

Navigating student ratings of instruction

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Agreeing that teaching effectiveness is multidimensional, the authors find that SETs do a good job measuring general instructional skill, which is a composite of delivering instruction, facilitating interactions, and evaluating student learning. Nevertheless, research summarized here indicates that the instructor's rank, experience and autonomy, the class size, and the instructor's grading practices are all factors that work to diminish the validity of the ratings. Particular note is made of the "Dr. Fox" effect, named for a famous study in which students gave high ratings to an actor playing the role of professor (Dr. Fox). The concern here is that enthusiastic or expressive instructors can receive higher evaluations even though their demeanor does not make any measurable contribution to learning.