

Warning and Guidance on Student Evaluations of Teaching

This statement is to be included in all files for instructor evaluation, in accordance with UO Senate legislation on the improvement and evaluation of teaching passed May 2018 and as approved by the Senate Committee on the Continuous Improvement and Evaluation of Teaching on Jan 10th, 2019.¹

Research has shown that numerical student evaluations of teaching may be marred by bias against women,² racial and ethnic minorities, and other groups, while being generally unrelated to student learning.³ Other studies show numerical evaluations are affected by whether or not the course is required, by the subject matter, class size, the time of day the course is offered, and by expected grades.

In response to this research the UO Senate, in cooperation with the Office of the Provost, is revising UO's teaching evaluation instruments and practices. During this transition, numerical student evaluations of teaching should not be used as a standalone measure of teaching quality for any university purpose. Instead, teaching should be evaluated primarily using peer reviews, instructor self-reflection (as for example in instructors' teaching statements), and substantive written student comments.

Review and promotion committees and others doing reviews of teaching are therefore charged with ensuring that assessments and evaluations do not rely primarily on numerical scores from student evaluations as measures of teaching quality. If, in the process of reviewing files for tenure, promotion, hiring, contract renewals, teaching awards, or other university purposes involving the evaluation of teaching, a committee or evaluator must use numerical scores from student evaluations of teaching, they must make reasonable efforts to ensure that the numerical scores correspond with other sources of teaching evaluation such as peer reviews, substantive qualitative comments from students, instructor self-reflections and teaching statements, and other relevant information. If such information is not available, reviewers should consider gathering more data. If such data is still unavailable or if you believe that numerical scores are being relied on without reference to their known limitations and without other sources of information, please contact the Provost's Office for further guidance.

¹ <https://senate.uoregon.edu/2018/05/04/us1718-19-implementing-a-system-for-the-continuous-improvement-and-evaluation-of-teaching/>

² Boring, A. (2017). Gender biases in student evaluations of teaching. *Journal of Public Economics*, 145, 27. DOI: [10.1016/j.jpubeco.2016.11.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2016.11.006) at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272716301591>, and MacNell, L., Driscoll, A. & Hunt, A.N. (2015). What's in a name: Exposing gender bias in student ratings of teaching. *Innovative Higher Education*, 40, 291. DOI: [10.1007/s10755-014-9313-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-014-9313-4).

³ Uttl, B., White, C.A., Gonzalez, D.W. (2017). Meta-analysis of faculty's teaching effectiveness: Student evaluation of teaching ratings and student learning are not related. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 54, 22. DOI: [10.1016/j.stueduc.2016.08.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2016.08.007). See <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191491X16300323>