

CU Denver FCQ Resolution
May 2023

Whereas, ample research evidences student evaluations of teaching (SET) like our FCQ are highly biased tools with respect to women and other marginalized groups and have little to no correlation with the quality of teaching¹;

Whereas, despite this research, not only do FCQ's continue to play a central role in faculty evaluation, but also results are published on a public site (a practice far outside national norms) thus inviting a level of public scrutiny which our administrators do not have to endure;

Whereas, in 2019 the FCQ Office began mining our FCQ's for key words and related stem words including: "age, of color, creed, disability, gender expression, gender identity, national origin, political affiliation, political philosophy, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status," reviewing and then reporting possible equity violations², a process to which written evaluations of administrators are not subject;

Whereas, per Regent Law and Policy, the evaluation of faculty is the primary responsibility of faculty and yet our recognized shared governance groups were not apprised of this use of our FCQ's or consulted on the appropriateness of this process or asked to participate in this process;

Whereas, the use of this highly biased tool for a purpose for which it is not designed places faculty in additional jeopardy;

Whereas, Offices of Equity are now treating the FCQ as if students filed an equity report, when they did not³;

Whereas, Offices of Equity are denying faculty the opportunity to call for an investigation, claiming an investigation cannot be done because of the anonymity of FCQ's, when in fact students can be identified and an investigation launched, thus denying faculty due process;

Whereas, students have effective avenues to file actual equity reports upon finding the need to do so;

Whereas, there is no system-level requirement that we use the current FCQ or that all faculty on the same campus use the same FCQ or that we collect written comments;

Therefore, be it resolved that we reject the current FCQ process.

Be it further resolved, that starting with the Summer 2023 administration of FCQ's and holding as long as FCQ's continue to be mined for keywords, all Canvas shells will have a banner with the following text to inform students (and faculty) of the actual FCQ processes:

The primary purpose of the FCQ is to strengthen teaching and learning on our campus. Therefore, constructive feedback is welcome. Know that while your name is withheld from faculty, you may be identified in certain instances. For example, all FCQ's are scanned for

specific keywords and phrases indicating attacks, slurs or other prohibited behavior. This behavior may result in “having your FCQ response removed, your comment being referred to the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) and possible disciplinary action” ([FCQ Office Terms of Service](#)). If you have concerns about possible equity violations, you should report them directly to the campus [Office of Equity](#).

Be it further resolved, that in Fall 2023 Faculty Assembly will work in concert with the Provost’s Office to research and propose alternatives to the current FCQ process that are in line with Regent Law and Policy while protecting faculty and student rights, improving the faculty teaching evaluation process, and more effectively mitigating sources of bias.

Notes

1. Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: a Review of Measurement and Equity Bias in SETs and Recommendations for Ethical Reform (<https://philpapers.org/rec/KREESE>)

In our analysis, two problematic and consistent findings predominate the literature. First, we find that scholars across disciplines and in numerous country contexts consistently reveal that SETs do not measure teaching effectiveness (Uttl et al., 2017; Benton & Cashin, 2012). That is, SETs are prone to measurement bias. Second, most of the literature indicates that men receive higher evaluative scores compared to women (see for instance, Basow & Silberg, 1987; MacNell et al., 2015; Mengel et al., 2018; Sidanius & Crane, 1989; Wigington et al., 1989). There is some evidence of discrimination towards other group as well, though it is less-well documented in the scholarship (as we will discuss below). In other words, SETs are also prone to equity bias.

The authors recommend the restriction or elimination of written comments (in our case we would need to eliminate as the FCQ Office has made clear it will not stop mining our comments):

Across all the studies in our sample, the clearest evidence of gender bias is in qualitative comments. Scholars employing content analysis of qualitative comments finds clear evidence of bias with women faculty and faculty of color are more likely to receive negative comments about personality traits, appearance, mannerisms, competence, and professionalism compared to white men (Wallace et al., 2019). Furthermore, many faculty report particularly mean-spirited and cruel comments (Lindahl & Unger, 2010). Instead of asking for general “comments,” assessments should direct students to provide feedback on certain experiences with the course, as this may reduce irrelevant and mean comments.

There are additional problems with qualitative comments beyond issues of bias. They are difficult to aggregate and have a low sample size (Himelein, 2018). Furthermore, they are not reliable—in fact, they frequently have contradictory feedback (Linse, 2017). Finally, even well-intentioned reviewers of qualitative comments may be susceptible to novelty bias (we are more likely to remember unexpected or uncommon findings) and negativity bias (the tendency to be influenced by negative information more than positive information) (Himelein, 2018). Comments that are anomalous or do not correlate with class averages on quantitative items should be disregarded.

2. Per email communication with the FCQ Office
3. The standard letter on the CU Denver campus states, "Due to the anonymous nature of the comment in the FCQ, I am unable to follow up with the reporting party [student] to ask for clarification."