

Using Write-In Responses to Improve Survey Measures



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Overview

- Sharing experiences about improving survey questions using write-ins
- FSSE survey, administration, and questions
 - Course division, academic rank, highest degree earned
- Methods of analysis
- Overview of findings and recommendations
- General ideas for “fixes”
- Additional challenges

In what situations or contexts have you wanted to improve survey items using write-in responses?

What were your biggest challenges and/or successes?

FSSE

Faculty Survey of Student Engagement

- Measures faculty (and other instructional staff) expectations and values for student engagement and their use of educational practices that are linked with high levels of learning and development
- Faculty are instructed to select one course that they are teaching or have taught during the current school year about which they answer a variety of questions
- From the 2013-2016, we have 70,561 respondents from 541 institution administrations

Administration

- FSSE is administered online in the spring at four-year colleges and universities in the US and Canada
- FSSE is intended for any instructional staff, including faculty, instructors, graduate students who teach, etc.
- Institutions provide the names and email addresses of *their selected sample* of instructional staff who will teach at least one undergraduate course in the academic year of administration

Survey Questions with Write-Ins

Did study:

- Course division for selected course
- Academic rank
 - Note adjunct status and full-/part-time employment is asked about separately
- Highest degree earned

Didn't study:

- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation

Course Division (#13)

Please answer the following questions based on *one particular* undergraduate course section you are teaching or have taught during the current school year.

What is the class level of most students in your selected course section?

- Lower division (mostly first-year students or sophomores)
- Upper division (mostly juniors or seniors)
- Other, please describe:

Course Division (#13)

What is the class level of most students in your selected course section? (n=61,493)

- 41.6% Lower division (mostly first-year students or sophomores)
- 52.6% Upper division (mostly juniors or seniors)
- 5.9% Other, please describe:

5.8% (n=3,563) wrote something in

Academic Rank (#36)

Which of the following best describes your academic rank, title, or current position?

- Professor
- Associate professor
- Assistant professor
- Instructor
- Lecturer
- Graduate Teaching Assistant
- Other, please specify:

Academic Rank (#36)

Which of the following best describes your academic rank, title, or current position? (n=61,621)

- 23.9% Professor
- 22.8% Associate professor
- 22.9% Assistant professor
- 17.8% Instructor
- 7.1% Lecturer
- 0.7% Graduate Teaching Assistant
- 4.8% Other, please specify:

4.9% (n=3026) wrote something in

Highest Degree (#39)

What is the highest degree you have earned?

- Doctoral degree (Ph. D., Ed.D., etc.)
- Professional degree (J.D., M.D., D.D.S., D.V.M., etc.)
- Master's degree (M.A., M.S., M.F.A., M.B.A., M.S.W., etc.)
- Bachelor's degree
- Associate's degree
- Other, please specify:

Highest Degree (#39)

What is the highest degree you have earned? (n=61,439)

- 63.2% Doctoral degree (Ph. D., Ed.D., etc.)
- 2.9% Professional degree (J.D., M.D., D.D.S., D.V.M., etc.)
- 30.8% Master's degree (M.A., M.S., M.F.A., M.B.A., M.S.W., etc.)
- 2.2% Bachelor's degree
- 0.1% Associate's degree
- 0.8% Other, please specify:

0.9% (n=571) wrote something in

Methods of Analysis

- Good old fashioned reading (Allison)
 - Tools: Excel output, pen and paper, couch, laptop, cat, snacks
- Qualitative software (Bridget)
 - Tool: NVivo
- Text mining (John)
 - Tool: rapidminer

Reading

Pros

- No need to find, learn, or use some kind of software
- Change of pace
- Feels like I'm really listening
- Get a sense of tone and emotion

Cons

- No hard quantitative evidence, only my notes and sense of results
- May be hard to determine if any fixes change my results in the future

Qualitative Software – Nvivo 11

Pros

- Free two-week trial
- Import from Qualtrics, SurveyMonkey
- Track respondent IDs
- Word frequency search
- Group similar responses

Cons

- Time spent learning software
- Time spent coding each response
- No substitute for knowing your data

Text Mining

Pros

- Fast
- Easy to use
- Data are "live"
- Exact

Cons

- Lack context, results may be confusing
- Answers limited questions
- Requires precision
- Large files

What method(s) or tool(s) would be your preference?

Is this driven by institutional culture?

What method(s) or tool(s) would provide the most compelling evidence for your decision makers?

Who makes the decisions about tools and changes?

Course Division: Reading

Common

- All years, a mix of all, all, equal distribution of classes, first-years thru seniors,
- 50/50 mix, combo of both, mix of both, both, combination, equal blend of the two, lower and upper

Less common

- 2nd year, 2nd and 3rd year, middle division, sophomore thru senior
- Dual enrollment, advanced high school credit, high school students
- Upper division students taking a lower division general education course
- Undergraduates and graduates, upper division and graduates

Course Division: Reading

Uncommon

- Advanced, honors, certificate, endorsement, night classes, online classes, general education
- Adults, non-traditional, working students
 - "Some are new and some are old"
 - "Some are younger others adults"
- ESL, English proficiency, international students
- Not sure, unknown
- "Students in many different disciplines"
- "The last few in the major on suspension"

Grrrrr....

- College graduates, graduate students, doctoral students, masters, post bac, professional students, RN-BSN
- Depends on the class, some classes are upper some are lower, depends on the semester
- "I teach more than one course"
- "Um I teach multiple courses. This is a stupid question"

Course Division: Qualitative Software

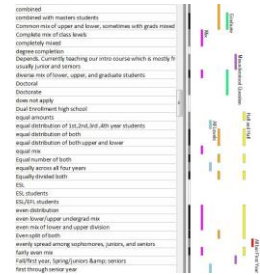
Nvivo word frequency search

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words
mix	3	1186	10.91	blend, blended, combination, combinations, combined, miscellaneous, mix, mixed, mixture
levels	6	656	7.02	degree, degrees, equal, equal, evenly, even, evening, evenly, grade, grades, level, leveling, levels, grade
upper	5	691	6.83	upper
lower	5	627	6.52	lower, lower
division	8	603	5.57	class, classes, division, divisions, part, sections, sections
seniors	7	489	4.79	ages, older, senior, seniors
students	8	434	4.30	student, students
sophomores	10	398	3.83	soph, sophomores, sophomores, sophs
juniors	7	389	3.84	junior, juniors
year	4	406	3.88	ages, class, classes, day, year, years
graduate	8	304	2.79	grad, grad, graduate, graduates, graduating, graduation

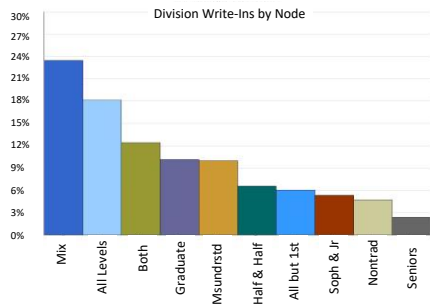
Course Division: Qualitative Software

- Coding categories based on read-through, word frequency on sample of 500 responses
 - Seniors only
 - Sophomores & Juniors
 - All but first-years
 - Non-traditional
 - Graduate students
 - Half and half
 - Both
 - All levels
 - Mix
 - Misunderstood question
- 75% of sample fit into these codes

Course Division: Qualitative Software



Course Division: Qualitative Software

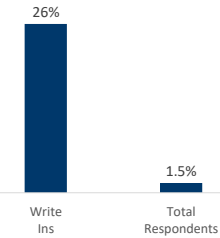


Course Division: Text Mining

Word	Document Occurrences
upper	689
lower	662
both	604
level	558
divis	456
senior	477
student	416
mix_of	392
junior	389
and_upper	366

Count	dmix		Total
	0	1	
iboth	0	331	2918
1	542	61	604
Total	542	392	3566

Proportion of respondents who wrote "both" and/or "mix of"



What 'fix' would you recommend?

What would our facilitators recommend?

Academic Rank: Reading

Common

- Adjunct, adjunct assistant professor, adjunct clinical faculty, adjunct lecturer
- Administrative position (chair, dean, director, coach, coordinator, department head, interim something, president, supervisor, vice president)
- Clinical, assistant/associate clinical professor, assistant/associate teaching professor, instructional assistant professor, teaching faculty
- Research professor, non-teaching faculty, research assistant professor, research associate
- Multiple appointments
- Visiting faculty

Less common

- Academic advisor, career counselor/advisor
- Artist in residence, executive in residence, professional in residence, Professor of Practical Practice, community faculty
- Academic staff
- Librarian
- Emeritus, retired
- Campus pastor, chaplain
- Distinguished professor, endowed professor
- Non-ranked faculty position, unclassified,
- Faculty specialist, specialist professor
- Senior something, lecturer, instructor, adjunct, clinical faculty
- Temporary position, sessional faculty, term faculty

Academic Rank: Reading

Uncommon

- Doctoral student, graduate student, graduate teacher associate, postdoc
- Full-time (fill in rank), part-time (fill in rank), limited term (fill in rank)
- I don't know, not sure, no idea

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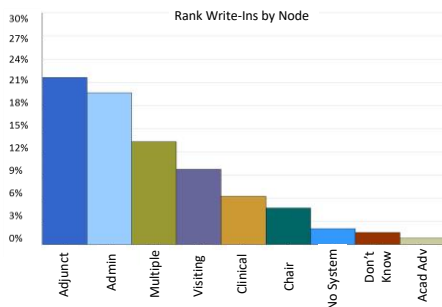
- Extra awesome faculty member
- Indentured slave, peon, etc.

Academic Rank: Qualitative Software

Categories used:

- Adjunct
 - Administrator
 - Academic advisor
 - Chair
 - Clinical
 - Don't know
 - Multiple roles
 - No rank system
 - Visiting
- 76% of responses fit into these categories

Academic Rank: Qualitative Software

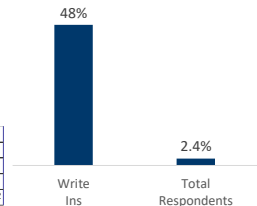


Academic Rank: Text Mining

Word	Document Occurrences
professor	1106
adjunct	889
assist	393
adjunct_professor	379
faculti	357
assistant_professor	289
visit	275
instructor	261
clinic	178
associ	174

	dadjunct	dvisit	dinstructor	dclinic
dadjunct	798			
dvisit	5	260		
dinstructor	76	10	139	
dclinic	10	0	36	132

Proportion of respondents who wrote "adjunct" "visit" "instructor" and/or "clinic"



What 'fix' would you recommend?

What would our facilitators recommend?

Highest Degree: Reading

Common

- Ed.S., educational specialist degree

Less common

- MFA is a terminal degree, (lots of anger here)
 - "You do realize that an MFA is a terminal degree, right?"
- Various certificates
- High school diploma, no degree
- JD and PhD, MA and JD

Highest Degree: Reading

Uncommon

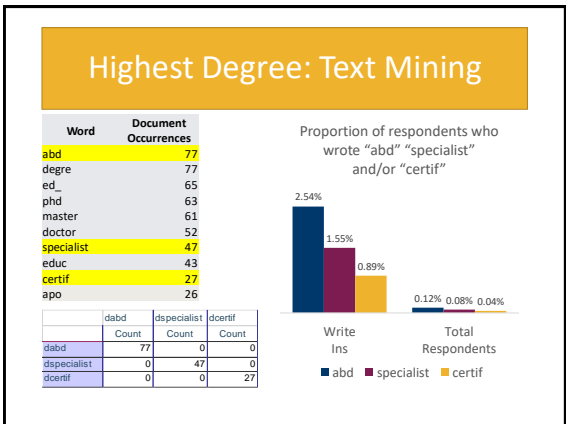
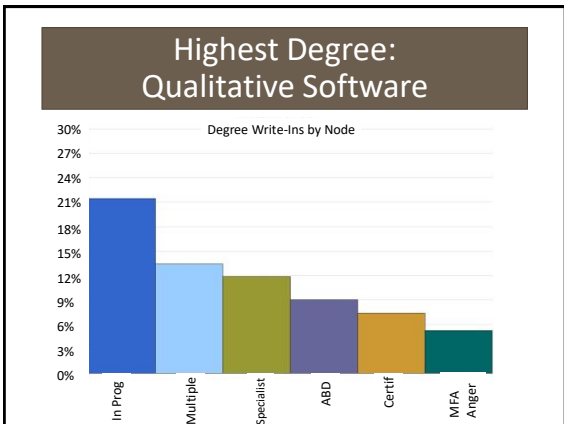
- Known expert, years of experience, life experience, published author
- Two master's degrees, two bachelor's degrees
- Bachelor's degree but in school for my master's
- M.Ed., M.Phil
 - "MSW and a PhD course"

Grrr.....

- ABD, working on my PhD, doctoral student, doctorate degree, doctoral candidate, MA and ABD

Highest Degree: Qualitative Software

- Categories used:
 - ABD
 - Certificate
 - In progress
 - MFA anger
 - Multiple degrees
 - Specialist



What 'fix' would you recommend?

What would our facilitators recommend?

Options for "Fixing"

- Make a change to the question stem
- Add definitions
- Edit or create additional response options
- Add to or create a parenthetical
- Change the ordering of questions or response options
- Take away the "other" to force a choice
- Ask in a series of questions
- Embrace the messiness

Additional Challenges

- Identity questions
- Questions with longer write-in responses
- These things we measure change over time
- The questions we ask change over time
- We don't have a universal language to describe academic matters
- Are the improvements worth the resources (time, effort, conversation, etc.)?

Final thoughts and questions?

Thanks for joining us!

You can find this presentation as well as more information about FSSE at fsse.indiana.edu/html/publications_presentations.cfm

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