



Bringing Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs) to Mason Korea

A student-led analysis on better student engagement and classroom management mid-semester

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Current Challenges

For students:

- Student evaluations of teaching (SETs) only available at the end of the semester
- Reluctant to individually contact faculty during the semester
- SETs are hard to take seriously

For faculty and staff:

- Unable to accurately measure student engagement mid-semester
- Face more work dealing with student feedback individually

Current Challenges

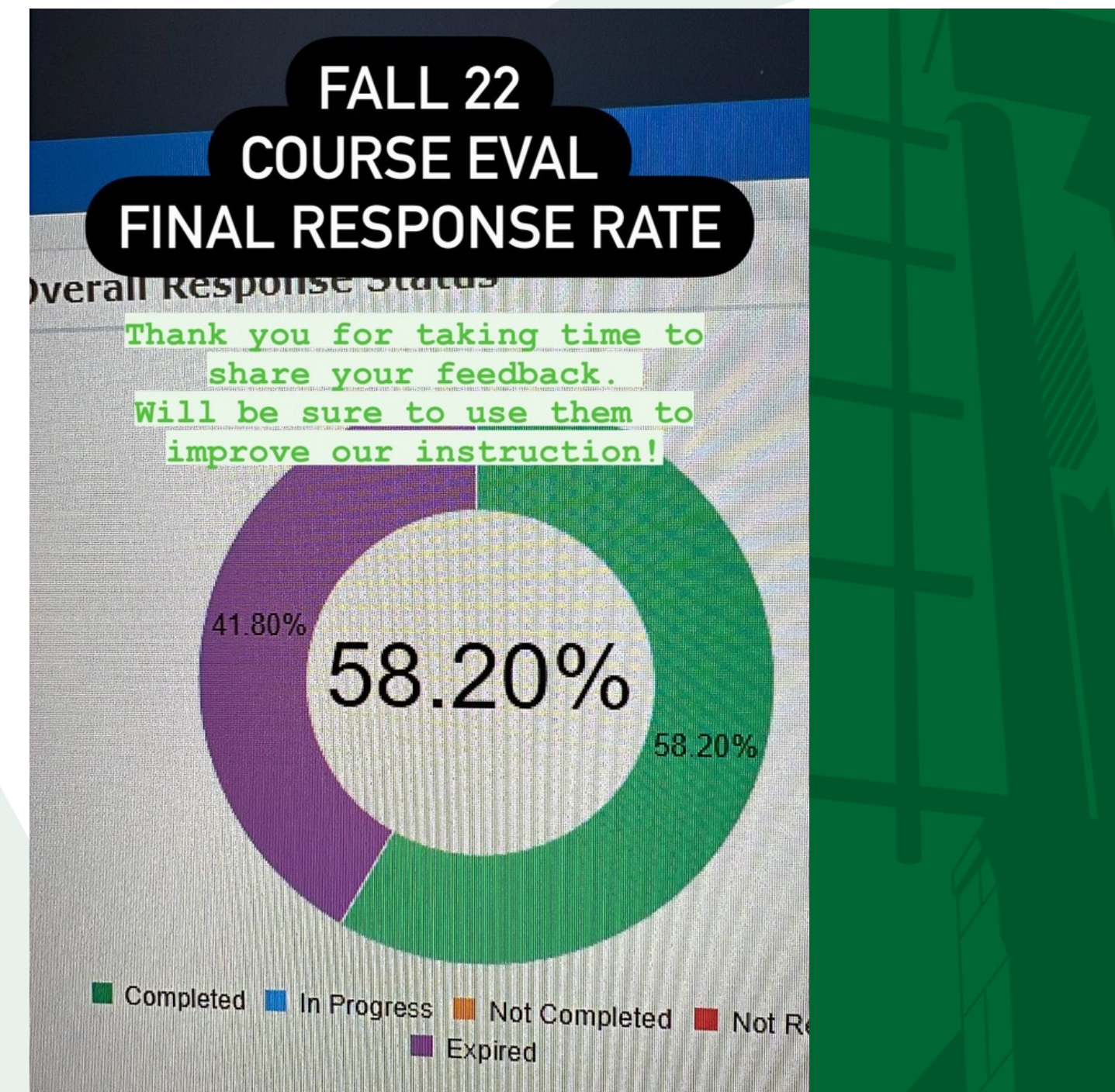
Ensuring and maximizing student success

Such a problem has negatively impacted academic satisfaction, and in large, student success and learning, due to the lack of (a) a structured channel for expressing feedback and (b) transparency on how their feedback is used after the semester.

Goals

Encouraging quality SET responses

While faculty members and the Office of Academic Affairs have indeed encouraged students to complete SETs, the quality of their responses and overall response rate still leave much room for improvement.



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Course evaluations, in recent decades, have been used increasingly for the purpose of high-stakes employment decisions, such as promotion, salary and re-hire. Research, however, clearly indicates that such forms, often biased, are best utilized as a snapshot of student impressions of teaching, and are, thus, best used as a means of formative, not summative assessment.

Zylstra et al., 2019 Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference, George Mason University



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Due to this misuse/misunderstanding of the form, faculty are missing the opportunity to utilize student-centered evaluative methods to gain insight into student perceptions of learning.

Zylstra et al., 2019 Innovations in Teaching and Learning Conference, George Mason University



Formative vs. Summative Assessment

	Formative	Summative
Purpose	to monitor and guide a process while it is still in progress	to judge the success of a process at its completion
Time of Assessment	during the process	at the end of the process
Use of Assessment Information	improve and change a process while it is still going on	judge the overall success of a process; to generate a grade/evaluation

when & why
administered

from: Alrasi, P. W., & Russell, M. K. (2008). *Classroom assessment: Concepts and applications* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: McGrawHill. (p. 124)

Assessments

Formative vs. Summative

The lecturers concur on the use of course evaluations as a way to **improve and change a course while it is still going on.**

Policies

Instructor recommendations

The Effective Teaching Committee in April 2019 to the Faculty Senate, recommended instructors to conduct **multiple, informal, mid-semester, anonymous**, course evaluations.

Policy Recommendations – Faculty Evaluation at Mason		
INSTITUTIONAL/UNIVERSITY LEVEL	PROGRAM & COLLEGE LEVEL	INSTRUCTOR LEVEL
1. Administer Course Evaluation Forms in class to retain or enhance response rates	8. Primary purpose of faculty evaluation (and of the Course Evaluation Form), should be formative, i.e., the improvement of teaching effectiveness	12. Educate students on the importance, purposes, and uses of the Course Evaluation Form
2. Establish strategies to increase response rates for Course Evaluation Forms administered online	9. Educate students on the uses of the Course Evaluation Form	13. In face-to-face courses, use class time to allow students to complete the Course Evaluation Form
3. Engage in education of the faculty on how to communicate uses of the Course Evaluation Form to students	10. Secondary purpose accountability, using multiple measures for this process, including peer review	14. Conduct multiple informal, mid-semester, anonymous, course evaluations
4. Engage in the education of students on how the results from Course Evaluation Forms are used in the faculty evaluation process	11. Educate instructors on migration from paper to online Course Evaluation Forms	
5. Provide increased accessibility of data to course instructors		
6. Ensure that all buildings allow for Internet access during the period designated for students to complete the Course Evaluation Forms		
7. OIRE collaborate with faculty to conduct research on how results of Course Evaluation Forms are used to evaluate faculty and improve teaching		

Mid-semester SETs

Challenges posed by additional, currently-used SETs

George Mason University uses Blue by Explorance for the student evaluations of teaching process. Because Mason is no longer administering paper evaluations, creating a separate Student Evaluations of Teaching schedule for the Korea campus during the semester via Blue may introduce new challenges.

Mid-semester SETs

Challenges posed by additional, currently-used SETs

Additionally, because the SET questionnaire has been carefully created for use prior to finals by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, whether and how these questions should be modified for use during the semester may pose concerns.

Using CATs

Classroom Assessment Techniques

The Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning notes that CATs "are often very useful as a way to take stock of the course at the midterm," because "**they let you know what is working and what can be improved upon from the perspective of the learners themselves.**"

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Many faculty find that the course adjustments they make in response to student feedback significantly strengthen the course, improve the learning experience for students, and inform their teaching practices.

Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning



The "minute paper"

Popular forms of CAT

Students spend 1-2 minutes on:

- reflecting on the most important point they have taken from the day's class
- asking a question that remains for them about the material
- providing an assessment of the project they have just completed, or
- writing anything else that will provide you with immediate feedback.

Formats for Gathering Feedback

▶ questionnaires (usually open-ended)

The purpose of this feedback form is to gather input so that I can improve this course and how it is taught and therefore help you improve your learning. I am the only one looking at your responses, and I will report back to you on the feedback I receive.

1. What aspects of this course are helpful to your learning? In other words, what contributes most to your learning?
2. What specific suggestions do you have for changes that I can make to improve the course or how it is taught?

3. Is the pace of the course:
too fast just right too slow

from: <https://www.cmu.edu/teaching/assessment/assessteaching/early-course-feedback.html>

▶ surveys

HOW IS THE PACE OF THE COURSE FOR YOU?	TOO SLOW 1	2	FINE 3	4	TOO FAST 5
How is the course's level of challenge for you?	Too easy 1	2	Fine 3	4	Too hard 5
Do the lectures help you better understand the material?	No 1	2	Some 3	4	A lot 5
Do the assignments help you better understand the material?	No 1	2	Some 3	4	A lot 5
Do the discussions help you better understand the material?	No 1	2	Some 3	4	A lot 5
Is the text useful to your understanding of the course material?	No 1	2	Some 3	4	A lot 5
Does our class group work help you better understand the material?	No 1	2	Some 3	4	A lot 5
Do the online resources for this class help you better understand the material?	No 1	2	Some 3	4	A lot 5

from: <https://steamscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/student-engagement-classroom-managment/classroom-assessment-techniques-cats/>

Technology to Support the Gathering of Feedback



Questionnaires

What are students learning and how are elements of the class supporting that?

Surveys

Introductory large courses are ideal for this type of approach.

Leverage technology

Technologies such as Qualtrics (and Mason360) exist to help gather feedback.

Using Feedback

- ▶ You can elicit feedback from students at any point in the semester, and as many times as you wish.
- ▶ Explain your purpose for asking for feedback.
 - Suggest that students write *TO* you rather than *ABOUT* you.
- ▶ Plan to share the main points of feedback you receive with students.
- ▶ Ensure students that their responses will be kept confidential.
- ▶ Make sure the format elicits the type of feedback you desire.
 - Are you looking for evidence of student learning or feedback on your teaching?
- ▶ Provide time during class (preferably at the beginning) for students to provide feedback.

Suggestions

Bringing CATs to Mason Korea

We ask for the active use of CATs by Mason Korea faculty, possibly structured in coordination with Academic Affairs to set up a voluntary, recommended period mid-semester for faculty to administer CATs to students preferably using a chosen technology for consistency.

Suggestions

Bringing CATs to Mason Korea

Mason Korea Student Government will continue to work with faculty members and the student body to maximize student participation and to reiterate its importance. Furthermore, we suggest that "timely and consistent feedback" is provided throughout courses in order to encourage students to become vested in the feedback process.



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