

Students will have access to evaluations online

■ Students wonder if Web-based archives will be useful

By Beata Mostafavi
Oregon Daily Emerald

After 10 weeks of classes that bring loads of midterms and papers, students get to swap sides and give the professors report cards - in the form of student evaluations. And after spending time at the end of each term filling in bubbles, some may wonder where those scantrons go.

By this summer, the University hopes to have some of the evaluation data available online, said Jack Rice, associate vice provost for academic affairs. Rice said creating an online database that stores such information has been an ongoing project, and he hopes it will be finished by the beginning of next year.

During the final week of classes, students fill out questionnaires that, if signed, go into the teacher's permanent file. They also submit evaluations via scantrons.

Although all departments may ask questions specific to their courses, each is required to ask four common questions that students may later access. They ask students to rate the course and teacher compared to other classes of the same size and level.

In the past, the ASUO stapled together 20-page pamphlets containing results of the four questions, but the administration found problems with the books. ASUO Programs Coordinator Tambi Boyle, who was involved with the online evaluation project last year, said the manuals had errors including blank spots, number errors and misspelled names.

Rice said the biggest problems with the pamphlet idea were that it wasted paper, cost money to produce and only allowed students to see classes from the previous term. Students who want to take Sociology 202, for example, could not find information on the class if it had not been offered the last term, he said. He added that by accessing the Web archive he envisions, students could turn up three or four years of the evaluation results.

"A Web-based system would be beneficial to everyone," he said.

Last year, the ASUO attempted to work with Rice to put together the Web site, but the project was never completed. The ASUO has since stepped aside and has left the work up to the administration.

ASUO President Jay Breslow said while the ASUO has not made any efforts to publish the evaluations this year as it has done previous years, he still thinks it's a good idea.

"We should have done it this year," Breslow said.

How much difference does it make?

But some students are a little skeptical about how helpful it would even be to look at other people's course ratings.

Annemarie Kalson, a junior general science major, said the problem with public course rankings is that people would not know why someone else ranked a teacher poorly.

"Sometimes it's justified, sometimes it's a clash of personalities," she said.

Kalson added that while she does not think public evaluations would really help students choose classes, they would be interesting to read.

Some students formed their own system of finding out what others have to say about courses. For example, the Gamma Phi Beta sorority recently began a scholarship list, where members can evaluate classes based on difficulty and workload, teacher's character and teaching styles.

Stephanie Coombs, a sophomore member, said the system works out well because the women can go back and ask each other why they ranked teachers and classes a certain way.

She said the benefit of this kind of set-up is that many core classes are listed, which helps people select teachers.

"It helps especially freshmen and sophomores who don't know teachers and have to take basic classes," she said.

But other students wonder how much of a difference student evaluations even make.

Kalson said that because she's never had any major complaints about her classes, she usually doesn't spend too much time on evaluations.

"To tell you the truth, I usually rush through it," she said. "I don't feel so much that my individual voice is heard."

But some teachers find the material very useful. Scott Fitzpatrick, an anthropology graduate teaching fellow, said the evaluations help him refine his teaching methods.

Rice said it is important that students take the time to thoroughly and honestly fill out evaluations, which are reviewed by supervising boards.

"It's more than worth it, it's imperative," he said. "We very much value student opinions."

University of Oregon

COURSE EVALUATION REPORT

Average winter term 2001 evaluation scores for several top University departments and the instructors within those departments, listed in ascending order.

	A	B	C	D	F	SCORE
1. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the sociology department rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A
2. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the psychology department rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7.6
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7.6
3. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the School of Journalism rate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.4
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.7
4. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the political science department rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A*
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A*
5. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the English department rate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.4†
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.5†
6. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the economics department rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.0
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	8.2
7. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the School of Fine & Applied Arts rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A**
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A**
8. In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the international studies department rate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9.4
In comparison with other UO courses of this size and level, how does the average instructor rate?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	9.5

† This figure is an average of the scores for the composition and literature classes
* The political science department did not have the evaluation scores on file
** No departmental averages were available from the School of Fine & Applied Arts

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