

## Center for Instructional Development and Research

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Information for People who Teach  
at the University of Washington

## Using Your Student Ratings

Instructors often use student ratings as one way to help document their teaching effectiveness. This issue of the Bulletin is designed to help UW faculty and TAs interpret the student ratings they have received and use them as a source of information about the quality of their teaching.

### CONSIDER YOUR RATINGS AS PART OF A BIGGER PICTURE

Ratings offer one source of evidence on teaching, but a complex activity like teaching is not fully represented by a single type of evidence, collected at a single point in time.

To provide a more complete understanding of your effectiveness as an instructor, present your student ratings alongside information from a variety of sources, such as:

- Documentation of student learning in your course
- Reviews of your teaching by peers or colleagues
- Your own self-assessment and reflection on your teaching
- Other student feedback collected during the course

Each perspective can offer valuable information, but none by itself gives the whole picture on teaching effectiveness. For more information about strategies for assessing your teaching, see Sources of Data for Assessment of Teaching: <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/Assessment.html>

### PROVIDE YOUR OWN INTERPRETATION OF YOUR RATINGS

Numerical student ratings, like other forms of data, are subject to interpretation. Rather than presenting the numbers by themselves, provide your own analysis of the ratings. Your own analysis might focus on factors such as:

- *Ratings that stand out to you.* What do you see that indicates a particular area of effectiveness? What do you see as a potential area for improvement?
- *Patterns in numerical ratings.* Can ratings for some items help you make sense of ratings for others? How do responses to items on general teaching effectiveness (#1-4 on UW report forms) compare with responses to other items on more specific teaching practices?
- *Patterns across sources of data.* Do numerical ratings reflect points raised in students' open-ended comments, in your own self-assessment, or in other data?
- *Course characteristics.* How do ratings compare to ratings for similar courses, or courses taught to students with similar backgrounds and preparation?
- *Changes over time.* How do ratings for this course compare to ratings for previous times you taught it?

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## IDENTIFY STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT HELPS THEM LEARN

Student ratings are not an assessment of student learning, but they provide information that helps you identify student perceptions of how well a course supported their learning:

- *Perceived Value.* Student learning is supported when students recognize the purpose and value of work you are asking them to do. Ratings that indicate students found work reasonable or effective also suggest that students found the work worthwhile for their learning.
- *Clear Connections.* Students report learning better when connections among course work, assignments, and assessment criteria are clear. In courses with sections or labs, students report learning better if they see how these different course components are related to one another.
- *Academic Challenge.* Courses that students identify as challenging, and which offer sufficient support for meeting those challenges, are often among the most highly valued by students. Courses that students perceive as easy are not necessarily more highly valued.

## HIGHLIGHT YOUR LESSONS LEARNED

When you present your student ratings, you can also show how you have used them to reflect on and develop your teaching. Lessons learned might include changes in your teaching, further development of your teaching philosophy, or ways that you have developed courses and assignments to support student learning.

Student ratings at UW are administered by the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA), and CIDR staff often consult with instructors on analyzing, interpreting, and learning from the ratings they receive.

To learn more about the UW Instructional Assessment System (IAS), contact the Office of Educational Assessment (OEA), [oea@u.washington.edu](mailto:oea@u.washington.edu), or visit [http://www.washington.edu/oea/services/course\\_eval/](http://www.washington.edu/oea/services/course_eval/)

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## HOW CAN CIDR HELP?

To talk with a CIDR consultant about analyzing, interpreting, and learning from your student ratings, call 543-6588, or send a message to [info@cidr.washington.edu](mailto:info@cidr.washington.edu).

See also CIDR's online collection of additional student ratings resources: <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/ratings/index.html>



## Center for Instructional Development and Research

CIDR promotes excellence in teaching and learning at the University of Washington through its work with individual faculty and TAs, departments, campus-wide initiatives, and University leaders. CIDR staff are available year-round to collaborate on the design, implementation, and assessment of ways to advance teaching and learning for all students in the diverse UW community. Consultations are confidential and offered at no charge to UW faculty, TAs, and departments.

If you have questions about teaching and learning, or you would like to find out more about working with CIDR, you can call us at 543-6588, send a message to [cidr@u.washington.edu](mailto:cidr@u.washington.edu), or visit our web site:

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/>



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