

(Original motion by James McDonald as revised by the Ways and Means Committee)

**Proposed revision in the Faculty Handbook, I, Section V. Faculty Personnel Policies, Performance Evaluation and Merit Pay**

**Insert the following at the end of paragraph 2:**

It is important that the evaluation instrument and procedures, including college and/or department rubrics, reflect best practices and research on faculty assessment, especially the assessment of teaching. Teaching is a complex activity and research shows that student evaluations of instruction should not largely determine the evaluation of teaching performance. Furthermore, when student evaluations of instruction are used, multiple measurements from the surveys should be used in the evaluation. For these reasons, two constraints are imposed on the use of student evaluations of instruction for teaching evaluation.

1. Rubrics for teaching evaluation shall not give student evaluations of instruction more than a weight of 25%.
  2. Rubrics for teaching evaluation which make use of student evaluations of instruction shall incorporate the responses to at least three questions from the student evaluation of instruction.
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**Rationale for the motion.**

The sense of the Senate is that the rubrics and processes for performance reviews of teaching in use by some units at UL Lafayette place too much weight on the results of the Student Evaluation of Instruction. This motion encourages a more holistic approach to teaching evaluation and imposes two constraints on the use of results of the Student Evaluation of Instruction.

The current version of the relevant section from the Faculty Handbook and two supporting documents are attached.

1. A brief note by Beckie Supiano from [The Chronicle of Higher Education \(9 September 2019\)](#) which briefly summarizes the current state of the argument against over-reliance on student evaluations of instruction with reference to the statement on student evaluation of teaching by the American Sociological Association.
  2. The [Statement on Student Evaluation of Teaching by the American Sociological Association](#) (September 2019 ). Note that this statement was endorsed by 17 other scholarly associations.
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## **Current I. SECTION V FACULTY PERSONNEL POLICIES**

### **Performance Evaluation and Merit Pay**

The University conducts an annual performance evaluation which rates a faculty member's performance. A faculty member's department head or immediate supervisor, sometimes with the assistance of a departmental personnel committee, evaluates that person's performance in the areas of teaching, research and professional activities, and university and community service. The department head's evaluation is ultimately reviewed by the dean of the college and by the Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs, both of whom may adjust the faculty member's overall evaluation relative to other members of the college or the University.

The evaluation instrument used in each college may vary slightly, but the general procedure and aims of the process are similar. The evaluation instrument, which a faculty member completes in January each year, summarizes the person's activities for the preceding calendar year. Faculty members are judged on the basis of their overall merit in all activity areas.

**Rating Scale** (to be used in conjunction with college and/or departmental rubrics)

- **5** = Exceptional—distinction, extraordinary productivity/performance beyond annual expectations
- **4** = Exceeds expectations—high quality, performance/productivity that can be sustained annually
- **3** = Meets expectations—quality, performance/productivity can be strengthened and sustained annually
- **2** = Needs Improvement—requires improvement in one or more areas
- **1** = Unsatisfactory performance—requires significant improvement in one or more areas

# Sociologists Caution Colleges Not to Over-Rely on Student Evaluations of Teaching <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Sociologists-Caution-Colleges/247101>

By Beckie Supiano September 09, 2019 Premium (2019 The Chronicle of Higher Education)

The American Sociological Association released on Monday a [statement](#) laying out the problems with student evaluations of teaching and urging colleges not to over-rely on them.

“Student feedback,” says the statement, which was endorsed by 17 other scholarly associations, “should not be used alone as a measure of teaching quality. If it is used in faculty evaluation processes, it should be considered as part of a holistic assessment of teaching effectiveness.”

An extensive research literature has identified problems with student evaluations of teaching. In its statement, the association cites two key issues. For one, course evaluations don’t measure the quality of teaching particularly well. They are “weakly related to other measures,” like students’ performance on exams, the statement says, and are often used in “statistically problematic ways,” for instance assigning too much importance to small differences.

This is not the first time a major scholarly association has weighed in on the question of how teaching should be evaluated. In 2013 the American Educational Research Association [released](#) a [report](#), “Rethinking Faculty Evaluation,” that said teaching assessment should be based on what students learn. That, it said, cannot be derived from student ratings. Instead, the report said, colleges should draw on evidence from teaching portfolios, classroom observations, and surveys and interviews of both students and professors.

## Further Reading From *The Chronicle*

### The problems with course evaluations:

Research has found that students [judge professors who are women](#) more harshly than those who are men.

If course evaluations are steeped in bias, and they’re [used in personnel decisions](#), then colleges could face litigation.

**The value of student feedback** Students can be [trained to give better feedback](#), as in this effort at the University of California at Merced.

Kevin Gannon offers some advice for [interpreting course evaluations](#).

### Models for evaluating teaching:

Adopt a [better student evaluation](#), says the IDEA Center.

Use [an inventory of teaching practices](#), argues Carl Wieman, an advocate for science teaching.

Incorporate [peer evaluations](#), suggests Philip B. Stark. That’s the direction in which [the University of Southern California](#) has recently moved.



## Statement on Student Evaluations of Teaching

American Sociological Association

September 2019

Most faculty in North America are evaluated, in part, on their teaching effectiveness. This is typically measured with student evaluations of teaching (SETs), instruments that ask students to rate instructors on a series of mostly closed-ended items. Because these instruments are cheap, easy to implement, and provide a simple way to gather information, they are the most common method used to evaluate faculty teaching for hiring, tenure, promotion, contract renewal, and merit raises.

Despite the ubiquity of SETs, a growing body of evidence suggests that their use in personnel decisions is problematic. SETs are weakly related to other measures of teaching effectiveness and student learning (Boring, Ottoboni, and Stark 2016; Uttl, White, and Gonzalez 2017); they are used in statistically problematic ways (e.g., categorical measures are treated as interval, response rates are ignored, small differences are given undue weight, and distributions are not reported) (Boysen 2015; Stark and Freishtat 2014); and they can be influenced by course characteristics like time of day, subject, class size, and whether the course is required, all of which are unrelated to teaching effectiveness.

In addition, in both observational studies and experiments, SETs have been found to be biased against women and people of color (for recent reviews of the literature, see Basow and Martin 2012 and Spooren, Brockx, and Mortelmans 2015). For example, students rate women instructors lower than they rate men, even when they exhibit the same teaching behaviors (Boring, Ottoboni, and Stark 2016; MacNell, Driscoll, and Hunt 2015), and students use stereotypically gendered language in how they evaluate their instructors (Mitchell and Martin 2018). The instrument design can also affect gender bias in evaluations; in an article in *American Sociological Review*, Rivera and Tilcsik (2019) find that the range of the rating scale

(e.g., a 6-point scale versus a 10-point scale) can affect how women are evaluated relative to men in male-dominated fields. Further, Black and Asian faculty members are evaluated less positively than White faculty (Bavishi, Madera, and Hebl 2010; Reid 2010; Smith and Hawkins 2011), especially by students who are White men. Faculty ethnicity and gender also mediate how students rate instructor characteristics like leniency and warmth (Anderson and Smith 2005).

A scholarly consensus has emerged that using SETs as the primary measure of teaching effectiveness in faculty review processes can systematically disadvantage faculty from marginalized groups. This can be especially consequential for contingent faculty for whom a small difference in average scores can mean the difference between contract renewal and dismissal.

Given these limitations, the American Sociological Association, in collaboration with the scholarly societies listed below, encourages institutions to use evidence-based best practices for collecting and using student feedback about teaching (Barre 2015; Dennin et al. 2017; Linse 2017; Stark and Freishtat 2014). These include:

1. Questions on SETs should focus on student experiences, and the instruments should be framed as an opportunity for student feedback, rather than an opportunity for formal ratings of teaching effectiveness. For example, two universities – Augsburg University and University of North Carolina Asheville – recently revised and renamed their instruments to the “University Course Survey” and the “Student Feedback on Instruction Form,” respectively, to emphasize that student feedback, while important, is not an evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

2. SETs should not be used as the only evidence of teaching effectiveness. Rather, when they are used, they should be part of a holistic assessment that includes peer observations, reviews of teaching materials, and instructor self-reflections. This holistic approach has been in wide use at teaching-focused institutions for many years and is becoming more common at research institutions as well. For example:

- University of Oregon has undertaken a multi-year process to develop a holistic framework for assessing teaching effectiveness, including peer review, self-reflection, and student feedback. Extensive research and resources are available on the Office of the Provost [website](#), including guidance on how to interpret SETs
- University of Southern California has instituted peer review of teaching for faculty evaluation. Their [Center for Excellence in Teaching](#) provides resources for how to use peer review effectively and addresses common concerns.
- University of California Irvine requires faculty to submit two types of evidence to document teaching effectiveness. In addition to SETs, faculty can submit a reflective teaching statement, peer evaluations of teaching, and other evidence like a [Teaching Practices Inventory](#), developed by physicist Carl Weiman.
- University of Nebraska Lincoln has articulated [best practices for faculty evaluation](#) that state, in part, “it is recommended that student evaluation scores should not be given undue weight in faculty evaluations, since these scores are easily manipulated and reflect many attitudes that extend beyond the successful accomplishment of the faculty member’s teaching duties.”
- The University of Michigan’s Center for Research on Teaching and Learning recommends that student ratings should

never be used in isolation and should be part of a broader assessment of teaching effectiveness. They have developed [resources](#) that include a summary of research findings on SETs, a handout for students on how to make their feedback most helpful to instructors, and best practices for using SETs in personnel decisions.

- Ryerson University has gone even further and is no longer using SETs for tenure or promotion decisions (Farr 2018). Instead, Ryerson asks faculty to compile a teaching dossier that includes a statement of teaching philosophy, evidence of curricular engagement, and self-reflections.
3. SETs should not be used to compare individual faculty members to each other or to a department average. As part of a holistic assessment, they can appropriately be used to document patterns in an instructor’s feedback over time.
  4. If quantitative scores are reported, they should include distributions, sample sizes, and response rates for each question on the instrument (Stark and Freishtat 2014). This provides an interpretative context for the scores (e.g., items with low response rates should be given little weight).
  5. Evaluators (e.g., chairs, deans, hiring committees, tenure and promotion committees) should be trained in how to interpret and use SETs as part of a holistic assessment of teaching effectiveness (see Linse 2017 for specific guidance).

Gathering student feedback on their experiences in the classroom is an important part of student-centered teaching. This feedback can help instructors to refine their pedagogies and improve student learning in their courses. However, student feedback should not be used alone as a measure of teaching quality. If it is used in faculty evaluation processes, it should be considered as part of a holistic assessment of teaching effectiveness.

## Endorsements

American Anthropological Association  
American Dialect Society  
American Folklore Society  
American Historical Association  
American Political Science Association  
Archeological Institute of America  
Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies  
Canadian Sociological Association  
Dance Studies Association  
International Center of Medieval Art  
Latin American Studies Association  
Middle East Studies Association  
National Communication Association  
National Council on Public History  
Rhetoric Society of America  
Society for Cinema and Media Studies  
Society for Classical Studies  
Society for Personality and Social Psychology  
Society of Architectural Historians  
Sociologists for Women in Society

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## Additional Resources

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