

Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness

Timothy Young
University of California, Irvine

San Diego State University

At San Diego State University, I was the instructor of record for Introduction to Microeconomics (Spring 2014) and Introduction to Macroeconomics (Fall 2013 and Spring 2014). For these courses, I designed the syllabus, lectures, assignments, quizzes, and exams from scratch. Prior to teaching my own classes, I was a teaching assistant for Introduction to Macroeconomics and undergraduate Intermediate Microeconomics. I was also asked by tenured faculty to fill in as a guest lecturer for intermediate courses when they were unavailable. Below, I provide a brief overview of student evaluations from the courses I taught in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014. For complete unedited evaluations, please see the links on my website under the “Teaching” tab (www.timothycyoung.com).

The first course I ever taught was Introduction to Macroeconomics, in Fall 2013. I received positive, but generally average scores on my evaluations. When teaching this same course in Spring 2014, I completely redesigned the course to incorporate students’ suggestions. Specifically, I focused on addressing the following comments from the Fall 2013 evaluations:

- “He can have more things to stimulate what you are learning. He only had one day where we did something in class with our peers. It let us think about what he was teaching us and make the graphs on our own instead of just copying down notes every day.”
- At times it can be boring and hard to really pay attention. Maybe different activities or change up the notes. Maybe write bigger.
- This course can help future students if the instructor gives more homework for the students to practice and see different types of questions that will be on the tests.
- Finding a general interest in this class was difficult. I am not interested in economics at all and I'm bad at any kind of math, so I had a hard time wanting to learn about this subject.

With these comments in mind, I redesigned the course for Spring 2014 with a focus on fostering an active learning environment that incorporated more hands-on group work, more examples applicable to students’ everyday lives, and more engagement with economics outside of the classroom through things like a mock stock market challenge (if they were able to outpace my returns during the semester, they would receive extra credit). To ensure that students were clear about my expectations for the material covered on exams and that they were keeping good pace in the course, I started giving them regular (and surprise) quizzes. I received many comments from students from the Spring 2014 class that suggested that these changes were effective:

- Our teacher really connected the material with real life examples. That helped
- He gave a great lecture that was very animated and he pushed students to answer questions. He made the material entertaining. I dropped my other economics class to be in this professor's class because the other professor taught like he was dying of boredom.
- I liked the stock game that we played with the class even though I didnt [sic] do very well I had fun with it and it interested me.
- I enjoyed Professor Young's adamant efforts to ensure that his students were receptive by evaluating progress with quizzes. It allowed us to continually strive to do better on the next quiz and to always be studious.

While the qualitative evaluations suggested I had greatly improved the previous course's weaknesses, I also observed improvements quantitatively across all dimensions (three of which are discussed here, but all of which are available on my website):

Q: The instructor's ability to communicate the subject matter of this course clearly and effectively, whether by lecture, discussion or other means was:

<u>Fall 2013</u>			<u>Spring 2014</u>		
[Survey response rate: 24/41 (29.41%)]			[Survey Response rate: 53/78 (29.41%)]		
Poor	1	4.17%	Poor	1	1.89%
Below average	1	4.17%	Below average	0	0.00%
Average	7	29.17%	Average	9	16.98%
Above average	9	37.50%	Above average	18	33.96%
Outstanding	4	16.67%	Outstanding	25	47.17%
Did not respond	2	8.33%	Did not respond	0	0.00%

Q: Overall, how would you evaluate the instructor's teaching?

<u>Fall 2013</u>			<u>Spring 2014</u>		
[Survey Response rate: 24/41 (29.41%)]			[Survey Response rate: 53/78 (29.41%)]		
Poor	1	4.17%	Poor	1	1.89%
Below average	1	4.17%	Below average	1	1.89%
Average	6	25.00%	Average	6	11.32%
Above average	9	54.17%	Above average	17	32.08%
Outstanding	4	4.17%	Outstanding	26	49.06%
Did not respond	2	8.33%	Did not respond	2	3.77%

Q: As a personally enriching educational experience, this course has been:

<u>Fall 2013</u>			<u>Spring 2014</u>		
[Survey Response rate: 24/41 (29.41%)]			[Survey Response rate: 53/78 (29.41%)]		
Poor	1	4.17%	Poor	1	1.89%
Below average	0	0.00%	Below average	0	0.00%
Average	11	45.83%	Average	11	20.75%
Above average	6	25.00%	Above average	16	30.19%
Outstanding	3	12.50%	Outstanding	25	47.17%
Did not respond	3	12.50%	Did not respond	0	0.00%

University of California, Irvine

At the University of California, Irvine, I was a teaching assistant for an upper-level undergraduate course called Introduction to Financial Investments (Econ 132A) and lower-division undergraduate courses in Economic Probability & Statistics II (Econ 15B), Introduction to Microeconomics (Econ 20A), and Global Economy (Econ 13A). As a teaching assistant for these courses, I taught discussion sections (1-2 per week), created study guides and handouts for students, led review sections, and graded assignments. I chose not to teach any of my own classes at UC Irvine because I was confident in my teaching skills given my experience at San Diego State University and as a teaching assistance at UC Irvine. Instead, I chose to maximize the time allocated to my research agenda. While I did not regret this decision, I did miss teaching my own class.

Overall, my evaluations from UC Irvine reflect the student-focused instruction I acquired at San Diego State University. The evaluations for the course I taught most frequently, Introduction to Financial Investments, were overwhelmingly positive. Below, I show responses for the overall rating of effectiveness, which is the most comprehensive assessment provided in course evaluations at UC Irvine:

Q: Rate your T.A.'s general teaching effectiveness:

<u>Fall 2014</u>			<u>Fall 2015</u>		
[Response rate: 40/136 (29.41%)]			[Response rate: 11/46 (23.91%)]		
Poor	0	0.00%	Poor	0	0.00%
Inadequate	0	0.00%	Inadequate	0	0.00%
Less than adequate	0	0.00%	Less than adequate	0	0.00%
Adequate	7	17.50%	Adequate	2	18.18%
More than adequate	11	27.50%	More than adequate	2	18.18%
Very good	10	25.00%	Very good	3	27.27%
Excellent	12	30.00%	Excellent	4	36.36%

<u>Spring 2015</u>			<u>Spring 2016</u>		
[Response rate: 40/233 (17.17%)]			[Response rate: 33/119 (27.73%)]		
Poor	1	2.50%	Poor	0	0.00%
Inadequate	0	0.00%	Inadequate	0	0.00%
Less than adequate	1	2.50%	Less than adequate	0	0.00%
Adequate	8	20.00%	Adequate	5	15.15%
More than adequate	5	12.50%	More than adequate	2	6.06%
Very good	13	32.50%	Very good	15	45.45%
Excellent	12	30.00%	Excellent	10	30.30%

The modal responses from students were either “Very good” or “Excellent,” and were persistently positive across academic quarters. Evaluations were similarly positive for the other courses for which I was a teaching assistant. For qualitative and quantitative assessments for Introduction to

Financial Assessments, and all the other courses I was a teaching assistant for at UC Irvine, please see the links on my website under the “Teaching” tab: www.timothycyoung.com