



# Strategies to enhance course evaluation ecosystem: Lessons Learned at NUS

**Kiruthika Ragupathi & Beh Keng Khim**

Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning

National University of Singapore



# The NUS context

---

- 3 campuses
- 17 Faculties and Schools
- 80 Departments
- 43,000+ students
- 2,000+ Courses each semester
- 8,000—10,000 Classes each semester
- 2 semesters + 4 mini-semesters + 2 special terms each academic year

# History of course evaluations at NUS



Introduced paper and pen course evaluations



Used as a source of evidence for evaluation of teaching



Switched to online evaluations (legacy system)



Transitioned to Blue (university-wide roll-out)

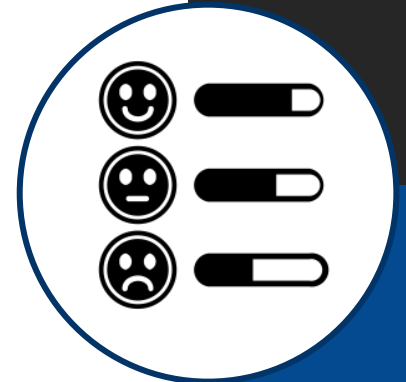
# Course evaluations at NUS

## Feedback on the teacher

- 4 university-wide questions: Likert-scale
- 2 open-ended questions
- Up to 3 department specific questions: Likert-scale
- Nomination for teaching awards: Yes/No with comments

## Feedback on the module

- 3 university-wide questions: Likert-scale
- 2 open-ended questions
- Up to 10 module-specific items: Likert-scale/open-ended (optional)





# Strategies for enhancement

Lessons we have learned over the last 5 years





# Boosting response rates



# Increase in response rates

Before  
BLUE

51%

AY 2016-2017  
Semester 1

71%

AY 2016-2017  
Semester 2

69%

# What we do...



**personalised email invitations**



**subsequent reminders**



**improved access**

(LMS integration, mobile devices, web)



**real-time response monitoring**

for teachers/administrators



**incentives**

(points awarded upon completion, used for course registration)



# Invitation email to students

Hello Liyan,

Now is your opportunity to provide feedback to your professors on their teaching. Your feedback is important, and sharing your fair and honest views about your experience of teaching in the modules you took will enable professors to know how they are doing and where they can improve.

Provide your feedback now >>



## **Your feedback counts**

Your constructive feedback supports professors to improve their modules and is one source of evidence used in the university's appraisal decisions.



## **It's confidential**

Your professors will never see your name; they will only receive an aggregate report, and only after the exam results have been released.

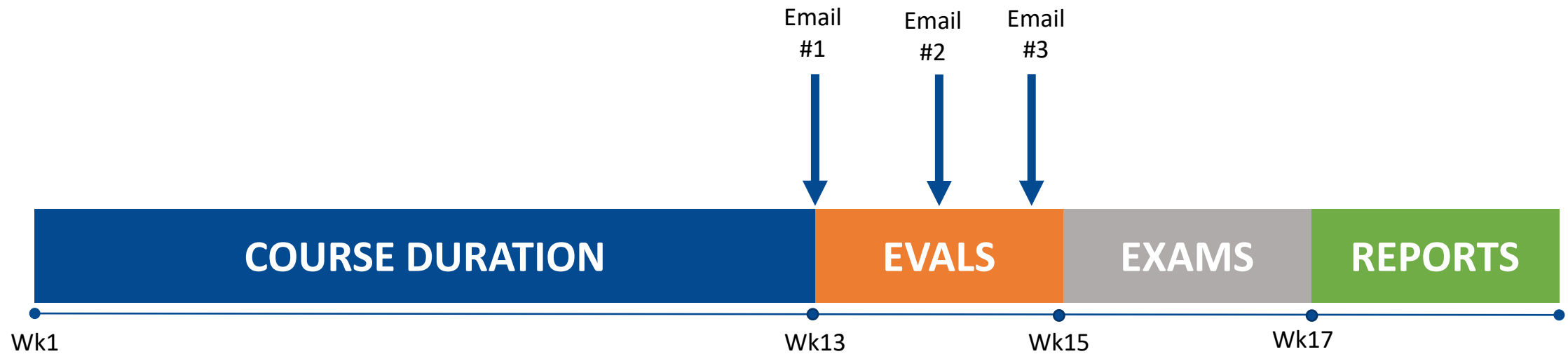


## **It's quick**

You can complete your module feedback on campus, at home, or on the go! It is easy to use and compatible with mobile devices.

The student feedback exercise is available for a very limited time. Please provide your feedback now!

# Communication to students



# Response rates are dropping again!

- 2018: Incentives were removed
- 2020: Module feedback points earned for every survey completed can now be used during course allocation to resolve tie-breaker situations

AY 2016-2017  
Semester 1

71%

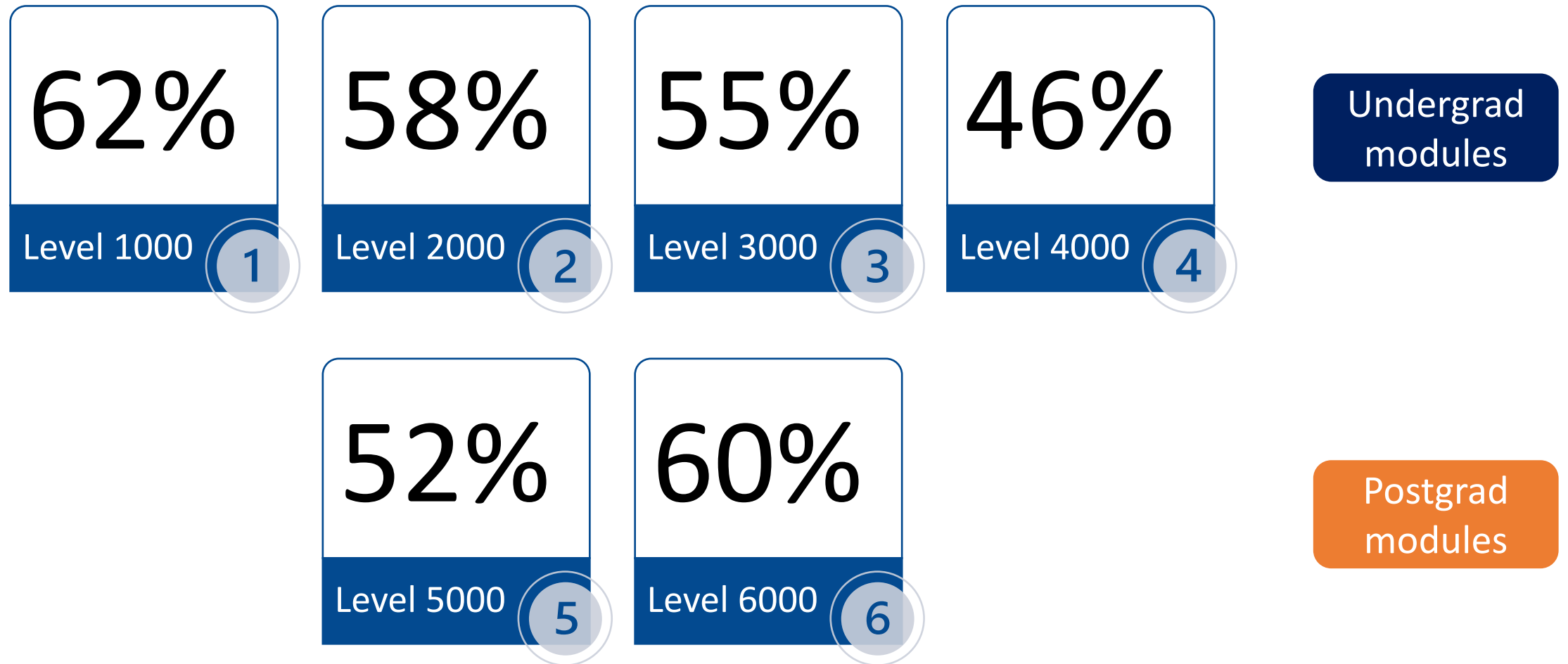
AY 2019-2020  
Semester 1

46%

AY 2021-2022  
Semester 1

65%

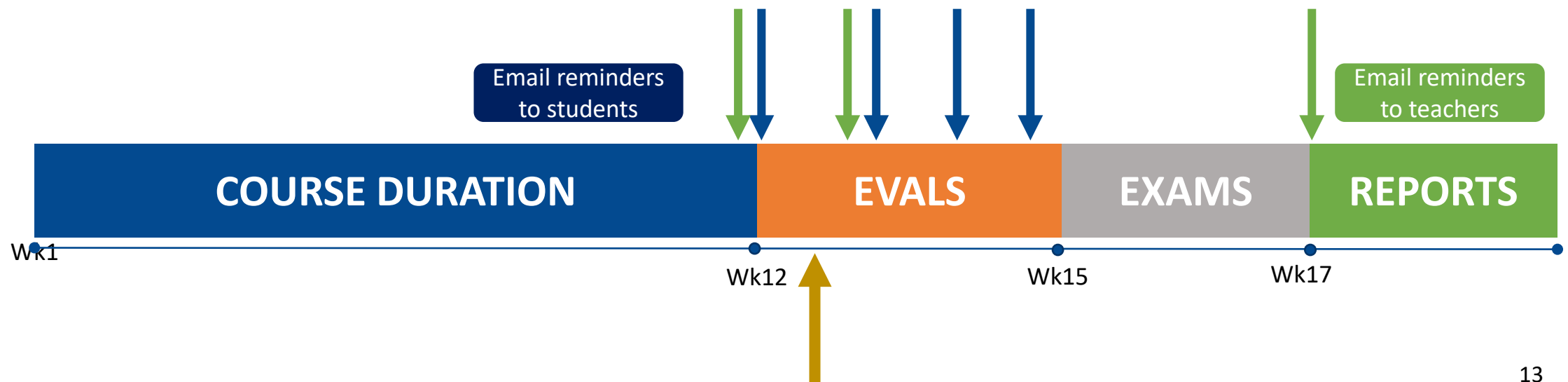
# Trends change with year of study






# What we plan to do...

- **Extend duration** of SF exercise from 2 weeks to 3 weeks
- Encourage teachers to **share with students on how they use student feedback** to improve teaching practice
- Nudge teachers to **provide time in class** for students



A close-up photograph of a hand holding a white ceramic mug. The mug has the words "SEE THE GOOD" printed on it in a dark, serif, all-caps font. The background is dark and out of focus, showing a person's arm and shoulder in a white shirt.

SEE THE GOOD

# Educating students

Photo by [Tim Mossholder](#) on [Unsplash](#)

# What we do...

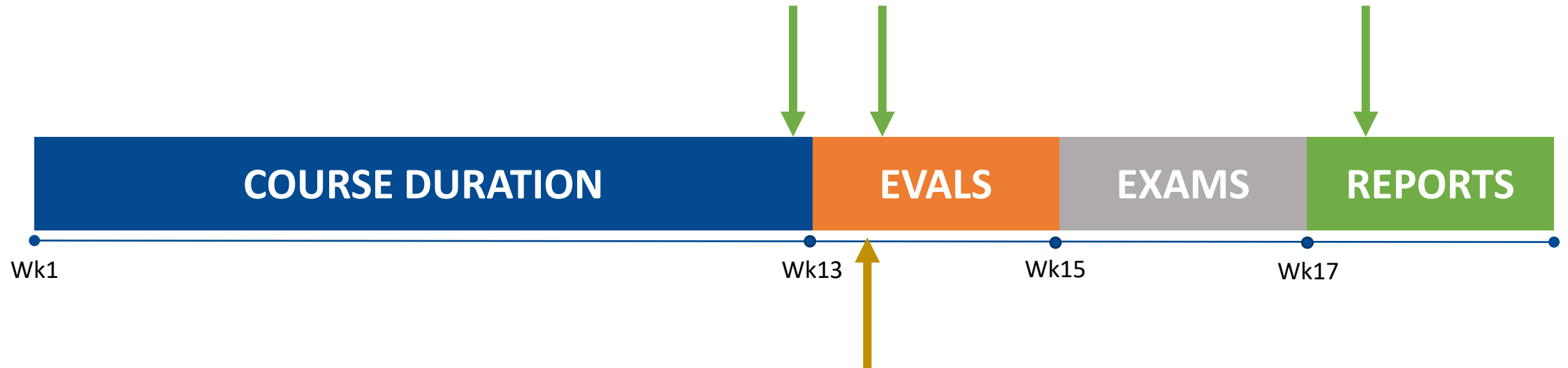
**Students:** Reminder emails that emphasise the importance and purpose of feedback (since 2019)

**Staff:** Reminder emails encouraging teachers to monitor response and share informational materials on SFT in class (since 2021)

**Faculty/school Leadership:** Targeted emails or conversations by some faculty/school leadership before the exercise

**University Leadership:** Share an infographic sent by the Senior Vice-Provost (Education) at the start of every semester

# Communication to teachers





## Student Feedback Exercise: **Your Voice Matters!**



### **Be Constructive**

Comments on your learning experience increases the value of your feedback.

Always focus on the learning and teaching issues and not on the teacher!



### **Be Specific**

Provide examples of how you think your teacher or the way the module is organised has helped (or not helped!) your learning.



### **Be Considerate**

Improper language or personal comments is highly inappropriate, and undermines your feedback.

Abusive comments are unacceptable.

## Student Feedback Exercise: **Your Voice Matters!**



### **Your feedback counts**

Your constructive feedback helps professors to improve their modules and is one source of evidence for the university's appraisal decisions.



### **It's confidential**

Your professors will never see your name. They will only get an aggregate report after the exam results have been released.



### **It's quick**

Complete your module feedback on campus, at home, or on the go! It is easy to use and mobile compatible.

Student Feedback Exercise:  
**Your Voice Matters!**

**Provide your feedback now >>**



# Pilots in faculties: Educating students



Deanery reaches out to students via email before every student feedback exercise

73%



Vice-Dean meets with the student committee and have townhall meetings before the exercise

71%



Residential colleges maintain close relationships with students

RC1: 72% | RC2: 83%

RC3: 87% | RC4: 81%



# What we plan to do...

## Introduce closing of the feedback loop



### **Feedback exercise**

(gathers data from students)



### **Report distribution**

(to teachers & departments)



### **Teacher self-reflection**

(gather summary & actionable insights from teachers)



### **Closing the loop**

(share summary report with students that includes teacher actionable insights)



# Providing feedback insights

# What we do...

## Improved reports for teachers

- towards a formative report aimed to develop reflective teaching, and improvement over time
- aggregated text analytics report for each teacher

## Better insights to Heads and Deans

- summary reports (for a quick overview)
- export reports (for further analysis)



# Teacher Report

## A. GUIDELINES FOR INTERPRETING THE REPORT

The teacher evaluation report is for developmental purposes and is meant to help identify strengths and areas for improvement. Please consider the following recommendations that will aid in interpreting the results:

1. Examine the report by taking note of patterns in order to consider how best to act on the feedback your students have taken the time to provide. Use the reflection section at the end to reflect upon how you might act on the feedback.
2. These evaluations stem from student perception and thus constitute one source of evidence among others as to the quality of your teaching. Any response to the feedback should be based on the most representative results rather than on outlying responses.
3. Upon getting a general sense as to what has gone well, and which areas may require attention and improvement, it is important to drill down to the related questions. These questions can help guide future action if feedback from students suggest areas for improvement.
4. Keep both the likert scale and written comments in mind while reading through the report. High scores (4+) suggest student consensus indicating a strength. On the other hand, low scores (2-) should be considered as an area that requires immediate developmental focus based on student feedback.



# Teacher Report

## **F. SELF-REFLECTION**

1. When comparing these results to the previous year's results, what areas have shown improvement?
2. What areas remain to be improved and what are the necessary steps / actions to do so?
3. Are there colleagues who could potentially guide me?
4. Are there issues that require departmental or institutional support?

# Interpretation guide for faculty



## INTERPRETING AND WORKING WITH YOUR STUDENT FEEDBACK ON TEACHING REPORTS

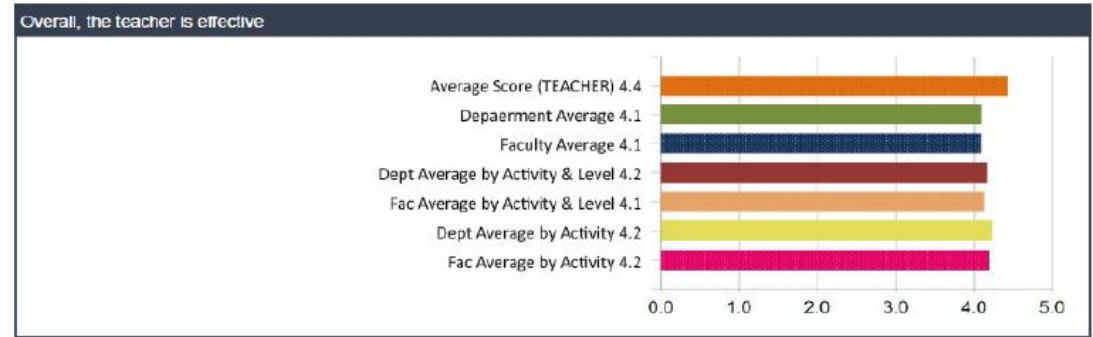
A RESOURCE GUIDE

### Summary graphs: Snapshots of strengths and weakness

Summary graphs are graphical representation of students' ratings, presented as average scores that capture the quality of key elements. These set of tabulations and graphs allows you to compare your SFT scores to the department/faculty means as well as by department/faculty by activity type and level of module. A tabular comparison is provided for the university-wide questions: the overall effectiveness, enhances thinking ability, provides timely and useful feedback, and increases interest in the subject.

#### (i) Rating Score

Question	Average Score (TEACHER)	Dept Average by Activity & Level	Fac Average by Activity & Level	Dept Average by Activity	Fac Average by Activity
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
Overall, the teacher is effective.	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.2	4.2



# Text analytics report for teachers

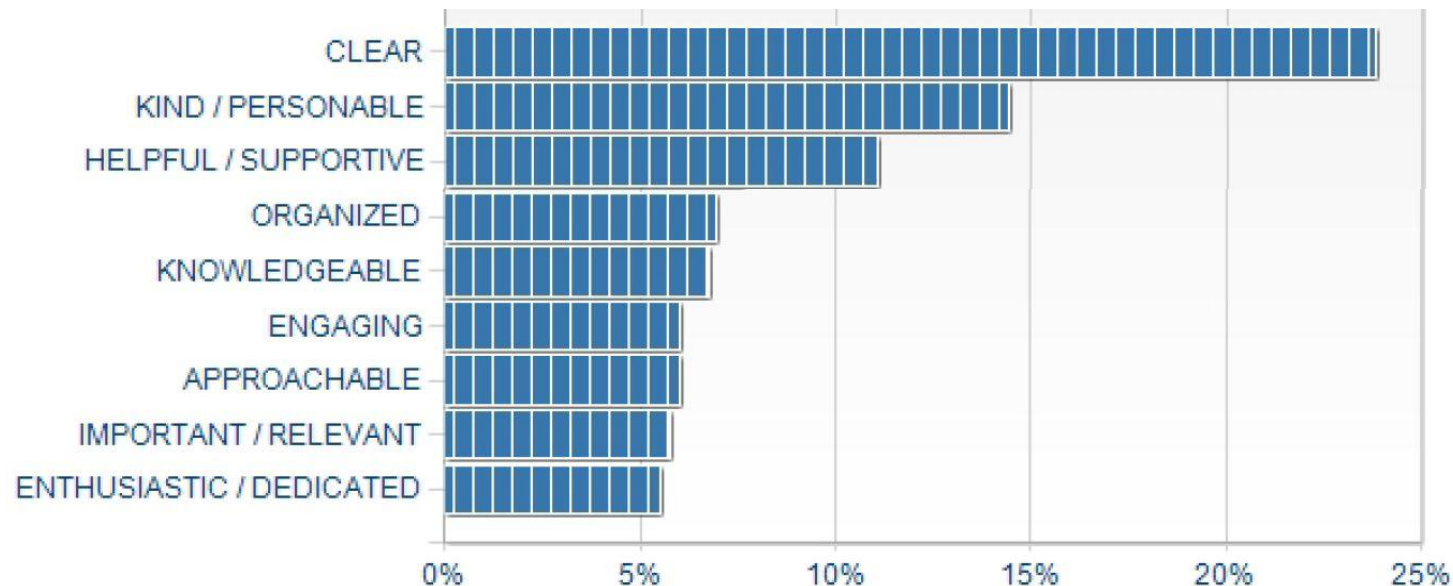
## AGGREGATED TEXT ANALYTICS REPORT

This report provides an analysis of student comments received in response to two questions: "What are the teacher strengths?" and "What improvement would you suggest for the teacher?"

- The text analytics reports provide an overview of student comments for all of your teaching over the past semester.
- The reports are useful primarily for formative purposes. They can help with quickly identifying perceived strengths and opportunities for development in one's teaching based on the frequency of keywords and keyword combinations that appear in student comments. The corresponding attributes are derived from a dictionary that has been compiled on the basis of hundreds of thousands of student comments from multiple universities in North America, Australia, and elsewhere.
- The reports are especially useful for modules with large class sizes given the high volume of free-form comments, as they provide instructors with a quick summary of massive amount of data by categorisation. That said, it goes without saying that given enough time, humans tasked with reviewing free-form comments will always produce better results than even the most powerful computers. For example, if you have fewer than 50 comments then it might be a lot easier to read the actual comments than relying on categorisation. Thus, text analytics reports are not used for judging the quality of teaching, but are **meant only for the eyes of teachers themselves to reflect on** and, where necessary, improve their own teaching.

# Better Insights to Heads/Deans

- real-time response monitoring during SF exercise
- summary report
  - an overall summary on modules and teachers
  - text analytics on open-ended comments



# What we plan to do...

- Instructor Feedback Dashboard
  - To support instructors in analysing their own data
  - Help instructors in identifying continuous improvement opportunities





# Distributing reports



# What we do...

Static view for teachers

Dynamic view access for:

- Department/faculty administrators
- Heads and Deans

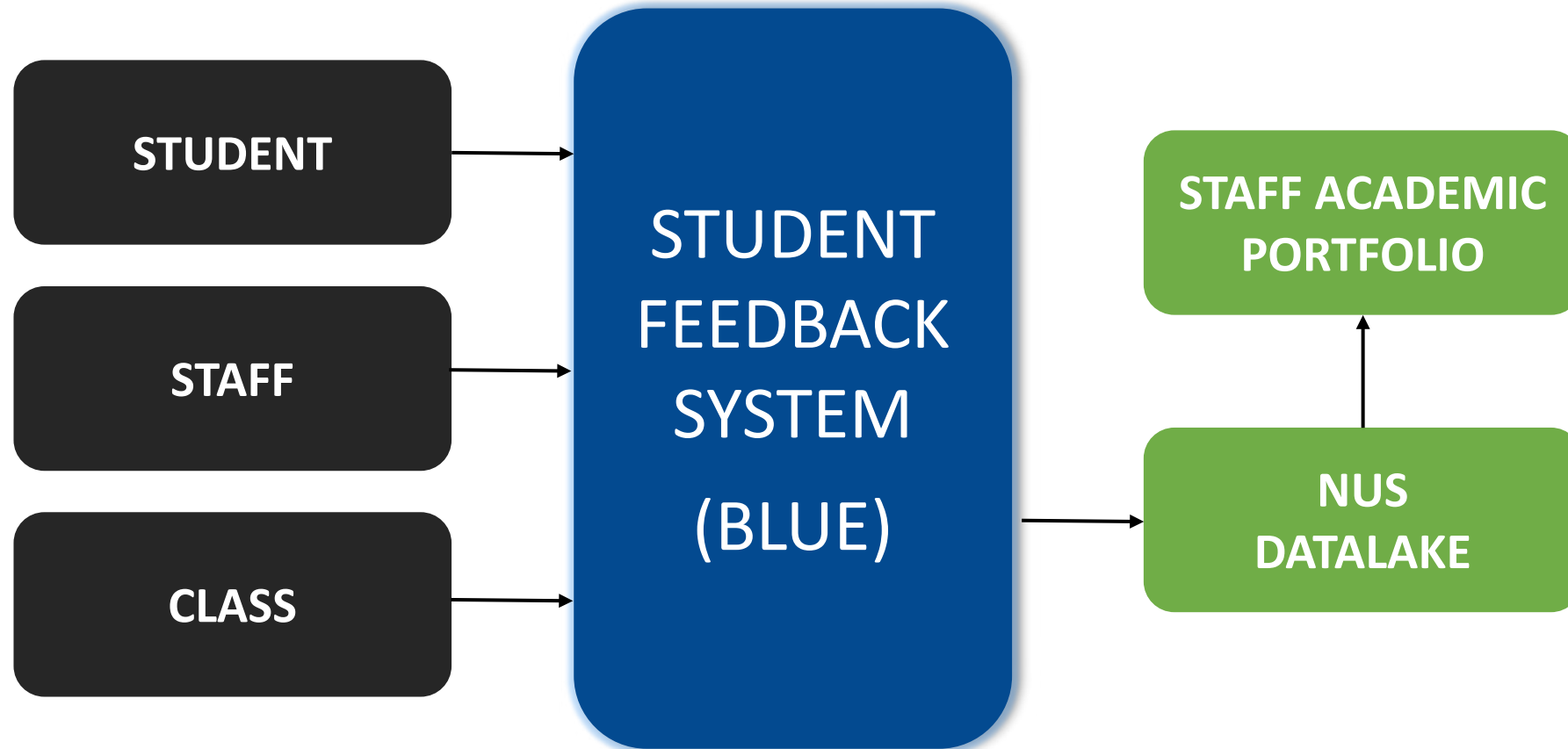
# What we do...

- Decentralised solution at the faculty level to share reports via their intranet (outside BLUE)
  - challenging to quickly provide access for all staff and students in a department or faculty from BLUE
- Feedback view (?) as an option



# Ensuring data accuracy

# What we do...



# Challenges faced in ensuring data accuracy

- Classes not published
- Data accuracy issues
- Classes not assigned to department admins
- Admin staff assigned to teach modules were not evaluated



# What we plan to do...


- A quick guide to data preparation administrators



# Supporting the community



# Support for SFT

**Student Feedback**★

PAGE TREE


- About SFT system
- Evaluation Period
- SFT Questionnaire
- SFT Reports
- › FAQs for Students
- › FAQs for Faculty Members
- › FAQs for Department Administrators
- › Resources and Guides

## Student Feedback on Teaching (SFT) at NUS

Created by Beh Keng Khim, last modified 29 minutes ago


Student feedback on teaching at NUS constitutes one significant source of data on teaching quality as part of the University's processes for educational quality enhancement and assurance. The University gathers student feedback on the module and teaching using a university-wide online system.

When students provide feedback on their teachers, they are encouraged to:




### Be Constructive

Comments on your learning experience increase the value of your feedback.



### Be Specific

Provide examples of how you think your teacher or the way the module is organised have helped (or not helped!) your learning.



### Be Considerate

Improper language or personal comments are highly inappropriate, and undermine your feedback. Abusive comments are unacceptable and will be discarded.

38



# Q & A

Kiruthika Ragupathi  
[kiruthika@nus.edu.sg](mailto:kiruthika@nus.edu.sg)

Beh Keng Khim  
[cdtbkk@nus.edu.sg](mailto:cdtbkk@nus.edu.sg)