

# Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)<sup>1</sup>

## Guidelines for Classroom Use

**Goal:** The Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) process is designed to complement self-assessment and peer review (both internal and external to the department) of teaching at OSU. SET questions consider overall teaching quality and basic teaching functions. The goal is for instructors and supervisors (Dept Heads, Chairs, or instructors responsible for Teaching Assistants) to identify teaching excellence as well as areas that requires improvement.

**OSU SET policy:** *"Anonymous evaluations by all students in the class are required each term for each class the faculty member is teaching. A copy of tabulated results must be provided to the faculty member; a duplicate copy shall be placed in the faculty member's personnel records file"* (<http://oregonstate.edu/facultystaff/handbook/facrec/evals.htm>). Extension faculty are expected to choose three events per year to evaluate teaching. Faculty teaching Extended Campus courses will use an electronic version of the SET questions.

**The new SET form:** The primary purpose of the revised SET form is to provide student feedback that confirms quality teaching or identifies themes for possible improvement. The first two questions are worded broadly to compare faculty across an entire campus, and were validated by the Office of Educational Assessment at the University of Washington (<http://www.washington.edu/oea/describe.htm>). Questions 3-12 were selected from validated SET forms used at other universities to represent standard teaching functions and behaviors. Questions on the revised form were validated statistically at OSU (AOT report, 2002).

Faculty are encouraged to add questions to the back of the form to assess personal teaching practices or improvements, measures of learning, facilities, or accreditation requirements. When adding questions to the back, survey research literature recommends that questions be worded carefully to assess only one item or concept at a time. Care must be exercised to avoid using synonyms such as "examples and illustrations" since they could mean different things to respondents.

**Photocopying:** Alignment during photocopying is critical for accurate and complete scanning. Questions may be typed onto a master and photocopied onto the scan forms placed in the copy tray. When copying, avoid stray marks and lines that may abort the scanning process.

To save copy costs, most faculty use overhead equipment to project the questions onto a screen while students respond on the back of the scan sheet.

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<sup>1</sup> The current "Student Assessment of Teaching" form will be changed to Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) at next printing.

**Confidentiality:** To assure confidentiality, instructors are expected to leave the room while forms are being completed. Respondents should be asked to complete narrative questions on a separate sheet of paper. Students should place completed forms in an envelop with someone designated to seal and deliver the contents to the departmental office, where they will be held until grades are submitted. The *Instructions* (see box) are intended to protect confidentiality while improving the quality of responses based on students believing in your commitment to improve teaching at OSU.

**Narrative Questions:** Examples of narrative questions are listed in Appendix 1.

**Interpretation of SET data:** Scanning and automatic generation of summary reports will occur at The Milne Computer Center. Reports summarize percentages, frequencies, and medians as measures of central tendency. SET medians are calculated from a 1-6 scale anchored by word descriptors (ie. poor to excellent) known as *ordered qualitative* data, distinct from ordinal numeric data used to calculate arithmetic means. Medians show less distortion from high or low values in the data set. As described below, SET is intended to complement several sources of information about quality teaching and possible improvement rather than differentiating general teaching performance between good and poor instructors.

A new feature of SET summarizes the results of two *norm-referenced* questions that assess general teaching quality and that are relevant in most instructional situations. Ratings you receive for questions 1 and 2 can be compared to the *norm* or *standard* set by other instructors at OSU. As a result, ratings for these questions are valid for promotion and tenure (P&T), awards, or merit. Based on the literature review done by the AOT committee, correlations of these ratings with class size<sup>2</sup> and/or student status (eg. 100 to 400 level courses) can justify interpretation and slight adjustments in scores within the discipline. As with any survey data set, clarity about what is being assessed is essential. For example, instructors involved with team teaching or other non-traditional teaching approaches may require special explanations to avoid ambiguity when reporting results.

Evaluating teaching quality or improvement also requires criteria specific to the discipline, known as *criterion referenced* questions in the literature. The purpose is for teachers to consider strong or weak responses to questions 3-12 as indicators of quality teaching or as prompts for teaching improvement, respectively. Interpreting these indicators within the discipline may provide insights or document teaching quality to complement the norm-referenced data (questions 1&2) used in P&T or faculty awards.

Many instructors rely on narrative questions to add clarity and meaning to median data reported in SET. Faculty expressed a preference for narrative responses because of the detail, ideas, and constructive suggestions provided by this form of feedback.

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<sup>2</sup> Historically, the correlation with class size ( $\leq 25$  or  $> 25$  students) was summarized for departments and colleges, but based on number of SET forms scanned. The new version will improve accuracy by accessing actual enrollment data from Banner similar to computations for Ecampus courses. Header sheets must have the correct course and section numbers. If incorrect or omitted, summary data from your class will not be computed in departmental or college summaries.

**Using SET data to complement teaching improvement:** The science of teaching evaluation clearly reminds us that teaching is a tremendously complex activity that requires a similarly robust assessment process. SET represents the experiences or perceptions of students only. It must be complemented by self-evaluation, internal and external peer assessment, and the sciences of teaching, learning, and evaluation.

As you review SET data, note the practices and skills that should be continued or enhanced along with others that need improvement. Discuss results with peers and your supervisor to consider possible enhancements, alternative methods, or new approaches. Develop ways to test these ideas the next time you teach this or other courses. Attend seminars, search the literature, or ask a peer from your department or profession how they might improve one or more aspects of the course. Consider how you will assess this aspect of your teaching, how it might affect learning by students, and how it contributes to the curriculum within the discipline. How will these teaching innovations be communicated to peers and how will results be interpreted? Will post-graduation or post-school year surveys or other assessment techniques be required? Finally, how do you feel about your teaching? Self-assessment and personal satisfaction are the most important aspects of teaching and teaching improvement at OSU.

**SET Data and Accreditation:** Accreditation requirements for universities such as OSU are intended to improve and validate teaching performance by faculty and instructors. Validating *norm referenced* teaching competencies within colleges requires aggregate data from questions 1 and 2 be reported to Deans and the Assistant Provost for Academic Programs. All other SET data are designed to assess teaching performance by individual instructors with reporting being restricted for this purpose only.

Summarized by the Advancement of Teaching Committee of the Faculty Senate, 2003.

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### Instructions for Administering the SET

Research confirms that respondents take SET evaluations seriously when instructors express a sincere desire to consider their input on teaching quality and performance. To improve comparability for individuals across the university, a standard set of instructions should be used for all instructors and educational events.

1. Teaching at OSU is an essential part of each instructor's responsibilities. Your responses to this questionnaire will help the instructor identify quality teaching or discover aspects that need improvement.
2. Please take the time to answer each question honestly and add your comments or suggestions on a separate sheet of paper.
3. Instructors will consider your comments carefully. Also, supervisors for each faculty or instructor will use this information to encourage teaching excellence.
4. **Please use a number 2 pencil to mark your response. Otherwise, the scan machine will not read your responses.**
5. Please hand your completed evaluations to \_\_\_\_\_. This person has been instructed to seal the envelope and hand it to the departmental secretary to ensure confidentiality until grades are completed.

## Appendix 1

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR POSSIBLE USE ON THE BACK OF THE FORM

#### Assessing Instructor/Teaching:

Office of Educational Assessment at UW <http://www.washington.edu/oea/iasforms.htm> has multiple forms based on teaching approaches, instructor's skills and organization, and educational outcomes (Form X). Kansas State University IDEA Center also displays standard assessment questions along with a dozen learning objectives with relationships to teaching methods <http://www.idea.ksu.edu/StudentRatings/index.html> . Both Centers permit OSU faculty to select a modest number of questions from their surveys to copy on the back of the OSU form. These questions have been tested for reliability and validity.

#### Assessing Student/Learner Responsibilities (examples):

- The teacher's performance in this course was?
- Your assessment of completing readings and homework was:
  - Inspire critical thinking?
  - Challenging?
  - Too much/ not enough?
- Your assessment of learning new information was:
- Your attendance in class was:
- Your prior interest in this course was:

#### Assessing learning resources/environment:

- Quality of learning resources (books, media, visual aids, etc)
- Quality of learning environment (seating, ability to see instructor, lighting, ventilation, noise, etc) OR (specialized equipment such as drawing tables, etc)

#### Sample narrative questions:

- The comment sheet from the University of Washington may have questions relevant to your teaching (<http://www.washington.edu/oea/iascmmmt.htm>).
  - Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your participation in this class?
  - Was this class intellectually stimulating? Did it stretch your thinking?  
Yes No Why or why not?
  - What aspects of this class contributed/detracted most to/from your learning?
  - What suggestions do you have for improving the class?
  - What aspects of presentation helped you most/the least?
  - What would improve the presentation?

Open-ended questions for Teaching Assistants:

1. What qualities of your TA do you regard as good or outstanding? Please be specific.
2. Are there areas in which your TA needs improvement? Please be specific.
3. Do you have any other helpful comments about this TA's performance?