather more information. While an individual comment may not suggest the need for immediate action, it may be worth following up with the class to see if other students share the sentiment or have suggestions on how to improve.