

Predicting online course evaluation response rates: Beyond student-level factors

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Course Evaluations at Loyola Marymount University

Who we are:

- Medium-sized Jesuit and Marymount Catholic institution located in Los Angeles
- Over 6,000 undergraduates and more than 3,000 graduate students
- Average undergraduate class size of 20 students
- Average graduate class size of 17 students



- Why response rates are important
- What predicts response
- Course evaluations at LMU
- Study methodology
- Findings
- Strategies for increasing response

Why Response Rates are Important

- Evaluations used to evaluate quality of teaching and to make rank, tenure, and merit decisions
- Institutions increasingly moving online
 - Biggest challenge is decline in response rates
 - Well established in literature. Fluctuates from 30-50%. (Al-Maamari, 2015; Arnold, 2009; Berk, 2006; Dommeyer et al., 2004)

Why Response Rates are Important

- The higher the response rate, the better we are able to generalize to the larger population
- Nonresponse increases the potential for bias
 - Survey nonresponse is not random (Dillman et al., 2009; Groves, 1989; Porter, 2004)
- Smaller class sizes of particular concern

What Predicts Response

- Student-level predictors of response:
 - **Grade in the course** (Adams, 2010; Al-Maamari, 2015; Avery et al., 2006; Goodman et al., 2015; Spooren, 2012)
 - **GPA** (Goodman et al., 2015)
 - **Course in student's major** (Adams, 2010; Macfadyen et al., 2016)
 - **Student level** (Spooren, 2012)
 - **Number of evaluations** (Adams, 2010; Johnson, 2003; Spooren, 2012)
 - **Gender** (Al-Maamari, 2015; Avery et al., 2006; Goodman et al., 2015)

What Predicts Response

- Course-level predictors of response:
 - **Class size** (Avery et al., 2006; Goodman et al., 2015)
 - **Course type** (Macfadyen et al., 2016)
- Instructor-level:
 - **Full-time status** (Goodman et al., 2015)

Course Evaluations at Loyola Marymount University

- Evaluations administered centrally using Blue by eXplorance
- School of Education online since 2012
 - Graduate and credential programs
 - Over 1,300 students and 200 course sections
- School of Film and Television online since 2014
 - Undergraduate and graduate programs
 - Over 800 students and 200 course sections

Course Evaluations at Loyola Marymount University

- Evaluations are accessible through Blackboard
- Students receive up to 4 emails from their dean
- Majority of students participate

Average Online Response Rates							
Fall 12	Spring 13	Fall 13	Spring 14	Fall 14	Spring 15	Fall 15	Spring 16
80.5	77.8	81.4	77.5	78.0	75.5	80.5	77.3

Study Methodology

- 8 Academic terms (Fall 2012 – Spring 2016)
- 78% Average online course evaluation response rate
- 490 Unique instructors
- 2,187 Evaluated courses

Study Methodology

Used OLS regression to model course evaluation response rates based on course-level, aggregate student-level, and instructor-level characteristics, holding all else constant

Course-Level

- College
- Cross-Listed
- Location
- Enrollment
- Difficulty

Student-Level

- Course Load
- Age
- GPA
- Sex
- Race/Ethnicity
- Level
- Time Status
- In Course College
- Grade Type

Instructor-Level

- In Department
- Sex
- Race/Ethnicity
- Course Load
- Experience
- Tenure Status
- Location

Model Results

Instructor-level variables are related to online course evaluation response rates, holding course-level and student-level factors constant

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$R^2 = 0.21$

$P < 0.05$

- Possible implications of our findings:
 - Student level findings confirms previous research
 - Non-traditional courses need attention
 - Instructor characteristics matter

Strategies for Increasing Response

- Targeting faculty
 - Faculty buy-in is key
 - A faculty member's level of involvement can be more important than course and instructor characteristics (Goodman et al., 2015)

Strategies for Increasing Response: Targeting Faculty

Survey on Faculty Involvement

- A little over half of faculty responded (55-60%)
- Vast majority took at least one step to encourage participation. Only 2 to 2.5% reported doing nothing.
- Significant steps:
 - Making an announcement in class and online increases rate
 - Offering incentive increases rate
 - Asked student to complete on a mobile device in class
 - Taking students to computer lab increases rate

Strategies for Increasing Response: Targeting Faculty

- Faculty buy-in is key
 - Involve faculty from the beginning and attend to their needs and concerns throughout
 - Use evidence-based persuasion
 - Make accommodations where possible

Strategies for Increasing Response: Targeting Faculty

- Give them resources:
 - Training on the online system
 - Use of class time
 - Suggested language for encouraging participation
 - Suggested syllabi language

Strategies for Increasing Response: Targeting Faculty

Course Evaluations

Student feedback on this course provides valuable information for continued improvement. All students are expected to fairly and thoughtfully complete a course evaluation for this course. This semester, all course evaluations for the School of Education will be administered online through the Blue™ evaluation system. You will receive an e-mail notification at your Lion e-mail address when the evaluation form is available. You may also access the evaluation form on the MyLMU Connect (<https://mylmuconnect.lmu.edu/>) dashboard during the evaluation period.

Strategies for Increasing Response: Targeting Faculty

- Communicate with them during the evaluation period
 - Emails from Dean/Associate Dean
 - Emails to “at risk” faculty
 - Emails with current response rates

Questions?

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Thank you!