

Office of the Provost Policy on Accessing and Using SPOT Data

1. Individual instructor SPOT reports are private and confidential.

- 1.1. SPOT reports are subject to the same privacy and security protections as other university employee performance and HR data. They are accessible to the instructor, individuals in leadership roles to whom the instructor reports, and others to whom the university has granted authority to access confidential personnel data. **SPOT responses are not to be made available to individuals in other roles without the instructor's permission.** These access parameters apply to both numerically recorded rating scale responses and to open-ended text responses.
- 1.2. SPOT reports are intended for the use of individual instructors and people in leadership roles to whom the instructor reports, for the purpose of reviewing student perceptions of the instructor's teaching. SPOT reports of student perceptions may be included as [a source of evidence](#) when teaching is assessed for purposes of annual review, promotion, or tenure decisions. SPOT reports are not to be used by others for other purposes without the instructor's permission.
- 1.3. Data generated by responses to course-level questions and Gen Ed questions may be used for purposes of curriculum review. In those cases, reports may not include any information which identifies an individual instructor without the instructor's permission.

2. Comparative analyses are trustworthy only to the extent that they are based on like-to-like comparisons.

- 2.1. Research on student ratings has shown that response patterns are potentially influenced by many factors in addition to teaching quality, such as course level, class size, major vs. non-major status, and instructor demographic characteristics. Comparative analyses that do not control for these factors may misrepresent an individual's teaching effectiveness relative to that of others in the comparison group.
- 2.2. Comparative analyses that do not control for these factors cannot be used as the sole justification for personnel decisions.

3. Analyses and reports should be consistent with the nature and limitations of the data.

- 3.1. SPOT responses are nominal data, recorded numerically on an ordinal scale. Higher numbers indicate a higher level of agreement, but the difference between "slightly agree" and "agree" (for example) cannot be assumed to be quantitatively the same as the difference between "agree" and "strongly agree." Response distributions and medians provide the most accurate summarization of student perceptions.
- 3.2. The SPOT survey rating scale should not be interpreted as an interval scale. An interval scale assumes that each point on the scale is equally distant from adjacent points on the scale. Average and composite scores are often used to represent interval data, based on the assumption that it is possible to uniformly and precisely measure distances between interval points across all conditions and instructors. Therefore, average and composite scores may be useful for helping identify patterns and outliers in SPOT data, but because of the nature and the limitation of SPOT data, average and composite scores cannot be used as the sole justification for personnel decisions.
- 3.3. Because SPOT responses are recorded numerically in campus data, it is technically possible to download the data and it is mathematically possible to recalculate aggregate data with greater granularity than is provided by SPOT system reports. However, it misrepresents both the nature and the limitations of the data to suggest that differences at the level of hundredths of a point are meaningful or accurate.

4. SPOT responses cannot be used for research without the informed consent of participants.

- 4.1. It is understood by instructors and students that SPOT data are collected for purposes of quality assurance and improvement. To use the same data for broader research purposes would require the informed consent of the instructor and student participants. To use the data for research purposes without informed consent of participants is a violation of university human subjects research regulations.

- 4.2. Internal quality assurance studies are not subject to human subjects review. However, for quality assurance studies that compile SPOT data for multiple courses or instructors (except as described in 1.3, above), an individual's SPOT data cannot be used or reported without the individual's permission.
- 4.3. Requests for access to SPOT data for purposes other than those specified by this policy must be submitted to the Office of the Provost for approval. Submissions must include the intended purposes and rationale for using SPOT data and procedures for assuring that data will be used in ways that conform to the principles contained in this policy.