

## FAQs: Course Evaluation Reports

### **1. How do I get a copy of my course evaluation reports?**

Course evaluation reports are accessible to course instructors via their myDU accounts. They can be accessed through the following procedure:

- a. Log into your myDU account. We recommend using the following web browsers: Internet Explorer for PC users and Firefox for MAC users because we have in the past experienced browser compatibility issues.
- b. In the upper banner, click on "Faculty."
- c. In the side menu, click on "CoursEval"
- d. In the middle of the screen, you should see . . .  
"You can view your available reports by going to your [CoursEval™](#) Home Page"  
Clicking on the "[CoursEval™](#)" will take you to your Course Evaluation dashboard.
- e. When you get to your Course Evaluation dashboard, a list of your course evaluation reports should be visible. If not, click on the green "Reports" icon located in the upper left-hand portion of the screen. A list of your course evaluation reports should now appear.

### **2. How is the evaluation report structured?**

At the top of the page, on the left-hand side, will appear the name of the survey that was used to collect the responses. In addition, the semester and year that the survey was administered will also be displayed. Below that, you will find the Course Number, the associated School (Department if the course is in RCAS), the responsible faculty member for the course (the responsible faculty is usually also the course instructor), and the ratio of received evaluations to expected evaluations for that particular course.

The report then goes on to report the results for each question in that particular survey. The questions are listed in the order that they appear on the survey. If your school or department included supplemental questions, these will appear at the end of the report. Accompanying most questions is the response set offered to the students with the corresponding number of students who selected each item in the response set, the total number of students in that course who responded to the prompt, and the mean (average) value, where the left-most item in the response set is given a value of '1' and the right-most item is given a value of '4.'

For the survey items requesting a narrative response, a response rate is provided both as a percentage and the actual number. Students were required to respond to the "quantitative" prompts, whereas providing a "qualitative" response was optional. Directly following the qualitative prompt are the students' responses.

To the far right of each student response is an icon in the image of a magnifying glass. Clicking on it will allow you to see a summary of all the responses for this student for this particular course evaluation.

**3. The paper-and-pencil evaluation used in the past had 5 items in the response set; this new one has only 4. Why is that?**

The Task Force on Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness, the Dominican group responsible for drafting the set of university-wide questions used in the survey, decided that a ‘Neutral’ response would not be included in the response set. We made this decision for two reasons: 1.) our students should be capable of forming an opinion on each of the “quantitative” items in the survey and 2.) a ‘Neutral’ response offers no useful information with regards to improving and/or evaluating teaching effectiveness. This is in line with the thinking of experts on the development of course evaluation instruments. Berk (“Thirteen Strategies to Measure College Teaching,” 2006), has stated that

from a measurement perspective, the information provided on teaching performance from a “Neutral” response is NOTHING! ZIPPO! By not forcing students to mark their positions, information is lost. Further, when several students pick the midpoint for an item and the ratings are generally favorable (a.k.a. negatively skewed), the overall faculty rating on the item can be lower or more conservative than when respondents are forced to pick a position. (p. 110)

**4. What exactly is the “comparisons” section comparing?**

Directly to the right of the course evaluation data is a section entitled “Comparisons.” This is present on most, but not all, course evaluation reports (evaluation reports for multiple instructors or for many online courses do not include a comparison section). The comparison section displays the mean scores at the department or school level for each quantitative item in the survey. To be included in the comparison group, courses must have used the same survey.

For example, GSB 611-01 is a graduate level course in the Brennan School of Business. Because each school uses different surveys for their graduate and undergraduate courses, the comparison section for GSB 611-01 is a comparison of this particular course to the combined averages of all the graduate courses in the Brennan School of Business (including GSB 611-01, the particular course of interest). For the undergraduate courses in Brennan, the comparison section would include only undergraduate courses in Brennan that were all using the same survey (i.e., multiple instructor and online course would be excluded because they used a different survey).

<b>Dominican University General Questions</b>	<b>GSB 611 - 01</b>						<b>--- Comparisons ---</b>	
	<b>Responses</b>				<b>Course</b>		<b>BSB</b>	
	[SD]	[D]	[A]	[SA]	N	Mean	Mean	Pct

Consider CAS 180-01. It is a course in Rosary College of Arts and Sciences and its comparison section is divided into two sub-sections: “CAS” and “All.” The CAS sub-section is an intra-

departmental comparison within the Communication Arts and Sciences department. The “All” sub-section reports the combined averages of all the courses in Rosary College that used the same survey as CAS 180-01 (including CAS 180-01).

Dominican University General Questions	CAS 180 - 01						--- Comparisons ---			
	Responses				Course		CAS		All	
	[SD]	[D]	[A]	[SA]	N	Mean	Mean	Pct	Mean	Pct

Generally, all of the departments in Rosary College used the same survey except for any department that included supplemental questions in the course evaluation. One such department is Psychology. (Because they included supplemental questions, they used their own unique survey.) Psychology has a comparison section, but it is only an intra-department comparison – with the combined averages of all the evaluated Psychology courses reported in the comparison section. Because it did not use the same survey as the other departments in Rosary College, a college-level comparison could not be made.

Dominican University General Questions	PSYC 101 - 01						--- Comparisons ---	
	Responses				Course		PSYC	
	[SD]	[D]	[A]	[SA]	N	Mean	Mean	Pct

**5. In the “Comparisons” section, what does ‘Pct’ stand for?**

‘Pct’ stands for Percentile Rank. It indicates the percentage of course evaluations within the comparison group that had a lower mean for that particular item than the specific course of interest. Generally, a higher percentile ranking is considered better. However, a couple of things should be kept in mind when examining percentile rankings: 1. if your average is the same as or very near the comparison average, your percentile ranking will be close to 50, and 2. percentile rankings only offer information as to the percentage of courses where the mean score was lower. One cannot infer the percentage of courses where the mean score is higher, only the percentage of scores that are of equal value and higher. For example, if you received a percentile ranking of 70, you can be certain that 70% of the courses in the comparison group had a lower mean score. It would be wrong to conclude that 30% scored higher – it is possible that everyone in the 30% group has the same mean score as you. There is an exception to this: the proper interpretation for a percentile ranking of 100 is that 100% of the courses in the comparison group had a mean value below your mean value.

It might seem intuitive to think that having a mean of 4.0 should equate to a percentile ranking of 100 because no one can score higher, but other instructors can have the same mean score. For example, if there is a comparison group of 10 and two people scored 4.0, then their percentile rankings should both be 80. That is, 80% of the people in the comparison group scored below them.

**6. How should these results be interpreted?**

Cautiously. As you examine the results of your course evaluation reports, keep the following in mind:

- a. Typically, at Dominican, class sizes are small. Thus, a single student response can have a large impact on the mean for a particular item. For example, consider the student responses to item 36 for two sections of “Underwater Basket Weaving” both with a class size of 10 students.

Dominican University General Questions		UBW 200 - 03					
		Responses				Course	
		[SD]	[D]	[A]	[SA]	N	Mean
<b>Q36</b>	Given the opportunity, I would take another course with this instructor.	1	0	6	3	10	2.5

Dominican University General Questions		UBW 200 - 04					
		Responses				Course	
		[SD]	[D]	[A]	[SA]	N	Mean
<b>Q36</b>	Given the opportunity, I would take another course with this instructor.	1	0	5	4	10	3.2

In both cases, there are the same number of students (9) who are conveying that they would take another course with this instructor and the same number of students who are saying that they would not take another course with this instructor (1). However, for comparison purposes, it would seem that the instructor from section -04 is a more effective instructor than the instructor from section-03. Relying solely on means to make comparisons might lead to erroneous conclusions.

- b. The same can be said for the qualitative responses. We might be inclined to place undue weight on a single extreme comment (whether it is positive or negative).
- c. Each course evaluation report is essentially a single snapshot of students’ perceptions during the course of a single semester. Although useful information is provided, it is of limited scope. The information provided by these reports becomes more powerful over the course of many semesters as more and more data sets can be included to gauge changes in teaching effectiveness over time. Over time (as more students participate and more semester are included), we can expect patterns to emerge and we can become increasingly confident about the conclusions we draw. Even then, however, caution is called for.

**7. On Item 10, “the instructor effectively explained complex ideas,” I got a 3.2 and the department average is 3.5; does this mean I’m below average?**

While that is one way of looking at it, based on the above example, it is probably not the best way to interpret the information provided. First of all, if you got a score of 3.2, it probably means that the vast majority of your students are of the opinion that you effectively explained complex ideas. Secondly, it is not a good idea to draw conclusions based solely on one type of evaluation measure, especially if it is from a single survey. Over time, have you consistently scored below your comparison group? Have you undergone a peer evaluation? If so, what did the evaluator convey regarding your ability to effectively explain complex ideas? Have your students included any written comments about your ability to effectively explain complex ideas? Finally, although your students are of the opinion that you effectively explained complex ideas, many did not strongly agree with this statement. There might be something to this. Again, peer evaluation reports and the students’ comments might provide some additional more useful information that you can use to improve your effectiveness. Take some time to examine the reports and reflect on your scores and the written comments. Do they provide information that you can use to improve your teaching effectiveness?

**8. Can I see response rates?**

Yes, response rates by school/college are available at the following URL:

[http://www.dom.edu/fdrs/oa/Course\\_Evaluation.html](http://www.dom.edu/fdrs/oa/Course_Evaluation.html)

**9. Can I get the overall means for my school/college?**

Yes, these are available at the following URL:

[http://www.dom.edu/fdrs/oa/Course\\_Evaluation.html](http://www.dom.edu/fdrs/oa/Course_Evaluation.html)

**10. How can I get additional feedback on my teaching?**

Consider inviting your chair or a colleague to observe a class or review teaching materials. Additionally, the BCTLE provides confidential, individual consultations on teaching, including teaching observations and “small group analyses” with students. Contact Jodi Cressman ([jcressman@dom.edu](mailto:jcressman@dom.edu)) for more information or to schedule a consultation.

In addition, special sessions on interpreting course evaluation reports will be arranged for faculty, program chairs, and deans.