

About the teaching and course evaluation

Management

The Division of Academic Affairs oversees implementation of the teaching evaluation survey and the Centre for Teaching and Learning offers advice on interpreting results and planning possible measures in response. Centre for Teaching and Learning services are available for individual teachers, groups of teachers, or administrators.

Access

Every member of teaching staff has access to the results concerning him or herself.

Deans of schools, heads and deputy heads of faculties and heads of departments have full access to those results pertaining to teaching staff under their jurisdiction. Supervisory teaching staff have access to results pertaining to part-time teaching staff who teach in the courses which they oversee. In the case of contract teaching, the head of the accepting faculty shall also have access to results pertaining to the relevant course. Heads of faculties may request that individual members of staff be granted access to results for the faculty in question.

Administrator access is via Kvika. The Division of Academic Affairs oversees access management.

Follow-up

Teachers, school teaching committees, the chairs of these committees, faculty heads, managing directors and school deans are responsible for ensuring that the results of the teaching evaluation survey are followed up. The Centre for Teaching and Learning offers advice to these parties on interpreting results and planning possible measures in response.

Regulation

See the provisions of [Article 24 of the Regulation for the University of Iceland no. 569/2009](#). See also the [rules of procedure on the teaching and course evaluation survey](#) (PDF), approved by the University Council 8 April 2010.

Format

A new version of the teaching evaluation survey was introduced in the autumn semester of 2008, which changed both the structure and presentation of results. Questions for the new survey were pretested on thousands of UI students and the results were organised into seven main areas, with 3-4 questions in each. These areas now form the framework for the main survey results for each member of teaching staff. Ratings in these areas provide more structured, interesting and hopefully more useful information on teaching and courses than results based on answers to individual questions or an overall rating. In the autumn semester of 2012, the survey was simplified and the number of question areas reduced by one.

The six areas

The teaching evaluation survey covers six areas. Two of these concern features of the instructor's teaching (teaching, academic motivation). For one area (teaching) students evaluate a few factors related to the presentation of material in class and the instructor's enthusiasm for teaching. The second area (academic motivation) covers how well the instructor encouraged students to develop skills in scholarly



criticism, academic independence and critical thinking. The third area (course structure) involves students evaluating the clarity of the course objectives and requirements, as well as how achievable they are. This area concerns consistency between descriptions of course objectives and how teaching is actually carried out. The fourth area (workload) covers how demanding the course is and how heavy the workload is compared to other courses that students have taken at UI. The fifth area (course outcomes) is an evaluation of the benefits of attending the course. The evaluation looks at increased interest, knowledge and understanding of the course subject and material. The sixth and final area (student contribution) is the student's own level of preparation for tackling the course subjects and the amount of work the student has put into the course. This area is therefore not a direct evaluation of the teacher or the course, but of the learning conditions for students and teaching staff.

Below are the statements used in the teaching evaluation survey to evaluate each area.

Teaching	Academic motivation	Course structure	Workload	Course outcomes	Student contribution
The instructor communicates the course content clearly and comprehensively.	The instructor encourages critical thinking.	The instruction is consistent with the course objectives.	Compared to other courses at UI/HI this course is difficult.	My interest in the course subject matter has increased.	I have studied hard in this course.
The instructor uses examples effectively to explain the course concepts.	The instructor encourages students to be independent thinkers.	The course objectives are clear and obtainable.	Compared to other courses at UI/HI the workload in this course is heavy.	My understanding of the course subject has increased.	I have completed the assigned reading and attended every class well prepared.
The instructor uses diverse approaches to tackle the subject.	The instructor encourages scholarly criticism.	The course is well organized.	This is a demanding course.	My interest in the course subject has increased.	I have worked hard in this course.
The instructor is enthusiastic about teaching.		The course requirements are clear.		I have learned a lot in this course.	I am generally well prepared for this course.

Presentation of information

The results of the teaching evaluation survey are formatted so that the teaching staff for each course can see the overall rating for the course and distribution of ratings, the mean by area and the mean for individual questions. Teaching staff can also see their own overall ratings, the mean by relevant area and the mean for individual questions, as well as responses to the open questions. It is also possible to compare results for a course or teacher with other faculties, schools and the University as a whole.



Interpreting results

Four of the six areas (teaching, academic motivation, course structure, workload) concern teaching staff, their teaching, communication between teachers and students and the distinctive features of the course. The fifth area, course outcomes, is more general than the other areas. Although it is not an overall evaluation of the course, this area comes closest to being a summary of the usefulness of the course, which could indicate the level of success in other areas. The sixth area is useful for evaluating student preparation and work for the course.

Conclusion

It can be dangerous to under or over analyse the results. The six areas are not inextricably linked to the objective facts of what happened on a course and results may carry different meaning from one course to another. There are many factors other than teaching that may affect results. There may therefore be an explanation for a low rating other than poor teaching and a high rating is not always a sign of first-rate teaching.

But experience of measurements such as these show that they can provide useful and constructive information. Results that are structured and easy to understand should promote better teaching and more widespread student satisfaction if they are taken seriously and thought is given to potential improvements. A sensible approach to the results and development of evaluated areas can and should be one – although certainly not the only one – of the foundations of teaching evaluation and development at the University.

Strictly speaking, this information does nothing other than rank teachers in accordance with how they are evaluated by students in the teaching evaluation survey. It is important that as many people as possible – students, teaching staff and administrative staff – consider both the potential applications of this information and its limitations. A general interest among the University community in the nature and results of the survey is vital to its reasonable use and development. The survey is not an automatic measurement that spontaneously provides reliable information, but a collaborative project that the whole University must consider and develop.

Suggestions from students, teaching staff and administrative staff regarding survey implementation and the publication, explanation or follow-up of results are a natural part of this development. If you have a suggestion or a question, please get in touch with the Division of Academic Affairs.

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