Writing Program
Course Evaluation Grade Point Average Analysis
August 2009

Understanding the relationship between grading practices and student evaluations is important because these evaluations are commonly the most significant—if not sole—factor in promotion, tenure, and continuing appointments. Yet course evaluation is only one indicator of teaching effectiveness, it works best when connected with other forms of assessment (Marsh & Roche, 1997, Appendix A: Letter to Faculty). Further, it reveals patterns that are most indicative over time, rather than in isolated instances. Hence this form of assessment works best for identifying significant patterns over several semesters, especially combined with other investigations of teaching and learning.

The Writing Program maintains an inventory of grade point averages and includes grade point averages in course evaluations to (1) to provide context for course evaluation averages, (2) discourage grade inflation, and (3) underscore the importance of grading calibration among instructors. We emphasize to faculty that course evaluations, and the GPA factor, are best understood over time, preferably within two years. In addition to course evaluation results (See Appendix B), we provide to faculty a summary chart with averages and standard deviation represented over a two year period.

Works Cited:

Marsh, H. & Roche, L. (Nov 1997). Making Students' Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness Effective: The Critical Issues of Validity, Bias, and Utility. American Psychologist. 52.11: 1187-97.

Course Evaluation Cover Letter
Spring 2009

Dear Faculty,

Enclosed are course and instruction evaluations from Fall 2008. As you consider this feedback, we would like to suggest a few guidelines:

Best understood over time

Student satisfaction surveys are among the ways to receive feedback about a course. They work best when connected with other forms of assessment. For example, an effective combination might be a students' perception of a skill (from the satisfaction survey) paired with sample projects.

Also, these surveys reveal patterns that are most indicative over a period of time, rather than in isolated instances. In other words, this form of assessment works best for identifying significant patterns over several semesters, especially combined with other investigations of teaching and learning.

Reading the numbers

At the top of the spreadsheet, you will see a text box containing averages (termed as "mean") for course and program grades. Similarly, the columns next to individual questions include averages for your individual course and the program.

An additional column is for standard deviation, which indicates the consistency of responses – a useful way to understand the reliability of an average number. For example, a low standard deviation (0-1) might indicate that almost all students rated a skill highly with a "4" while two students gave a "2." A high standard deviation (above 1) would indicate that there was little consistency in response, which makes the average a less reliable indicator. In most cases the standard deviation is below "1", which verifies that the student responses indicate a clear and reliable pattern.

Receiving a score that is within the program average is a good aim for consistency among our group. It isn't necessary to exceed these categories to be an effective teacher. Above all, these numbers provide some insight into patterns of response. For example, if you tend to give slightly lower than average grades relative to the average of those given by other instructors, and your students rate you slightly high for key categories, this might indicate that you motivate your student to achieve high standards.

Instructor uses of course evaluations

All of this information (narrative and numbers) can be used to continue professional and course development. Ideally, it affirms innovations in your strategies and practices that can be documented in a teaching portfolio, along with other assessment measures.

Further questions?

If you have any questions about these materials, please contact Linda Hart-Brown.

Spring 2008 WRI 10 (SAMPLE) 18 students enrolled

2,88 Average -- WRI 1 (SAMPLE section)

2.94 Average GPA - WRI 1 (ALL)

			Descriptive Statistics		
	Base	No reply	Mean WRI 1, Sec 1	Mean WRI 1 (ALL)	Standard Deviation WRI 1 (?)
(1) I complete the assigned readings and homework on schedule.	16	0	4.40	4.52	0.70
(2) I participate actively in class discussions and activities.	16	0	4.00	4.22	1.00
(3) I have made use of the instructor's office hours to get assistance with my writing.	16	0	2.00	2.74	0.70
(4) How interested were you in taking this course at the beginning of the semester?	16	1	4.13	3.61	0.70
(5) Now that you have nearly completed the course, how would you rate your preparation as a writer?	16	0	4.81	4.71	0.70
(6) Formal papers	16	0	5.60	5.18	1.00
(7)In-class activities	16	0	5.80	5.22	1.00
(8) My instructor describes writing in ways that help me to i...	16	0	5.30	5.20	1.00
(9) Available to answer questions	16	0	5.60	5.47	0.70
(10) Enthusiastic in teaching writing	16	0	5.70	5.58	0.70
(11) Organized	16	0	5.19	5.18	0.50
(12) Knowledgeable about writing	16	0	5.30	5.60	1.00
(13) Respectful	16	0	5.44	5.67	0.50
(14) Fair	16	0	5.25	5.52	0.50
(15) Analyzing readings	16	0	5.20	5.16	0.70
(16) Developing reading skills	16	1	5.10	4.98	0.70
(17) Thinking creatively	16	1	5.07	5.15	0.70
(18) Developing a topic	16	1	5.80	5.20	1.00
(19) Composing an argument	16	1	5.70	5.17	1.00
(20) Crafting an essay (writing process)	16	0	5.50	5.35	1.00
(21) Writing to an audience	16	0	5.00	5.15	1.00
(22) Giving and attending to feedback	16	0	5.40	5.25	1.00
(23) Paragraphing techniques	16	0	4.40	5.04	1.00
(24) Creating complex sentences	16	2	5.00	4.93	1.00
(25) Integrating evidence	16	1	5.50	5.12	0.70
(26) Peer review	16	2	4.00	5.00	1.00
(27) Assessing my own writing	16	0	5.06	5.13	1.00
(28) Class discussions	16	2	5.36	5.26	1.00
(29) Feedback from instructor	16	2	5.80	5.63	0.70
(30) Formal paper drafting	16	0	5.30	5.38	1.00
(31) In-class activities	16	3	5.15	5.17	0.70
			5.04	**5.05**	**0.84**

Instructor Name
WRI 10 (Section ?) Spring 2008

Question 2: Please describe your progression as a writer:
Great
Good
Practice makes perfect – I am a faster and more efficient writer now
My style has improved
I have realized my largest weakness as a writer and will beat them
I am better able to focus and communicate my ideas
Gained more confidence in my skills
(19) I now know how to add evidence and build a thesis statement

Question 4: My instructor describes writing in ways that help me improve. Please describe.
Very motivating instructor
Lots of feedback
(6, 7) Assignments are detailed and helpful, I know what to do!
Helped me identify strengths and weaknesses in my writing
(3,9) Couldn't make it to office hours, written feedback helpful though
Inspiring teacher
(6, 7) Assignment sheets and feedback on drafts were structured and easy to follow
(19) Comments about thesis development helped me better understand and focus topics

Question 8: Identify and evaluate aspects of the course that have been especially helpful to you (e.g. course organization, specific readings, writing assignments).
The communication and organization of the class was especially helpful to me.
Writing weekly was a big help; I liked the reading journal approach
Journal writing, class discussions
This course was well-organized and prepared us as to what we needed to learn.
Writing multiple drafts helped with developing a solid final draft
The final essay assignment helped me really understand the relationship between language and culture, liked the media studies approach

Question 9: Describe aspects of the course that you would change, if you had the opportunity.
(22, 26, 29) Why so much peer review? Comments from students weren't nearly as useful as the instructor's
Nothing
More on media analysis, those workshops and essay assignment were really helpful
(22, 26, 29) Peer review comments were not useful
(22, 26, 29) Why do I have to help weaker writers?