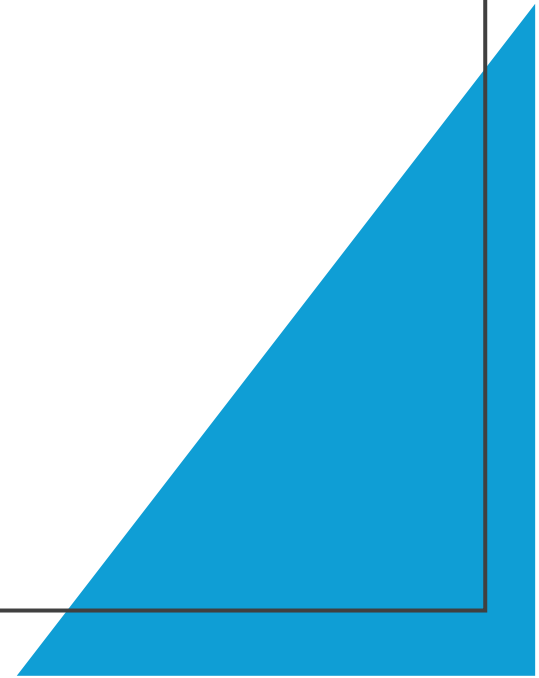


Low Course Evaluation Response Rates: *Problems and Practical Guidelines*

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RESEARCH STUDIES

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Problems with Low Course Evaluation Response Rates

- Nonresponse bias (extreme opinions more likely to respond)
 - Small samples create unstable averages
 - A few students can disproportionately influence results
 - Known biases (gender, race, course difficulty) become amplified
 - Weak diagnostic feedback due to few comments
 - Irresponsible personnel decisions (promotion, tenure, rank)
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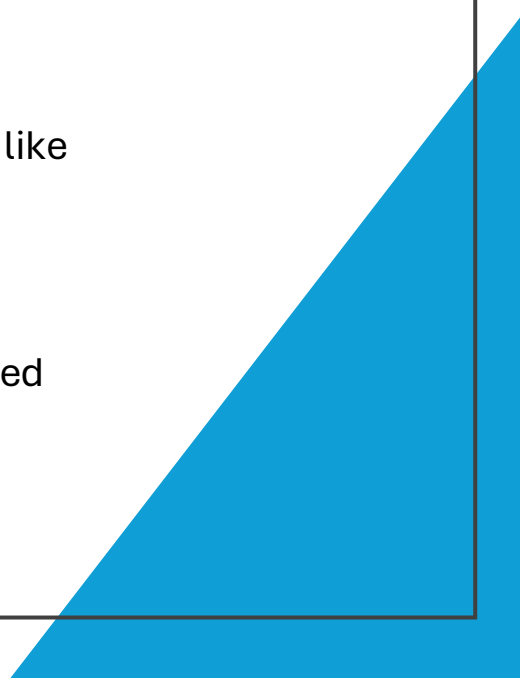
When do Low Response Rates Become an Issue?

- There is no universal cutoff, but common interpretations are:
 - 60–70% response rate: Strong reliability
 - 40–60% response rate: Moderate confidence
 - Below 30%: Serious reliability concerns
 - Below 20%: Highly unreliable
- Small classes require especially high participation because each individual students' responses represent a larger part of the total possible responses.

Suggested Minimum Responses by Class Size

Class Size	Responses Needed	Approx. Response Rate
12	11	92%
20	18	90%
30	25	83%
40	30	75%
75	46	61%
100	55	55%
125	60	48%

What Parameters do Other Campus Use?

- Minimum of 5–8 responses required before results are reported
 - At least ~30 responses preferred for stable instructor comparisons
 - 60%+ response rate recommended for personnel decisions like merit, promotions, etc.
 - Small classes (under 30 students) often require 80–90% participation
 - Results from very low-response surveys should be interpreted cautiously (whether positive or negative ratings)
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Addendum: A Formula for Estimating Error

Approximate margin of error (95% confidence):

$MOE \approx 1 / \sqrt{n}$ (for proportions)

$MOE \approx 2 / \sqrt{n}$ (for Likert-scale averages)

Examples:

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- 10 responses $\rightarrow \sim \pm 0.63$ on a 1–5 scale

 - 25 responses $\rightarrow \sim \pm 0.40$

 - 50 responses $\rightarrow \sim \pm 0.28$

 - 100 responses $\rightarrow \sim \pm 0.20$

More responses dramatically improve statistical reliability.

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