



Student Evaluations of Teaching: Faculty Feedback from the Pilot Study

Assessment Bulletin

Volume II, Number 1
September 1996

Office of
Academic Planning
and Assessment

SUMMARY Pilot-testing of a new form to gather student evaluations of teaching (the "Student Responses to Instruction," or SRTI, form) has been underway since spring, 1995. More than 400 instructors have administered the SRTI form. A survey of participating faculty members found general support for the usefulness of the SRTI form, but also identified some dissatisfaction with the timeliness of the processing of results. Feedback from this and other sources is being used to improve the SRTI instrument and the process.

For the past two years the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, the Center for Teaching, and the Faculty Senate Council on Teaching, Learning and Instructional Technology have been working to develop and pilot-test a new system for gathering student evaluations of teaching. The overall goal has been to develop a form that makes the best use of research into student learning — in part, by focusing on the aspects of teaching that seem to make the greatest difference in what students derive from their classroom experiences — and which emphasizes the kinds of questions students are equipped to answer.

After an extensive literature review and examination of teaching evaluations at other institutions a prototype "Student Response to Instruction" (SRTI) form was developed. Academic departments were asked to participate in a pilot test of the new form, and a total of 15 departments and programs have administered the form since spring 1995 (see below for the list of participating programs). In all, some 400 instructors (including TAs) have administered the SRTI during the pilot test.

In the spring of 1996 the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA) conducted a preliminary evaluation of the SRTI by sending a survey to the 218 faculty members who had administered the new form during the fall 1995 semester. The survey asked faculty members to assess the SRTI's usefulness in a number of areas, to compare the SRTI with their previous teaching evaluation instrument(s), and to comment on their satisfaction with the SRTI process. In addition, faculty members were asked to comment on several possible uses for teaching evaluation data.

Thirty-four percent (n=75) of faculty surveyed responded. While this feedback is important, great care must be taken in generalizing from these responses.

Selected Findings

Several themes emerge from the faculty responses:

- From the faculty members' perspective, the SRTI form stacks up well when compared to current departmental course evaluation forms. Eighty-three percent of the faculty respondents rate the SRTI form as "better" (37.7%) or "about the same" (45.4%) as their current departmental forms.
- Faculty also report that the SRTI form does a fairly good job of meeting their department's needs, with 71 percent saying the form meets departmental needs "very well" (26.1%) or "fairly well" (44.9%).
- The majority of faculty respondents agree that the SRTI form is meeting its intended goals. Of those who expressed an opinion, 91% agree that the form focuses on aspects of teaching that students are capable of judging. Solid majorities also agree that the form is appropriate for a wide variety of courses and teaching styles (67%), that it provides information useful in improving one's teaching (66%), and that it provides information useful in the evaluation of instructors for merit, promotion, and tenure (62%).

Programs participating in the SRTI pilot test

Accounting & Information Systems	Management
Chemistry	Marketing
Continuing Education	Nursing
English as a Second Language	Plant & Soil Sciences
Finance & Operations Management	Political Science
Forestry & Wildlife Management	Psychology
Honors	Veterinary & Animal Sciences
Journalism	

- While a number of faculty are dissatisfied with the time it took to receive their results (43% “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied”), the majority (83%) are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the presentation of the results provided.
- Support for using the SRTI form to provide information to students for course selection purposes is varied, with support strongest for the use of a subset of the current SRTI items (the three “global” questions) for this purpose (71% of respondents support this use of the data or are willing to consider the possibility).

Feedback and Improvements

This survey is one of several efforts to collect feedback on SRTI. In addition to surveying faculty, selected department chairs have been contacted and students using the SRTI form have been interviewed. In addition, experts in measurement and in faculty evaluation, from both on and off campus, have been consulted.

This feedback has resulted in a number of improvements. For example, based on faculty requests, an item has been added regarding the instructor’s preparation for class. The wording of questions and response categories has also been revised based on expert consultant’s recommendations. The revised SRTI items appear in Appendix A. Finally, service delivery has been improved. The feedback on timely receipt of results caused several process improvements, and this will remain a focus of attention.

Appendix A: Survey Results

In the following tables, the response category selected by the largest number of respondents for each item (the modal response) is shown in bold, as are the percent and number of respondents selecting each category.

Does the SRTI form meet your department’s needs?

1. How well does the SRTI form meet your department’s needs?

Very Well	Fairly Well	Not Well	Don’t Know
26.1%	44.9%	10.1%	18.1%
(18)	(31)	(7)	(13)

2. Prior to your participation in the SRTI pilot test, what form did your department use?

“Old blue” University Form	College/Dept. Developed Form	None	Other
26.1%	44.9%	10.1%	18.1%
(18)	(31)	(7)	(13)

3. How would you rate the SRTI form in comparison with your department’s previous form(s)? The SRTI form is:

Better	About the Same	Worse
37.7%	45.4%	15.9%
(26)	(32)	(11)

Is the SRTI form meeting its intended goals?

Several goals guided item selection and question format for the SRTI course evaluation instrument. These goals are listed below. Please indicate the extent to which you agree that the SRTI form meets these goals using the following scale:

Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Don’t Know (DK)
---------------------------	--------------	-----------------	------------------------------	--------------------

The SRTI form:

1. ...focuses on aspects of teaching that students are capable of judging.

SA	Agree	D	SD	DK
20.0%	60.6%	2.8%	5.6%	9.9%
(15)	(43)	(2)	(4)	(7)

2. ...relates to student learning outcomes and satisfaction.

SA	Agree	D	SD	DK
11.4%	45.7%	12.9%	7.1%	22.9%
(8)	(32)	(9)	(5)	(16)

3. ...is appropriate for a wide variety of courses and teaching styles.

SA	Agree	D	SD	DK
11.4%	44.3%	14.3%	12.9%	17.1%
(8)	(31)	(10)	(9)	(12)

4. ...provides information that is useful to me in improving my teaching.

SA	Agree	D	SD	DK
15.5%	45.3%	22.5%	9.9%	4.2%
(11)	(34)	(16)	(7)	(3)

5. ...provides information that is useful for the evaluation of instructors for merit, promotion, and tenure purposes.

SA	Agree	D	SD	DK
14.1%	38.0%	12.7%	19.7%	15.5%
(10)	(27)	(9)	(14)	(11)

Timeliness and presentation of results.

Please indicate your satisfaction using the following scale:

Very Satisfied (VS)	Satisfied (S)	Dissatisfied (D)	Very Dissatisfied (SD)	Don’t Know (DK)
---------------------------	------------------	---------------------	------------------------------	--------------------

1. How satisfied are you with the timeliness of your receipt of the results?

VS	Satisfied	D	VD	DK
14.3%	38.6%	17.1%	25.7%	4.3%
(10)	(27)	(12)	(18)	(3)

2. How satisfied are you with the presentation of the results?

VS	Satisfied	D	VD	DK
18.8%	63.8%	10.1%	4.3%	2.9%
(13)	(44)	(7)	(3)	(2)

Optional — Feedback on other uses of the SRTI form.

The purpose of the SRTI form was to meet faculty development and personnel decision-making needs. Recently students at UMass have approached the administration with a request for another use of the form — to provide consumer information. They have asked that the SRTI form be used to provide information for a Course and Teaching Evaluation (CATE) guide that would help students select courses. We are interested in your reaction to this idea. Please indicate your support for each possible use of the SRTI form using the following scale:

Yes (I would support it)	Maybe (I'm willing to discuss the possibility)	No (I would not support it)
-----------------------------	---	--------------------------------

1. The use of all SRTI items for student information.

Yes	Maybe	No
29.9%	31.3%	38.8%
(20)	(21)	(26)

2. The use of a subset of SRTI items (i.e., the three "global" questions [refer to questions 10-12 on SRTI form]).

Yes	Maybe	No
46.0%	25.4%	28.6%
(29)	(16)	(18)

3. The use of other items (e.g., "Would you recommend this course to a friend?" or "How heavy or light is the workload for this course?").

Yes	Maybe	No
33.9%	37.1%	29.0%
(21)	(23)	(18)

Appendix B: SRTI Items as Revised

1. The instructor was well prepared for class.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

2. The instructor explained course material clearly.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

3. The instructor cleared up points of confusion for you.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

4. The instructor used class time well.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

5. The instructor inspired interest in the subject matter of this course.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

6. The instructor showed a personal interest in helping you learn.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

7. The instructor provided useful feedback on your performance.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

8. The methods of evaluating your work were fair.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

9. The instructor stimulated useful class participation.

5. Almost always
4. Frequently
3. Sometimes
2. Rarely
1. Almost never

10. Overall, how much do you feel you have learned in this course?

5. **Much more** than most courses
4. **More** than most courses
3. About the **same** as others
2. **Less** than most courses
1. **Much less** than most courses

11. What is your overall rating of this instructor's teaching?

5. Almost always effective
4. Usually effective
3. Sometimes effective
2. Rarely effective
1. Almost never effective

12. What is your overall rating of this course?

5. One of the best
4. Better than average
3. About average
2. Worse than average
1. One of the worst

For more information, contact:

Martha L. A. Stassen
Associate Director for Assessment
Office of Academic Planning and Assessment
237 Whitmore Administration Building
University of Massachusetts, Amherst, MA 01003
413/545-5146 (mstassen@acad.umass.edu)

Office of Academic Planning and Assessment
237 Whitmore Administration Building
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

Office of Academic Planning and Assessment
237 Whitmore Administration Building
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, MA 01003

Faculty Members:

This is the first of the 1995-96 series of Assessment Bulletins. If you would like to continue receiving these publications, please call 545-2564 or e-mail Martha Stassen (mstassen@acad.umass.edu).