

Student Course Experience Survey (“course evals”): Required Enrollment Thresholds for Generating a Report

Office of Assessment

2018-11-13, updated 2019-05-12, 2019-08-02, 2022-01-05, 2022-10-01

Prepared by Jonathan A Glenn

Please note: effective in Fall 2022, we have adopted an enrollment threshold of five (5) rather than the previously used enrollment threshold of six (6). This change has been adopted, after consideration and consultation, with small graduate class sizes particularly in mind. If questions arise, please don't hesitate to be in touch.

Safeguarding the confidentiality of responses / anonymity of respondents is crucial to the integrity of the student course experience survey (evaluation of courses and instructors). We cannot, of course, control identifiable information that students may introduce in open-ended comments. In order to be responsible about what we can control, however, we set certain thresholds below which students might be identifiable and do not generate individual reports when the thresholds are not met.

The eXplorance Blue system allows us to set either response thresholds or class-enrollment thresholds (or both). We have determined that, although response thresholds have in the past been set in our evaluation system, class-enrollment thresholds make much more sense. Here is the reasoning: if I have a class with 25 students enrolled and only a very few of them respond to the evaluation survey, that small response will not in itself break the confidentiality / anonymity promise. If, however, I have a class with fewer than five students enrolled, it will be difficult to maintain confidentiality/anonymity because the number of possible respondents is so small.

Beginning with Fall 2022 terms, we use a class-enrollment threshold of five (5), meaning that individual reports are not generated for courses with fewer than five students enrolled. (That being said, a response threshold of at least one avoids the creation of blank reports, so this threshold is also in place.)

Note that responses from students in even the smallest courses will be included in aggregate reports for departments and colleges if and when such reports are generated; these responses are also reflected in department, college, and university averages currently reported (for comparison) in individual instructor reports.