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Sticks instead of carrots: debunking the myth of mandatory course evaluations generating bad data

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Abstract

There are many methods for encouraging students to complete their course and teaching evaluations, including offering incentives, offering more time in class to complete evaluations, and offering students to participate in focus groups (Goodman, Andson & Belcheir 2015; Svinicki, 2001). But what about integrating course evaluations into the curriculum? As a necessary part of the learning process? Critics believe instructors will receive bad data if evaluations are mandatory (Lariat, 2016), but we believe this is not the case. If handled with care, mandatory evaluations can increase the quantity of responses, but not diminish the quality of the responses. The case study we'll assess is the UME Program at OHSU. We'll review how the program encourages mandatory participation, and evidence there is no diminishing of scores or quality of responses.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the benefits/challenges of making evaluations mandatory
2. Identify ways faculty can work with administrators and the TLC on how to include evaluations into the curriculum
3. Develop methods in which instructors and/or administrators can encourage students to complete their evaluations
4. Develop methods to close the loop in evaluations, in other words, to incorporate feedback from students