



## *Institutional Research*

# **SmartEvals! FAQ**

### **General**

**1. Why is SmartEvals! recommended over other vendors?**

Last year, representatives from the University Evaluation Committee, the Academic Excellence Committee, Technology Resources, and the Office of Institutional Research closely examined three online course assessment systems. SmartEvals! stood out for its functionality as an instructor development tool; ability for instructors to add their own questions and/or assign different question sets based on college, department, program, or course type; ability to handle complex course combinations (i.e., cross-listed, combined, and team-taught courses); compatibility with the TCU portal; plus many other features.

**2. Are you sure this system will work?**

The system was tested in early 2012 using simulated data and volunteers assigned to the roles of students, instructors, or academic administrators. After a successful test, the software was piloted in conjunction with the newly approved SPOT instrument during the Spring 2012 semester with departments that volunteered to be part of the process. Spring pilot participants submitted their feedback regarding the system directly to Institutional Research and/or during a meeting scheduled for participants to talk about their experiences. It was determined that the system worked properly. After making some improvements that were suggested by participants, the pilot was continued through the Summer 2012 term with favorable results.

**3. Is the SmartEvals! system secure and anonymous?**

The SmartEvals! system uses current technology security measures to ensure the security of the data, the anonymity of the participants, and the confidentiality of the results.

**4. How will users be able to login to the SmartEvals! system?**

All users of the SmartEvals! system will be able to login through <https://my.tcu.edu> or through any email sent from the SmartEvals! system.

**5. The TCU community is familiar with the current system of administering paper SPOT or eSPOT. How will students, faculty, and others know that we are now using the SmartEvals! systems?**

There will be a campus-wide communication campaign targeted at students, faculty, and academic administrators.

**6. Will there be any training on using the SmartEvals! system?**

The Office of Institutional Research will offer training sessions on how to navigate the system for instructors, academic administrators, and administrative assistants with a role in their department's SPOT program.

## **Students**

**1. How will students receive notification that it is time to complete the eSPOTs with SmartEvals!?**

Students will receive an email announcement stating that the survey period is open. Subsequent reminders will be sent to students who have not completed their eSPOTs. Once a student is in the portal, all courses for the current survey cycle will be displayed in one convenient place.

**2. If a student closes their eSPOT survey before completing it, can the student re-enter the survey?**

Yes, a student who closes their eSPOT survey before completing it will be allowed to re-enter the survey using their unique link. However, the student will need to start the survey over again since his or her previous responses are not saved upon closing the survey. Survey responses are only saved after submitting the survey.

**3. I completed the eSPOT for the wrong class. What should I do?**

You can contact the eSPOT administrator at [eSPOT@tcu.edu](mailto:eSPOT@tcu.edu) to have the survey reset so that you may retake the eSPOT.

## **Instructors**

**1. How is instructor privacy maintained?**

Instructors will never see the scores of other individual instructors—even when courses are team-taught. Instructors will be able to view reports that compare their individual scores against College and Department averages.

**2. How are faculty notified of the survey cycle?**

The system notifies faculty via email of the impending survey cycle.

**3. Can instructors add their own questions to the SmartEvals! eSPOT?**

Yes, instructors will be able to add questions to their eSPOT. An instructor will have until the night before a survey launches to add questions.

**4. Should I be concerned about my averages dropping when I change from paper SPOT to eSPOT?**

A drop in averages may be experienced. However, since all instructors will be using eSPOT, if a drop occurs it should be felt across the board.

**5. Should I be concerned about my response rate dropping when I change from paper SPOT to eSPOT?**

About 50% of the classes participating in the Spring 2012 SPOT program, participated in eSPOT. The response rate for eSPOT using the SmartEvals! system was 69% while eSPOT using the previous system yielded a 67% response rate. These rates are well above the average of 50% or less that most colleges and universities see after their first year of using electronic course assessments.

**6. How can instructors increase their response rates?**

The SmartEvals! system allows instructors to login and check their own response rates. Only response rates are available. Actual responses may not be viewed until final grades are turned

in. It even permits instructors to send out reminders to students. Furthermore, response rates may increase by doing one or more of the following:

- a. Make an announcement at the beginning and/or end of every class meeting during the SPOT survey period. The students receive the invitation via email so be sure to tell them to check their TCU e-mail accounts. Students will also see an eSPOT icon each time they login through the TCU portal during the eSPOT survey period. If possible, give students a concrete example of how you have used information from prior SPOTs to make adjustments to your courses.
- b. Encourage students to bring their laptop, iPad, or tablet to class on a particular day during the SPOT survey period and set aside part of that class time for students to complete the SPOT.
- c. If feasible, schedule time in a computer lab during the survey period to allow students to complete the SPOT.
- d. Your regular encouragement to students to complete the SPOT during the survey period is the single most important thing you can do to improve your response rates.

**7. When will reports be available?**

Reports will be available after all grades are posted at the end of the semester.

**8. What type of reports can I expect to see?**

Instructors can view reports that compare their individual scores against aggregated Department, Division or School averages, though no instructor is ever able to view the results of any other individual instructor. Other reports consist of percentile rank report, myFocus report, historical report, distribution report, comments reports, and statistics reports. These reports and the raw data can be exported for offline storage purposes or for additional data analysis with external software. Further, most reports are customizable allowing for you to turn on or off columns. For example, if you do not want to see the standard deviations, you can decide to deselect that column.

**9. What is the myFocus report?**

The myFocus report presents assessment results in an easy-to-understand format that clearly identifies an instructor's areas of strength and weakness in teaching performance, and allows instructors to document strategies for improving effectiveness. myFocus analyzes all survey responses for each instructor, ranking the results according to several factors: average percentile rank score, question applicability, and confidence intervals and how long ago the question was answered. Questions are then presented on a spectrum ranging from those of greatest possible improvement to areas in which the instructor already shows mastery.

**10. My class does not need to be assessed. What should I do?**

SmartEvals! allows instructors to remove themselves from the course assessment process by clicking the "opt-out" button in the Eval-Center. The decision to opt-out should be made after consultation with your department chair or program director.

**11. The university-wide eSPOT survey has a question on it that is not applicable to my class. What should I do?**

An instructor may make a comment in the SmartEvals! system regarding the inapplicability of the question to his or her class. Although the responses will still appear in the instructor's reports, the comment will show up in the department chair's view of the instructor's reports.

**12. I heard you can drill-down on data to see how particular groups responded. Is this true?**

The SmartEvals! system does allow institutions to upload demographic data. However, we must take FERPA requirements into account and also the reasoning behind adding the characteristic. Based on this information, the University Evaluation Committee has decided to include the following student demographic variables: (1) gender, (2) class standing, and (3) academic department for major.

**13. Can you aggregate data?**

The SmartEvals! system does allow you to aggregate data. For example, if you teach several sections of a class and you want to view a combined report for all class sections, the system will allow you to aggregate the data. You can do this also by course level or course type.

**14. I would like to know how those who rated me poorly on an item rated me on other items of the survey. Can this be done?**

Yes. For example, if you wanted to know how students who rated you poorly on "the instructor provided useful feedback on my work." rated you on the rest of the eSPOT, you can select the strongly disagree link associated with that item, and the resulting report will show you how those students rated the rest of your eSPOT.

**15. Can I post a note in the system detailing circumstances that may impact my survey results?**

Yes. Instructors may add notes about a class after it happens to tell administrators about the circumstances surrounding the class or how they are interpreting the information.

**16. What if I have still have questions or want to give feedback on the SmartEvals! system?**

You may email questions or feedback to [eSPOT@tcu.edu](mailto:eSPOT@tcu.edu) or call 817.257.7793.