Curtin University

Guidelines for Interpreting
eVALUate Full Unit Reports (FURs)

These guidelines are designed to assist Unit Coordinators to use their eVALUate results to improve teaching and learning. Full Unit Reports (FURs) are only available when there is more than one student enrolled in a unit.

Responsibility for Sharing Full Unit Reports with the Teaching Team

As well as viewing your FUR online, you and your Head of School/Department will be able to save the report as a pdf file to your computer, and you can share it with relevant teaching staff. As a Unit Coordinator, you are responsible for ensuring that student feedback is used appropriately. However, before doing so, take time to review and interpret the eVALUate FUR in a holistic manner, considering both the quantitative and qualitative feedback (see section on Interpreting the eVALUate FUR).

You should share the appropriate results of the FUR with your unit teaching team. The quantitative results section of the report must be made available to all of your team members.

You are responsible for sharing the qualitative results with your teaching team in the spirit of Curtin’s Guiding Ethical Principles (http://policies.curtin.edu.au/home/values.cfm), and to show due care for your colleagues. You may share comments which are general in nature (that is, in which staff are not identifiable) with all staff teaching in the unit. Some comments, however, could identify particular staff. It is appropriate to pass on those comments (both positive and negative) to the named staff member only. Any comments in which staff are named are confidential to that staff member (and to those charged with the coordination and management of the unit). Misuse of data from eVALUate reports will be dealt with according to Clause 36 of the Certified Agreement on Disciplinary and Unsatisfactory Performance Procedures: Misconduct, or the Australian Workplace Agreement equivalent.

To edit a report, you may need to download the quantitative and qualitative reports separately. To edit qualitative comments, download the pdf file, then use the select text tool in Adobe Acrobat Reader to copy and paste all the comments into a Word document. You can then use Word’s editing tools (select, copy, delete) to remove any information pertaining to individual teachers from the version of the document which you intend to circulate to the whole teaching team. Students’ comments which name individual teachers should be saved in separate documents and made available to the staff member concerned. For further assistance with these technical matters, please contact Cynthia Ng (C.Ng@curtin.edu.au; x2113) in the Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning.

Note: Student feedback which may be considered offensive or defamatory (this includes racist or sexist comments, personal or abusive comments, or allegations of criminal activity) may NOT be passed on to any staff member, or any student, by either the Unit Coordinator or Head of School/Department. Under no circumstances will a comment be tracked to identify any student.

Ideally the teaching team should discuss the feedback as a group, noting the positive feedback (and determining how that can be maintained and increased) and as well as those areas requiring improvement.

It is important to be aware that it can sometimes be very challenging for staff to receive student feedback which is not complimentary, but that this should be seen in perspective. Your role as a Unit Coordinator is to help other teaching staff interpret their feedback accurately and, wherever possible, assist them to develop strategies to improve their performance. The purpose of the feedback is to improve the quality of the unit from everyone’s perspective – students and staff - and this may require help from colleagues. Staff are often not able to develop all of the solutions for unit issues on their own. It can often be very helpful to discuss feedback and ideas or suggestions for improvement with other staff. In this way you are likely to obtain a richer range of options. Staff from the Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning are available for assistance with managing the feedback process or development of teaching strategies for groups or individual staff (in the first instance, email Beverley Oliver at B.Oliver@curtin.edu.au or telephone x2292 on the Bentley campus). For pastoral support, contact the University Counselling and Health Services (x7850 on the Bentley campus). More contacts details are provided at the end of the guidelines.
How eVALUate unit results are reported

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Students and Staff</th>
<th>What's in that report?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>eVALUate Report</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unit Summary Report (USR)</strong></td>
<td>For all staff and students when published by the Unit Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>University Aggregated Report</strong></td>
<td>For all staff and students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For Staff (only)</th>
<th>What's in that report?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Full Unit Report (FUR)</strong></td>
<td>For Unit Coordinator and Head of School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Evaluation Report (TER)</strong></td>
<td>For staff member who has requested the report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course Summary Report (CSR)</strong></td>
<td>For Head of School, and Dean Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owning Organisation Unit Summary Report (OOUUSR)</strong></td>
<td>For Head of School, and Dean Teaching and Learning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For the General Public</th>
<th>What's in that report?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aggregated Course Report (ACR)</strong></td>
<td>Aggregated percentage agreement with quantitative items 1 to 7 and item 11 for a course.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample reports are available on the eVALUate website (see [http://evaluate.curtin.edu.au/info/reporting.cfm](http://evaluate.curtin.edu.au/info/reporting.cfm))

Interpreting the eVALUate Full Unit Report

**1. Descriptive Statistics**

The unit name and number and the name of the Unit Coordinator are provided to identify the person responsible for the teaching and learning in the unit. The number of student responses (indicated by ‘n’), and the number of student enrolments (indicated by ‘N’), are used to calculate the response rate within this unit.

**2. Response Rates**

It is important to compare the number of student responses (n) to the total class enrolment. Additionally, check the ‘n’ for each question since students may not answer every item (this is provided with the frequency distribution graph for questions 1 to 11). Frequency distributions are rounded to the nearest whole number.

The gathering and reporting of student feedback through systems such as eVALUate is not an exact science in that students’ perspectives are not definitive judgements on the worth of a unit or a teacher's ability. At best, student feedback at the unit level can indicate areas that are likely to be working well, and areas that need further exploration and possibly development. Student perceptions are very important but they can not be taken as a definitive judgment on teaching quality (see Curtin’s Academic Staff Certified Agreement 2005 - 2008 Clause 18.1).

Ideally, it would be best if every student in the unit gave feedback. However, 100% response rates are very rare. As in the research process, student evaluation systems must draw on a sample of a total population. It is
important to remember that even if only a few students respond, their feedback is still valid (in the sense that the student is telling you his or her perceptions). However, a greater area of concern is whether the feedback comes from sufficient students to be representative of the whole cohort. This is a complex decision usually based on a combination of the number of students who responded in a particular class size. However, there are further unknowns in gathering student feedback—and that is whether the feedback is skewed because of other factors. For example, if we use paper-based surveys in-class at the end of a semester, we need to be aware that even though the response rate might be robust (if a large proportion of the students are still attending classes), the feedback may still not be really representative—students may have been stressed, rushed, annoyed and so on. Likewise, it is possible that online systems like eVALUate might attract the participation of a biased sample of students (indications so far are that this is not the case).

**Every student response to the unit survey is valid:** each survey response represents one student’s perception and must be taken seriously. The collective responses of students to the unit survey are representative of those who provided feedback. Likewise responses from what might appear to be an unrepresentative minority are still valid—they cannot be disregarded simply because they are few; nor should they be taken as a definitive indication of the quality of the unit.

Nevertheless, it is important to test the representativeness of student feedback, and this can be done using a statistical process. To determine whether eVALUate results are representative of the views of the total student group enrolled in a unit, a minimum response rate is required and that response rate differs according to the number of students enrolled in the unit. The following table gives an indication of the response rate required in units of varying sizes to ascertain the representativeness of a sample. If the sample is representative, it means that the opinions of the sample are representative of the opinions of the whole group.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student enrolment in the unit</th>
<th>Response rate in eVALUate</th>
<th>No of student responses required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1000</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Number of student responses (and response rate) required for representative feedback**

Using this table, staff can be 95% confident that the actual percent agreement is within 10% (+) of the observed percent agreement for the total student group enrolled in the unit.

Further information regarding the statistical analysis is available to Curtin staff on request from B.Tucker@curtin.edu.au.

3. **Interpreting the quantitative items**

Each quantitative item is listed in the report, along with a frequency distribution of the students’ responses. The data are expressed as the percentage of students who chose strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree or unable to judge in response to each item.
1. Note the distribution patterns of the responses to each question. Narrow distribution patterns indicate a commonly held perception about the item amongst your students; widely spread patterns indicate that there is a wider range of perceptions.

2. Note the Unit Agreement (percentage). The percentages of students who agree or strongly agree with each statement are summed to provide a numerical value. When interpreting this number it is important to recognise that a value can be obtained in two ways for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Agree (%) + Agree (%)</th>
<th>= Unit Agreement (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 + 50</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 + 20</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To differentiate between how many students strongly agree or agree you need to return to the frequency distribution.

Excellent unit results will demonstrate a higher percentage agreement for strongly agree versus agree. The aim is to strive for as many students rating the item in the “strongly agree” category as possible. Review the items and identify:

- items on which the unit scored well/had the highest percentage agreement,
- items on which the unit did not score as well or had the lowest percentage agreement,
- items which are below your Faculty or the University’s percentage agreement, and
- items with less than 70% agreement.

4. Interpreting the qualitative items

There are two qualitative items which are reported separately. Each student comment appears as a bulleted point. Open-ended questions on the unit evaluation can help to clarify statistical data and provide suggestions for unit improvement. Initially, the comments appear to be a collection of random, unconnected statements. Organising student comments—by teaching components (i.e. unit organisation, communication, teaching, feedback); by items within the questionnaire (i.e. learning outcomes, experiences, resources, assessment, feedback, workload, quality of teaching, motivation, use of learning experiences, improvement, overall satisfaction) or by categories that are most meaningful to you—will highlight common themes and provide important insights into the students’ learning experiences.

A strategy for organising student comments is to group them in themes. The grouping of comments by similar topics allows you to focus on comments related to one aspect of teaching and learning at a time. Try to identify information or themes which explain the positive results, and those areas which require improvement. It is important to determine the positive aspects of the unit and the reasons for these. Check whether the comments provide further information about the items where the unit did not do so well, and determine where the problems lie, and what may be done to improve student achievement of the learning outcomes.

For units with large student enrolments, the Evaluation Team can organise the comments for you using an application called CEQuery (please contact Beatrice Tucker at B.Tucker@curtin.edu.au or telephone x2292 on the Bentley campus).

Compare student comments with the quantitative feedback as they may provide information about the ratings on the forced-choice responses, and the extent to which they support the quantitative feedback or identify discrepancies.

Positive and Negative Comments

It is helpful to determine the proportion of negative to positive comments for interpretative purposes. This will assist you in determining if the comments are representative of the entire class or a small minority of students. Comments that reflect positively on teaching effectiveness can usually be considered genuine. Since the unit evaluation is anonymous, students do not usually write positive comments unless they mean them. As student anonymity is assured in the eVALUate system, students may write negative and unconstructive comments. Keep in mind that pressures unrelated to your unit may underlie some of these comments. Try to discern whether you can glean any underlying message for the improvement of the unit from such comments. Abusive and unprofessional comments should be ignored (although this is not always easy).

Inconsistent or Contradictory Comments

Sometimes, student comments can be contradictory. These inconsistencies are often due to variations in student development and/or preferred student-learning style. Large introductory level classes, with students from a wide range of motivation levels, may be especially prone to these inconsistencies. There may be students who are not
yet developmentally capable of accepting the challenges of your unit. They may not be comfortable thinking independently, accepting a high degree of individual responsibility, or reasoning at higher cognitive levels. If this is the case, develop strategies to address these students at their current levels and help them to develop to the levels you consider appropriate.

Check whether the comments are consistent with the ratings for each of the items, and the extent to which there appears to be a problem. An isolated comment, which is not supported by other quantitative or qualitative data, should probably be disregarded. Alternatively, if there are problems with a particular aspect of the unit, then it is important to find ways to improve those, and that this can only occur if information about the problem is provided.

**Mentoring the teaching team**

As a Unit Coordinator, it is highly desirable that you help other teaching staff in the unit to interpret their feedback in an accurate light, and, wherever possible, assist them to develop strategies to improve their performance if required. Try to remember, that the purpose of the feedback is to improve the quality of the unit from everyone’s perspective – students and staff - and help may be required to achieve this. Staff are often not able to develop all of the solutions for unit issues on their own. It can often be very helpful to discuss feedback and ideas or suggestions for improvement with other staff. In this way you will obtain a much richer range of options rather than always trying to solve the issues in isolation.

It is important that these issues are handled sensitively and in a supportive manner. If you do not feel you have the skills to do this, or the feedback is particularly challenging, you may seek help from more experienced teachers within your School/Department (without divulging specific details). Alternatively, the Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning (see contacts at the end of these guidelines) or Counselling Services (x7850) may be other options. It is important to make sure that feedback is acted on and that negative feedback is not “avoided” or “ignored”. This may be an indication that other issues within a program, School or Department require attention such as a review of resourcing or professional development needs in a particular area.

**Responding to the feedback**

Once you have reviewed the quantitative and qualitative feedback, try to link these together and determine the reasons for positive scores/feedback and areas in which the unit didn’t do so well, and how they might be improved.

Capture the teaching team reflections on the FUR by recording overall thoughts. Focus on what you think you should:

- STOP doing (what students are telling you is not working for them)
- CONTINUE doing (what students are telling you is working for them), and where appropriate
- START doing (what students are telling you will work for them).

Identify the key areas which require improvement. Brainstorm and discuss strategies for improvement with the teaching team. Sometimes there are relatively simple changes which may be made to improve the outcomes, while at other times, the issues may be more complex.

It can often be helpful to prepare a brief written summary which may include the following elements:

- Summary of the unit outcomes, teaching and learning methods/pattern, resources and staff involved in the teaching team
- How your unit fits within a course or program of study
- Discussion of any changes in this teaching period which were made in response to previous student feedback (if known)
- Teaching staff perceptions of the best aspects of the unit, possible explanations and how these align with student perceptions
- Teaching staff perceptions of the aspects of the unit requiring improvement, possible explanations and how these align with student perceptions
- Areas which will be changed, how they will be changed along with the reasons for change
- Areas which won’t be changed and the reasons

A summary like this helps to put the whole unit experience within a context of a course, School or Department. It is important to consider the context of your unit within a whole course, rather than in isolation, as your unit is likely to be affected by other unit experiences, as well as having an effect on other units.
Peer observation

Consider inviting a colleague to act as a critical friend to comment on or review your teaching or to observe your teaching and provide you with supportive feedback. This might involve a peer observation of a teaching class with a fellow teacher. This may also include the evaluation of unit documentation, teaching resources, appropriateness of assessment and so on. Staff from the Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning can provide you with guidelines on how to plan and use a peer observation activity (see contact details at the end of this document).

Resources to Assist You

Resources are available from the Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning as hard copy (contact Evelyn Gibbs at E.Gibbs@curtin.edu.au; x2305) or downloadable as indicated below:

- **Foundations of Learning and Teaching** is a short course giving teachers practical tips for engaging students. While it is primarily intended for new and less experienced staff, all staff are welcome to enrol (see [http://otl.curtin.edu.au/professional_development/index.cfm](http://otl.curtin.edu.au/professional_development/index.cfm)).
- **Teaching and Learning at Curtin** is an annual publication which updates staff on all teaching and learning matters, as well as providing easily accessible tips for improving practice. The most recent version is downloadable from [http://otl.curtin.edu.au/teaching_learning/downloads.cfm](http://otl.curtin.edu.au/teaching_learning/downloads.cfm).
- Improving teaching and learning resources associated with eVALUate unit survey items 1 to 7 are available at [https://evaluate.curtin.edu.au/staff/improve_results_resources.cfm](https://evaluate.curtin.edu.au/staff/improve_results_resources.cfm).
  - Communicating clear learning outcomes
  - Creating engaging learning experiences
  - Creating effective learning resources
  - Assessing student achievement of learning outcomes
  - Providing feedback for student learning
  - Improving student perceptions of workload
  - Improving student perceptions of teaching quality
- **Additional web resources**
  - The assessment website which includes good practice in assessment design, moderation policy and procedures, computer-assisted assessment, academic integrity and plagiarism policy (see [http://otl.curtin.edu.au/assessment/index.cfm](http://otl.curtin.edu.au/assessment/index.cfm))
  - Excellent resources on assessment feedback are *Assessing learning in Australian universities: Ideas, strategies and resources for quality in student assessment* (see [http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/](http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/)) and *Enhancing Student Learning Through Effective Formative Feedback* (see [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/resource_database/id353_effective_formative_feedback_iuwah_etal](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/resource_database/id353_effective_formative_feedback_iuwah_etal))

If you would like further help, please contact staff in the Office of Assessment, Teaching and Learning for either a personal consultation, or to arrange a meeting with your teaching team.

**Prof Beverley Oliver**  +61 8 9266 2292  b.oliver@curtin.edu.au  
**Veronica Goerke**  +61 8 9266 3233  v.goerke@curtin.edu.au  
**Beatrice Tucker**  +61 8 9266 1092  b.tucker@curtin.edu.au  
**Jon Yorke**  +61 8 9266 1735  j.yorke@curtin.edu.au  
**Sonia Ferns**  +61 8 9266 2435  s.ferns@curtin.edu.au  
**Ann Kosovich**  +61 8 9266 7013  a.kosovich@curtin.edu.au
Sharing Results with Students

It is important to share the results of the feedback with students and inform them of the changes you intend to make. Students are much more likely to complete eVALUate if they see that there is action as a result of their feedback. The easiest and most effective way to do this is response to students using the Unit Summary Report (USR).

Share results using eVALUate Unit Summary Report (USR)

The Unit Summary Report (USR) is published by default for all units included in eVALUate and is visible online for all Curtin staff and students. The USR is available only when there is more than one student enrolled in a unit and where there is more than one student response.

eVALUate USRs communicate overall student Percentage Agreement (that is, the percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed), Percentage Disagreement (the percentage of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed) and Percentage Unable to Judge for all quantitative items. You as Unit Coordinator can include a response to the feedback (up to 2000 characters), and it will appear with the published report, as shown in the following example.

![USR Example](https://evaluate.curtin.edu.au/staff/)

Composing a Response in the USR

As of Semester 1 2009, the eVALUate website features a ‘one stop’ summary page for Curtin staff providing access to all relevant functions in eVALUate using a single sign-on via Staff OASIS or via the eVALUate website at https://evaluate.curtin.edu.au/staff/. In the unit evaluation section, Unit Coordinators can add a response to USRs at any time after an event has closed. To add a response to the USR:

- Click on the “USR” icon
- Select Add a Response
- Type your response into the text box - maximum of 2000 characters. (NB. some formatting equates to numerous characters)
- Submit Response - this automatically publishes a USR that has previously not been published.

Unit Coordinators are asked to be professional in their response. Student anonymity must always be ensured. The intention of the Unit Coordinators’ response is to acknowledge students’ feedback, assure them that their feedback is valued and to indicate how the students’ feedback will be taken into account when the unit is next offered. For assistance in composing a response to students, please contact Beatrice Tucker (B.Tucker@curtin.edu.au).
Publication of the USR enables further benchmarking with similar units across the University. For example, for a large first year communications unit, you will be able to compare your unit summary results with USRs in other Faculties.

**Share results using the Unit Outline**

The Unit Outline template (downloadable from [http://otl.curtin.edu.au/teaching_learning/downloads.cfm](http://otl.curtin.edu.au/teaching_learning/downloads.cfm)) also includes a section where you can include the recent changes resulting from student feedback (as shown below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a brief paragraph giving the student a general overview for the unit, then complete the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We welcome your feedback as one way to keep improving this unit. Later this semester, you will be encouraged to give unit feedback through eVALUate, Curtin’s online student feedback system (see <a href="http://evaluate.curtin.edu.au">http://evaluate.curtin.edu.au</a>). Recent changes to this unit in response to student feedback through eVALUate include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. (insert change here as applicable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For further information and feedback on any aspect of eVALUate, please contact Beatrice Tucker (B.Tucker@curtin.edu.au) or see [http://evaluate.curtin.edu.au](http://evaluate.curtin.edu.au).