

Online Course Evaluations: Summary of Research

The online course evaluation tool and process have been developed based on a review of research literature and summary reports on course evaluations in general, and online course evaluations more specifically. Highlighted here are some relevant research findings related to the efficacy and impact of online course evaluations and ‘best practices’ for a successful transition from paper-based to online platforms:

- **Overall, any differences in student ratings between paper-based and online models of teaching evaluations are not statistically significant** (Avery et al., 2006; Donmeyer et al., 2004).
- **Online evaluations tend to result in better reporting and higher quality data** (Llewellyn, 2003).
- **Response rates tend to improve significantly when individual instructors encourage students to complete online course evaluations** (Ballantyne, 2003; Norris & Conn, 2005).
- **Students responding online are more likely to provide qualitative comments about their course and instructor than are those responding on paper** (Hardy, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Layne et al., 1999, Donmeyer et al., 2004; Sorenson & Reiner, 2003).
- **Studies report significant cost savings related to staff time (distributing, collecting, scanning, typing comments, and storing data)** (Donmeyer et al., 2004; Bothell & Henderson, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Sorenson & Reiner, 2003).

“If a representative sample of students complete online evaluations, then confidence intervals of 80% are sufficient” (see Table 1: McGill’s acceptable response rates by class size) *Rawn, 2008.*

Table 1. Recommended Response Rates

Class size	McGill: Acceptable Response Rate (%)	Nulty (2008): Recommended Response Rates with 80% Confidence Interval (10% Sampling Error)
5-11	minimum 5 responses	at least 75%
12-30	at least 40%	74-48%
31-100	at least 35%	47-21%
101-200	at least 30%	20- 12%
201-1000	at least 25%	11-3%

(Adapted from Rawn, p. 11).

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