



RSAEM

Anne Boring

"Improving Student Evaluations of Teaching"

Ideally, student evaluations of teaching (SET) provide instructors with useful information to help them improve the quality of their teaching. The original purpose of SETs was formative: to help instructors improve their teaching practices through student feedback. Over time, universities have started relying on SETs to assess instructors' teaching effectiveness (summative purpose). A vast number of universities worldwide now use SETs as their main assessment tool to make personnel decisions for faculty, especially tenure track and adjunct faculty. Despite their widespread use, SETs remain highly controversial. Using survey data, the research describes some of the main issues that instructors worldwide currently have with SETs. The research then discusses measures that universities can implement to improve their use of SETs. The analysis covers five main issues that impact instructors' satisfaction and well-being: student biases, response rates and selection effects of students who complete their evaluations, multitasking issues and distorted incentives for instructors who are trying to fulfill both formative and summative purposes of SETs, the perceived power that students have over instructors' careers through SETs, and university administrations' interpretation of SET scores.

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