Interpretation of the survey results of course evaluation

In interpreting these findings, please note the following:

• Scoring: For all questions the best possible mean value = 5. Values from 3 - 3.5 are satisfactory, and those from 3.6 - 5 are very good.

Critical mean values are, according to the pertaining Rector's directive, those <3. There are the following exceptions: Questions 8.1, 8.3, 8.4 and 8.7 do not have critical values.

A course unit is defined as critical if the mean value of the overall satisfaction or the mean values of at least three individual questions are critical. A "critical" course unit means that Directors of Study should look closer at the particular course and discuss measures and possibilities for improvement with the lecturers involved.

In this situation certain questions assume particular significance:

• The block of questions which concern lecturers comprises 5 items which reflect the basic principles of good teaching. This block is hidden from students who indicate that they did not participate in the course.

• Questions on exercises: These involve two questions which are only visible if the course unit includes courses of types G or U.

• Question block 8 : Very important to us is the question about whether students feel in a position to explain course content to others. This question elicits how students estimate their learning success, and it also inspires them to actually try explaining course content. The question regarding students' prior interest in the course unit theme primarily serves ETH statistical purposes. All further questions in block 8 ask how students cope with the changeover to partial or complete remote teaching, whether they experience specific difficulties or problems, including technical problems.

• General satisfaction: Various things affect general satisfaction. For this reason a value of <3 requires closer scrutiny to pinpoint the exact causes of dissatisfaction. The values from other questions are a partial help, as are the comments.

• Comments:

Be pleased about every positive comment, and do not give too much weight to the negative comments of individual students. If many comments point in the same direction, however, you should take a closer look.

• Return rate and meaningfulness of results:

The statistical error of the estimated mean value is composed of two components: sampling error and systematic error (bias). In most cases (for bigger courses as well as for smaller ones) as few as 20 questionnaires suffice for a small enough sampling error. So-called "non-response bias" can cause systematic error, i.e. where the group of students who did not answer has a completely different opinion on the lecture than the students who did answer. We analyse ETH results regularly for non-response bias, but have so far found none. Students who do not answer may be less responsive or

more under time pressure, but they judge their courses and examinations no differently than students who take more time for the evaluation.

In any case, sampling error and non-response bias are both minimised if as many students as possible fill out questionnaires. Our ongoing objective is therefore to motivate students to participate.

Wherever organisationally possible we recommend discussing the results in class with your students. Doing so will help to increase future response rates, because students will see that you are engaging with their feedback.

• Use and visibility of results:

Teaching evaluation is an instrument of quality assurance and improvement for teaching. The results are interpreted individually and in relation to the individual course unit. No ranking list is compiled on the basis of evaluation scores.

Access to results for lecturers:

Please log in via SWITCHaai at the URL: https://evasys-back1.let.ethz.ch/EUB/

to download the reports of all your evaluated course units and examinations in the past 6 years.

Find a departement specific view of the results of the evaluated course units and examinations at the URL: https://ergebnisseub.sp.ethz.ch/SitePages/Home.aspx

Please address questions regarding teaching evaluation to evasys@let.ethz.ch.

We are happy to assist you in the further development of your teaching.

Sincerely,

ETH Zurich, Teaching evaluation