Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT)

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS,
OFFICE OF ANALYTICS & INSTITUTIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS

Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT): Policies and Procedures

Contents

Premise and Purpose

Section 9.11.1 in the Faculty Handbook outlines the general premise and purpose of the Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) system. As stated in this section:

> The university expectation is that all faculty members will be evaluated in all courses taught each year. More information about this matter is available from departmental offices and from the academic deans. Student evaluation of courses and instructors is an integral component of a good teaching program. While specific procedures vary across the college, in general, committees in each college are responsible for designing appropriate evaluation procedures and for receiving such evaluations. Faculty members should ensure that their college's procedures for conducting student teaching evaluations are followed in a way that is absolutely free of intimidation or influence by the teacher's presence.

> The Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPOT) system was developed to provide a centrally-supported, university-wide method for collecting student feedback regarding courses and instruction. The SPOT questionnaire is designed for use across all university departments; as such, it focuses on issues with broad pedagogical significance. It is not intended to stand-alone in providing evidence regarding teaching effectiveness. Rather, it provides one form of information regarding the quality of courses and instruction that may be integrated and interpreted with other forms—such as instructor-developed course-specific questionnaires, peer observation of teaching, and instructor self-assessment—for purposes of instructional development and/or evaluation.

SPOT data can potentially be sensitive information for both instructors and students, and as such, the following procedures are intended to maintain the integrity of SPOT data while serving the best interests of students and instructors.

Management and Responsibilities

SPOT is managed and administered by Institutional Effectiveness in the Office of Analytics & Institutional Effectiveness. A third-party software system, EvaluationKIT, has been the administration tool for SPOT surveys since fall 2016. Because of the complexity of SPOT administration and integrations with key business tools on campus, close partnerships are maintained with Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies (TLOS) and Business Intelligence Services (BIS).

Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies (TLOS)

Faculty and staff in TLOS are responsible for managing Canvas, Virginia Tech's university-wide Learning Management System (LMS). EvaluationKIT has a turn-key integration with Canvas that ensures all course, instructor, and student information is seamlessly pulled from Canvas to EvaluationKIT on a regular schedule. TLOS responds to any and all issues or changes to EvaluationKIT that are directly tied to the integration with Canvas.

Business Intelligence Services (BIS)

Faculty and staff in BIS are responsible for managing MicroStrategy, a business intelligence tool that is connected to Virginia Tech's data warehouse. SPOT results are pulled into the data warehouse, and MicroStrategy pulls that data from the warehouse for SPOT reporting purposes. MicroStrategy is used to build custom reports and dashboards with SPOT and other types of data. The BIS team is responsible for maintaining and offering technical support for MicroStrategy users, some of whom are also users of SPOT data.

SPOT Data Steward/Data Managers

The Data Steward is an Administrative and Professional (AP) Faculty member in Institutional Effectiveness who oversees the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of all SPOT data. The Data Steward oversees the access privilege request process of adding and removing department or college SPOT administrators. The Data Steward

also assists in running SPOT reports from EvaluationKIT and/or MicroStrategy. This person is the primary point of contact with technical support on campus and with support personnel at EvaluationKIT.

The SPOT Data Managers are AP Faculty members in Institutional Effectiveness that assist with the day-to-day responsibilities associated with the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of SPOT data. The SPOT Data Managers are responsible for the administration of SPOT surveys each term (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer I, Summer II), by taking primary responsibility for setting up SPOT projects in EvaluationKIT. These individuals also assist department level SPOT administrators in running SPOT reports from EvaluationKIT and/or MicroStrategy. The Data Managers use ServiceNow to respond to administrators' and instructors' help requests regarding SPOT administration and reporting.

Department SPOT Administrators

These users are the main points of contact for department or college SPOT issues and administration. These users can access SPOT data based upon their assigned role at the department or college level. One of the main responsibilities of department SPOT administrators is ensuring the integrity of their department or college SPOT surveys prior to the evaluation period. These individuals are required to verify that the courses, students, and instructors in EvaluationKIT are correct prior to the release of the instrument during each administration period. These users are also responsible for adding any additional program or department items to the main institutional instrument. Department SPOT administrators are also often asked to run SPOT data reports for University department heads or college deans through either EvaluationKIT or MicroStrategy. Detailed information regarding their responsibilities with corresponding instructions can be found in the VT SPOT Guide for Administrators and Instructors.

Department SPOT administrators are established at the sole request of Deans and/or Department Heads. Deans or Department Heads must send an email to Institutional Effectiveness confirming the addition or removal of a SPOT administrator. With this approval, access or removal of access to department- or college-wide SPOT results through EvaluationKIT and MicroStrategy is established. Institutional Effectiveness will add administrators throughout the year as requests are received. On a yearly basis, the unit will review all administrator roles and confirm access with each college and department. If any other changes are needed by colleges or departments, it is their responsibility to contact Institutional Effectiveness.

SPOT Administration

Setup

SPOT evaluations are setup and administered in EvaluationKIT, the University's course evaluation software provider. The setup of SPOT projects occurs on the following general schedule:

- Fall: Setup complete and project deployed by October 1
- Winter: Setup complete and project deployed by January 5
- Spring: Setup complete and project deployed by February 1
- Summer I and Summer II: Setup complete and both projects deployed by June 1

A detailed schedule of EvaluationKIT project deployment, other important dates, and the configuration process are maintained for internal documentation in VT Confluence. Other administrations are conducted as needed for off-semester courses and courses offered in the professional/executive MBA programs.

Timing

The SPOT survey period typically runs on the following general schedule:

- Fall: Two weeks before exams begin through Reading Day
- Winter: Three days before the end of the Winter session through the third day of the Spring semester (one full week)
- Spring: Two weeks before exams begin through Reading Day

- Summer I: One week before exams begin
- Summer II: One week before exams begin

A detailed schedule of dates is maintained for internal documentation in VT Confluence. Other administrations are conducted as needed for off-semester courses and courses in the professional/executive MBA programs. Administration timings vary based on course schedules.

Communications and Administrator/Instructor Change Windows

Several notifications regarding SPOT are sent during each survey administration. The timing of these communications are based on the length of the administration period. Three groups of individuals are contacted directly through the EvaluationKIT system. The general content of these communications is presented below.

Communications to department SPOT administrators:
- The initial email generated through EvaluationKIT informs administrators about the start date for that survey period and notifies them that they need to access the system and do the following:
    - Confirm whether or not their department's x964 and x944 courses are running SPOT and remove courses that should not run SPOT.
    - Remove courses that have zero students or zero instructors.
    - Confirm whether or not courses with five or more instructors should be running SPOT.
    - Setup any Custom Question Surveys and attach them to the appropriate courses during that administration.
- The second email to administrators informs them that they need to access EvaluationKIT and add or remove instructors as needed prior to the survey being deployed.
- An announcement is then sent to administrators on the day the survey is deployed letting them know that the system is now open.
- The final email to administrators lets them know 1) that results of that administration can be accessed through EvaluationKIT and 2) when the raw data will be loaded into the MicroStrategy system.

In addition to the notifications from EvaluationKIT outlined above, SPOT administrators will receive two emails from Institutional Effectiveness. These emails will come directly from the Director or other Institutional Effectiveness faculty members and will contain the forwarded email from the two pre-survey release notifications sent through EvaluationKIT. Institutional Effectiveness communications are sent through the VT email system and are generated to ensure that administrators are aware that they need to make changes in the system as needed.

Communications to faculty members and instructors:
- A pre-survey announcement is sent to teaching faculty and instructors approximately 10 days before the start of the administration period. This email contains the open and close dates for the instrument and informs them that the change window for adding or removing instructors is now open.
- An email is then sent to teaching faculty and instructors on the day the survey is released which asks them to encourage their students to complete the SPOT evaluations before the close date. This email also contains information on how instructors can track response rates for each of their courses.
- Every four days instructors receive follow-up emails from EvaluationKIT informing them of their response rate for each course they are teaching that term.
- The final email to teaching faculty and instructors informs them when their results can be viewed in EvaluationKIT.

Communications to students:
- The first email to students is sent on the first day the surveys are open. This email contains log-in information and the close date for that administration period.
- Reminder emails are sent through EvaluationKIT to all students who have not responded to the SPOT instruments for their courses.

- Students who complete SPOT surveys are automatically sent a certification-of-completion email.

Students also receive notifications through Virginia Tech's Learning Management System (Canvas) letting them know they have surveys to complete. Students are able to opt-out of SPOT surveys at any time during the administration period.

Data Loads
Information that is loaded into the EvaluationKIT system comes from Virginia Tech's Learning Management System (Canvas). Courses, students, and instructors are directly pulled from this platform. Therefore, anyone that is entered as an "instructor" in Canvas will be loaded for evaluation. Department SPOT administrators will receive emails notifying them of the time frame for making any changes prior to administration.

The last student data upload from the Learning Management System happens in the morning prior to release of the survey. After the final upload and prior to the first student notification, any student with an honors sanction is removed from the course from which they received this sanction. Any student who withdraws from the course after the final upload from Canvas will not be removed from the system.

As previously stated, SPOT administrators are responsible for ensuring that courses, students, and instructors are correct in EvaluationKIT during the administrator cleaning period prior to the survey being released.

Requests for Changes to Data
SPOT data submitted by students can be edited only if a student submits an unsolicited request to reset their SPOT evaluation due to error. This must be done while SPOT surveys are still open for submission. **Resets will be done until 5 pm on the final day of SPOT administration for each survey administration period.**

SPOT Incidents
SPOT incidents are handled by Institutional Effectiveness professionals with the assistance of TLOS staff. Some examples of incidents include:
- Resetting a student SPOT survey at the request of the student if they made an error or wish to change/add information
- Helping a student who is trying to access the instrument but is having difficulty
- Assisting in adding/removing courses, instructors, or students to a SPOT survey administration if the assigned departmental SPOT administrator is having difficulty
- Adding department SPOT administrators with permission from the Chair/Dean
- Assisting faculty in locating prior SPOT reports
- Importing missing courses from Canvas

SPOT incidents from faculty, staff, and students will be handled as soon as possible. Some requests are easier to process than others. If a faculty member, department SPOT administrator, or student has not received a response in five days, they should contact Institutional Effectiveness.

SPOT Data Access
SPOT results are available to faculty/instructors and department SPOT administrators from EvaluationKIT the first Monday after grades are submitted for each term. Notification emails are sent through the software platform informing these two groups that they now have access to the results. Off-cycle SPOT administration reports are released at least 30 days after the close of the administration. In addition, instructor results are loaded in the faculty member or instructor's evaluation files in Canvas.

Data are loaded into MicroStrategy several weeks after the close of the survey for that time period. Generally this occurs within six weeks. However, the timing may be later if any problems arise in the transfer of these data.

Department SPOT administrators can access results and run custom reports from EvaluationKIT. Detailed instructions for running reports can be found in the VT [SPOT Guide for Administrators and Instructors](). Additionally, all historical SPOT reporting can be accomplished through the use of MicroStrategy.

Data Usage

Intended Purpose, Acceptable Use, and Requests for SPOT Reports or to Release Personally Identifiable Information

SPOT results should be used for the improvement of courses and instruction at Virginia Tech. The primary consumers of these results are instructional faculty and academic departments. The SPOT questionnaire has a broad focus; it is not intended to stand alone in providing evidence of teaching effectiveness. Specific college- or department-wide procedures are housed in those respective areas.

All course evaluation results shall be considered confidential and will be accessible to only the instructor, department head, and personnel committee. Individual student responses will never be released except in the specific case presented below under "Requests to release personally identifiable information." Except for the aforementioned case, written comments will not be released in any form for any reason. Numerical results could be shared by individuals other than instructors or department heads when presented at an aggregate level such that no one student, faculty member, course, program, department, or college could be identified. Data will not be generated for external research purposes such as grants or other research studies. Under no circumstances is data provided to students. SPOT results are considered personnel records and thus are not included in the Freedom of Information Act.

Acceptable Use of SPOT Data:
- Department chair review of faculty performance
- Promotion and tenure process
- Faculty applications for teaching awards
- As part of a faculty member's teaching portfolio/dossier

Requests for SPOT Data Reports:
- Requests for comparative information, promotion and tenure data, or GTA evaluations made through Institutional Effectiveness: University instructors and administrators who have a need for SPOT data that they cannot access themselves may request that the SPOT Data Steward create a custom report for them. The data in the custom report are carefully de-identified of all student information. These reports typically require instructor identifying information to be left intact. The Data Steward will accommodate such requests as quickly as she/he is able given the current work load of the unit. These reports will require chair approval prior to being released and information will be sent directly to the chair or any individuals approved by the chair. The only exception to this process is reports that are solely generated from data for the faculty member requesting the report.
- Reports for internal assessment/research: University administrators may need SPOT data to determine quality enhancements to courses or classroom spaces. The Data Steward will create a custom report with all student and instructor identifying information redacted. These requests will be evaluated and only accommodated if the current work load, the potential impact on the University, and the scope of the data request is deemed appropriate.
- Department chairs may go directly through their department SPOT administrators to generate additional reports as needed.

Requests to Release Personally Identifiable Information: SPOT responses should remain confidential unless information is presented on a SPOT survey that leads instructors or other University personnel to believe a student would cause harm to themselves or others. Anyone who becomes aware of or notices something of this nature on a SPOT evaluation should contact the Threat Assessment Team at threatassessment@vt.edu as soon as possible. The

SPOT Data Steward will work directly with the Threat Assessment Team to provide information as needed to assist the investigation.

User Support and Responsibilities

Users of SPOT are directed to ServiceNow, or 4Help, for assistance. These users include students, faculty, staff, department SPOT administrators, or anyone else at Virginia Tech who uses SPOT and/or SPOT results.

Instructors and department SPOT administrators have defined rights and responsibilities in EvaluationKIT. As such, they are expected to read EvaluationKIT-generated emails that contain instructions, important dates, and any other information pertaining to the administration of SPOT evaluations, and perform their respective responsibilities. The VT Knowledge Base contains full details of those responsibilities for both SPOT administrators and instructors.

Information contained in this site includes the following:
- Logging in and viewing courses in SPOT
- Verifying courses in SPOT
- Determining instructors on SPOT
- Adding custom questions to course evaluations
- Viewing evaluation results and running reports
- Finding past evaluation results (before 2016)
- Checking/Improving SPOT response rates
- Fixing missing evaluations/Excluded courses from SPOT
- Collecting feedback for courses not in SPOT

Resources and Helpful Links

- EvaluationKIT (https://vt.evaluationkit.com): SPOT administration system, also basic reporting system (back to Fall 2016).
- MicroStrategy (https://webapps.es.vt.edu/microstrategy): Business intelligence tool for historical SPOT reporting (back to 2012). Pulls data from the warehouse for reporting.
- Canvas (https://canvas.vt.edu): The University's Learning Management System. EvaluationKIT pulls course and user data from Canvas to run SPOT.
- ServiceNow (4Help): Virginia Tech's incident management system. An incident goes directly to the Institutional Effectiveness group in ServiceNow by emailing spotsupport@vt.edu.
- SPOT Guide for Students
  - https://vt4help.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article&sys_id=0b7d685c0f822a80d3254b9 ce1050eb7
- SPOT Guide for Department Administrators and Instructors
  - https://vt4help.service-now.com/sp?id=kb_article&sys_id=8f2f8c0f0f396680ee5a0bcce1050e28