Understanding Your:
IDEA Student Course Evaluation Report

The *IDEA Short Form Report* is designed to respond to four questions:

1. Overall, how effectively was this class taught?
2. How does this compare with the ratings of other teachers?
3. Were you more successful in facilitating progress on some class objectives than on others?
4. Do some salient characteristics of this class and its students have implications for instruction?

This guide will help you interpret the results from the *IDEA Short Form Report*. Start with a review of the number of respondents and the response rate. The best results are produced when at least 10 students provided ratings and at least 65% of enrollees responded (a 75% response rate is even better).

Throughout the Report, two kinds of scores are reported: _Average scores_ are based on the 5-point rating scale entered by students. _Converted scores_ are statistically tested and "standardized," so that they all have an average of 50 and a standard deviation (measure of variability) of 10. Both "Average" and "Converted" scores are presented in "raw" (unadjusted) and "adjusted" forms. The adjusted score accounts for your students' self-reported motivation and work habits. Each type of score is important to a complete understanding of your results.

Question 1. Overall, how effectively was this class taught? (Refer to the tables reported on the first page of the *IDEA Report*.)

Progress ratings are made on a 5-point scale: 1=No apparent progress; 2=Slight progress; 3=Moderate progress; 4=Substantial progress; and 5=Exceptional progress. In interpreting "raw" and "adjusted" averages, these terms can be substituted for the numeric figures; e.g., an average of 4.0 indicates that "substantial progress" is an appropriate term for summarizing student ratings on that measure.

A. Progress on Relevant Objectives: Combines ratings of progress on the 3-5 learning objectives selected by the instructor as *Important* (weighted "1") or *Essential* (weighted "2"). The IDEA Center regards this score as its single *best estimate of teaching effectiveness*. Both raw and adjusted scores are provided. To the right is a chart with converted averages (the table with the grey bar) to be used when making comparisons among faculty members or classes. This chart accounts for the fact that average progress ratings (scored 1-5) are higher for some objectives than for others; that is, some objectives appear to be more easily achieved than others. Because the converted scores (T-Scores) are adjusted to have the same mean, they assure faculty members that they will not be penalized for selecting objectives that are especially difficult.

Two additional overall measures of teaching effectiveness are shown on the report.

B. *Overall, I rate this instructor an excellent teacher.*
C. *Overall, I rate this course as excellent.*

As an index of teaching effectiveness, the average of these two ratings (**D**) is commonly regarded as equal in value to the "Progress on Relevant Objectives." The **Summary Evaluation** reported on the first page averages the progress score with the average of these two ratings. Although many IDEA users find this method of arriving at a Summary Evaluation to be meaningful, some may feel that other methods for arriving at a summary judgment better reflect their institution's philosophy and/or priorities.

Question 2. How do your ratings compare with those of other teachers? (Refer to the comparisons shown on the right hand side of the first page of the *IDEA Short Form Report*.)

Your report compares your average ratings to results for three different groups of classes. The first comparison group is with all classes in the standard *IDEA database*, and is always reported. The other two are reported only if enough classes were available to provide a stable basis for comparison.

These consist of:

(1) All classes in the *same discipline* as the class in question and

(2) All classes *at your institution*.

Institutional and *disciplinary* norms are updated annually and include the most recent five years of data; the IDEA database is updated periodically.

Question 3. Were you more successful in facilitating progress on some class objectives than on others? (Refer to the upper portion of the second page of the *IDEA Short Form Report*.)

On the top left, you'll find the 12 IDEA learning objectives and summarizes student ratings on those selected as either *Important* or *Essential*. A review of the specific objectives can help you determine where you might focus improvement efforts.

The first point to review is ensuring that **no more than 3-5 objectives** were selected. The selection of more than five learning objectives has been shown to decrease course evaluation scores. If more than five learning objectives were selected, it would be productive to reflect on which objectives scored the highest in terms of student achievement, and to revise the selection of objectives the next time the course is taught.

The reporting format is similar to that used on page one. In addition to "raw" and "adjusted" scores, the report shows the percent of students making ratings in the two lowest categories (No apparent progress or Slight progress) and in the two highest categories (Substantial progress and Exceptional progress).

Converted scores are shown in the right hand section and compared with the three norm groups previously described (IDEA Database, Discipline and Institution). In addition to the converted average, the report describes the status of each relative to other classes in the comparison group: "Much higher" (highest 10%: scores of 63 or higher); "Higher" (next 20%: scores from 56-62); "Similar" (Middle 40%: scores from 45-55); "Lower" (Next 20%: scores from 38-44); or "Much Lower" (lowest 10%: scores less than 37). Using broad categories like these rather than precise numbers is a reminder that ratings are neither perfectly reliable nor perfectly valid.

Question 4. Do some salient characteristics of this class and its students have implications for instruction? (Refer to the bottom portion of the second page of the IDEA Short Form Report.)

Student Characteristics. Students described their motivation by making self-ratings on the two items listed at the bottom of the second page: effort, and motivation. These characteristics have been found to impact student ratings of progress.

Statistical Detail:
The last page of the *Report* provides a detailed statistical summary of student responses to each of the items on the IDEA form as well as to any custom questions that were included for student response.

Students' Written Comments:
Comments by students are provided in a separate report. Students were asked to respond to the following three questions:

- *What aspects of the teaching or content of this course do you feel were especially good?*
- *What changes could be made to improve the teaching or the content of this course?*
- *Comments: (General)*

In addition to these three standard questions, individual faculty members, departments and units (e.g. RCDE) added their own custom questions. If these custom questions were qualitative (text), the responses to those questions will be included in the comment report for the course, as well.

Improving Teaching and Learning
Using data from the Diagnostic Form, The IDEA Center has conducted substantial research to identify teaching methods that facilitate learning on each of the twelve learning objectives. If you are disappointed in your progress on any of the relevant objectives in your course (identified on the second page of the Short Form Report), you might want to consider using the Diagnostic Form the next time you seek student input. In the meantime, a number of resources are available.

➢ [POD-IDEA Center Notes](#) were written in cooperation with the Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network in Higher Education. These brief papers provide detailed suggestions for improving twenty specific teaching methods; references to relevant professional literature are cited for each method.

➢ [POD - IDEA Center *Learning* Notes](#) are papers providing background, helpful hints, and additional resources for each of the 12 IDEA objectives.