

Interpretation of the survey results of exam evaluation (long)

In the interpretation of the survey results please note the following:

Brief overview of the most important four items

2.9: Students regard an examination as “fair” if it offers them an appropriate way to demonstrate how far they have reached (or not reached) the intended learning objectives. This item is therefore the most important in the whole questionnaire.

2.3: The “same conditions” for all is a prerequisite for valid testing of competences.

2.1: A good alignment between the examination and the course is the best way to make your examination more valid and more efficacious for learning.

6.1: Satisfaction with the quality of an examination can be increased by ensuring its validity above all, and by providing good conditions during the examination (see below).

VALIDITY of the examination: Is your examination meaningful, i.e. does it actually measure what it claims to measure? Does its content and methodology test the competences expressed in the learning objectives appropriately? Important prerequisites for validity are objectivity, reliability and alignment (see below).

2.2: Clear and understandably formulated examination questions reduce the risk that factors unrelated to learning goals (e.g. problems understanding language style) will have a negative influence on examination result.

2.5: Time pressure is not conducive to top performance and can significantly reduce the validity of your examination.

2.9: Students base the “fairness” of an examination on whether it is a valid test of their competences (see above).

ALIGNMENT: Examination tasks should be closely related to the competences expressed in the learning objectives and the associated teaching and learning activities. Improving alignment in these senses is important to make your examination not only more valid but also more efficacious for learning.

2.1: Alignment between the examination and the course (see above).

3.1 & 3.2: Large discrepancies between expectations and the actual examination in form and/or content endanger effective preparation for the examination and lead to errors in the assessment of the student’s competence.

3.4 & 3.5: If there are discrepancies between items 3.4, 3.5 and/or the learning objectives, alignment can be improved by matching the type of examination tasks better to the learning objectives and learning activities.

4.2 & 4.3: If scores for these items are low it is worth aligning the examination better with the course unit (or vice versa). Course units and course materials are – irrespective of their quality – not valued by students if they do not appropriately prepare them for the examination.

RELIABILITY: The examination should be comprehensive enough and should differentiate appropriately between varying levels of performance. Reliability can only be assessed via examination results.

Objectivity & equal treatment: The checking of whether learning objectives have been achieved should be independent of the implementation and scoring framework and must occur under standard conditions. Different scores should reflect actual differences in performance. Students must never be subject to arbitrariness with regard to examination content, implementation and scoring.

2.3: “Everyone was subject to equivalent conditions in the examination.” This is important for valid testing of competences but also a legal requirement for examinations (see above).

5.1: Conscientious preparation of examination conditions and ensuring a calm examination atmosphere are relatively simple ways to achieve high scores here.

TRANSPARENCY: Students should be familiar with the content and formal requirements of their examinations. Their examinations should be based on the learning objectives communicated.

4.4: Students have been told what is expected of them in the examination, especially regarding level and task type.

USEFULNESS TO LEARNING: Examination tasks should correspond to the respective target competences in form, content and requirements. They should comprise a stimulus to develop these competences (exam preparation). If scores for usefulness to learning are low it is worth checking the alignment between learning activities and learning objectives, particularly with regard to the type of examination tasks.

2.6 & 2.7: Low scores indicate that superficial studying took place rather than deeper involvement with the material.

4.5: This item has interviewees judge their own achievement of learning objectives. Low scores here show that the core content of the course has been insufficiently understood or studied. Large deviations between students’ self-judgment and the average for examination performance indicate fundamental errors in examination design.

4.7: Dissatisfaction is not conducive to learning.

FURTHER ITEMS:

2.8: Students’ self-judging of their own examination performance helps ETH to identify groups with particular discrepancies between self-judged and actual examination grades.

4.6: Serves as a control variable.

Best scores and critical values:

The best achievable score for 2.5 and 3.1 is 3. The best score for all other questions is 5. Scores between 3.5 and 5 are (very) positive. This applies in particular to general satisfaction, which is influenced by many different aspects.

According to the directive of the rector, critical (low) values are scores <3, with the following exceptions: for item 2.5 low scores are those <2 (the critical value). Items 3.1 and 4.6 have no critical value. Item 4.6 serves as a control variable for further statistical analyses at the department or ETH level.

An examination is defined as critical if the mean value of questions 2.1, 2.3, 2.9 or 6.1 or the mean values of at least three individual questions are critical. A critical examination means that the Directors of Study are advised to take a closer look at the corresponding items and, in discussion with the examiners, to determine the need for measures and possibilities for improvement.

Access to results for lecturers

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

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Find a department specific view of the results of the evaluated course units and examinations at
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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