SECaT Response Rates: Semester 2, 2014

Introduction

Following the directive from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) that all SECaT evaluations at The University of Queensland (UQ) be moved online, a new system for administering evaluations was implemented (EvaSys). Initial pilot testing of EvaSys and the online process was conducted in Summer Semester 2013, although this was limited to a small number of courses. A more extensive pilot was conducted in Semester 1, 2014 which involved at least one School from each Faculty participating in online SECaT evaluations prior to all Schools moving online from Semester 2, 2014.

During consultation with Schools and Faculties, one of the main concerns raised by staff was in relation to response rates. Consequently, the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITaLI) Evaluation Unit went to considerable effort to communicate various strategies for achieving high response rates prior to the Semester 2, 2014 evaluation period. These strategies included:

- Providing PowerPoint slides for staff to display in class;
- Encouraging staff to communicate with their students regarding the importance of evaluations and to share how previous feedback from students has resulted in changes to courses and teaching;
- Posting information and reminders to the UQ Facebook and Instagram sites;
- Employing student ambassadors equipped with lollies and iPads to visit all UQ campuses and encourage student participation;
- Developing a new 'Have Your Say' website as a source of information about evaluations for staff and students;
- Providing a direct link on the 'Have Your Say' website to the public SECaT course reports available in the UQ Reportal so that students may view SECaT scores from previous Semesters;
- Encouraging staff to conduct 'in class' evaluations;
- Promoting 'Have Your Say' using digital banners on campus, the UQ home page, and the my UQ home page during the evaluation period;
- Meeting with Teaching and Learning Committees to communicate information about the new evaluation system and process (particularly the importance of having correct data in the ECPS and SI-net), answer questions, provide resources, and discuss issues in relation to online evaluations.

Analysis of response rates on a daily basis throughout the evaluation period also proved to be a useful exercise, as it provided information at both the School and Faculty level as to how response rates were progressing throughout the evaluation period. The ITaLI Evaluation Unit communicated this information back to all course coordinators during the evaluation period so that if necessary, intervention could occur prior to the SECaTs closing.

Additionally, the ITaLI Evaluation Unit utilised Google Analytics software to provide more insight into students' patterns of responding. Google Analytics is a readily available online-based tool that can monitor and record site activity. The information recorded includes number and duration of sessions (refer to

Appendix A: Glossary for the definition of session), location of user (derived from IP address), device category, browser, operating system and internet service provider.

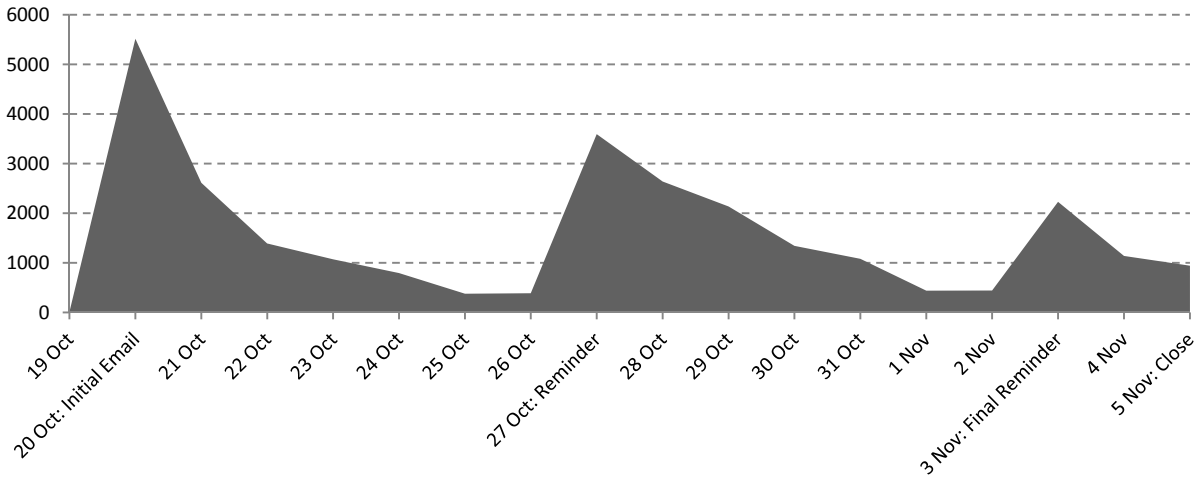
The purpose of this report is to summarise and present data in relation to response rates for Semester 2, 2014. All data presented in this report was collected within the evaluation period 20 October to 5 November 2014.

Findings from Google Analytics

Number of sessions per day

Figure 1 shows the number of sessions per day throughout the evaluation period. Of particular interest is the effect of the email invitations and reminders to students that occurred on 20 October, 27 October, and 3 November. Reminder emails were only sent to students who had not yet completed one or more of their SECaT evaluations. These reminders notably increased the number of sessions on the day of the reminder, although their effect decreased with each additional reminder. It is difficult to determine the reason for the decreasing effectiveness of reminders. It could be due to habituation to the email reminders, or the fact that as the evaluation period progressed more and more students had already completed their SECaTs, and thus there were fewer students to remind. Nonetheless it does show that sending two reminders is worthwhile.

Figure 1. Number of sessions per day.



Location

As expected, the majority of sessions occurred in Australia (99.47%). Only 0.53% of sessions occurred internationally in countries including the United States, Canada, Singapore, Germany, the United Kingdom, India, China, Hong Kong, and New Zealand. Table 1 lists the top ten cities in which sessions occurred. The majority of sessions occurred in Brisbane (93.64%), although a small number of sessions occurred in other major cities throughout Australia. This demonstrates that while not all students are on campus during the evaluation period, they are still willing to provide feedback. The online evaluation system facilitates this process, and enables these students to provide feedback that would not otherwise be captured by a paper-based evaluation conducted in class.

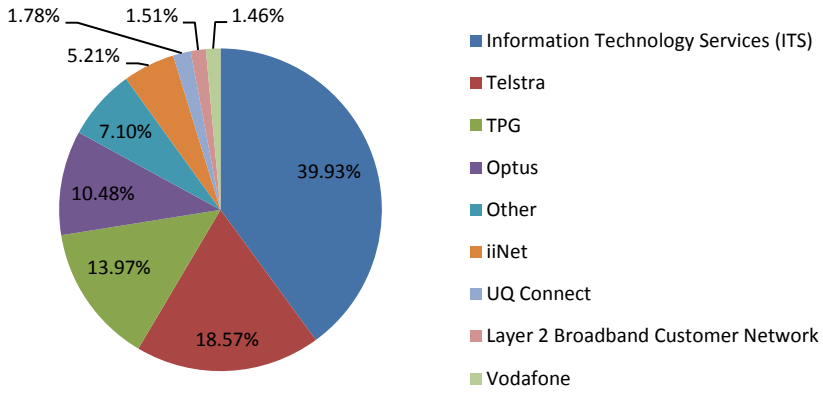
Table 1. Top 10 locations.

City	Sessions (n)	Sessions (%)
Brisbane	26,353	93.64%
Gold Coast	453	1.61%
Sydney	448	1.59%
Melbourne	292	1.04%
Sunshine Coast	72	0.26%
Toowoomba	66	0.23%
Perth	38	0.14%
Cairns	36	0.13%
Canberra	36	0.13%
Townsville	28	0.10%

Internet Service Provider

Figure 2 shows the proportion of all internet service providers that were used to access SECaT evaluations. Note that variations of the same internet service provider (e.g., Optus Internet – Retail and Optus Internet Pty Ltd) were merged into one name (e.g., Optus). Additionally, a number of internet service providers were associated with only one session (e.g., private networks and international internet service providers) and these were merged into an 'Other' category.

Figure 2. Internet service providers used to complete SECaT evaluations.



UQ's Information Technology Services (ITS) was the most frequently used internet service provider to access SECaT evaluations, representing almost 39.93% of all sessions. This data indicates that more than one-third of students were at a UQ campus when completing their SECaT evaluations. This is likely to be a conservative estimate, as some students may have been utilising other internet service providers while on campus (e.g., Telstra).

Browser

The ITaLI Evaluation Unit is not aware of any difficulties in accessing the SECaT evaluations, which was as expected given that EvaSys was designed to be compatible with many browsers. Table 2 lists the top ten browsers used to complete the sessions. The most commonly used browser was Google Chrome, which represented close to half of all sessions. Apple's browser Safari was also popular, representing almost one-third of all sessions. Note that most browsers can be installed on either Apple or Windows computers/devices and as such browser usage does not indicate the type of computer/device being used.

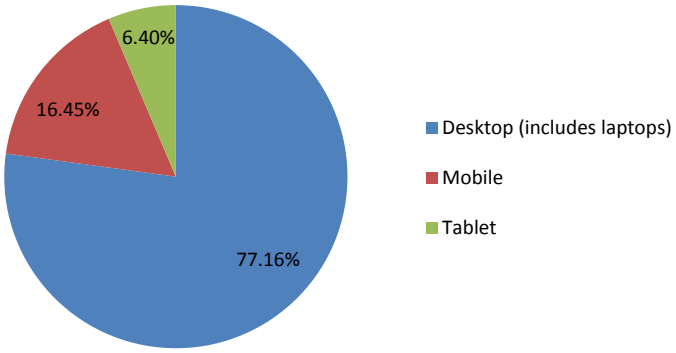
Table 2. Top 10 browsers used to complete SECaT evaluations.

Browser	Sessions (n)	Sessions (%)
Chrome	14,036	49.88%
Safari	8,688	30.87%
Firefox	2,892	10.28%
Internet Explorer	2,055	7.30%
Android Browser	289	1.03%
Safari (in-app)	91	0.32%
Opera	55	0.20%
Maxthon	11	0.04%
UC Browser	7	0.02%
Amazon Silk	5	0.02%

Device

Figure 3 shows the proportion of different devices used by students to complete their SECaT evaluations. By far the most common category of device used was 'desktop', representing over three-quarters of all sessions (77.16%). Unfortunately the category 'desktop' does not differentiate between desktop computers and laptops, so it is hard to ascertain figures for each of these devices separately. Mobile devices and tablets were also utilised, although to a lesser extent. This is consistent with a survey of students conducted earlier in the year in which the majority (75.80%) indicated that they would prefer to use either a desktop computer or laptop to complete their SECaT evaluations.

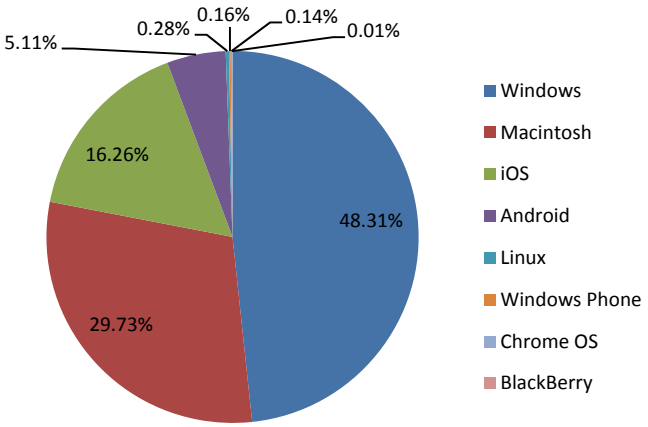
Figure 3. Devices used to complete SECaT evaluations.



Operating System

Figure 4 shows the proportion of different operating systems used by students to complete their SECaT evaluations. Windows accounted for almost half of all sessions (48.31%), followed by Macintosh and iOS (both Apple products) which together accounted for 45.99% of all sessions. The Android operating system accounted for 5.11% of all sessions. All other systems accounted for less than 0.50% of all sessions (e.g., Linux, Windows Phone, Chrome OS, and BlackBerry).

Figure 4. Operating systems used to complete SECaT evaluations.



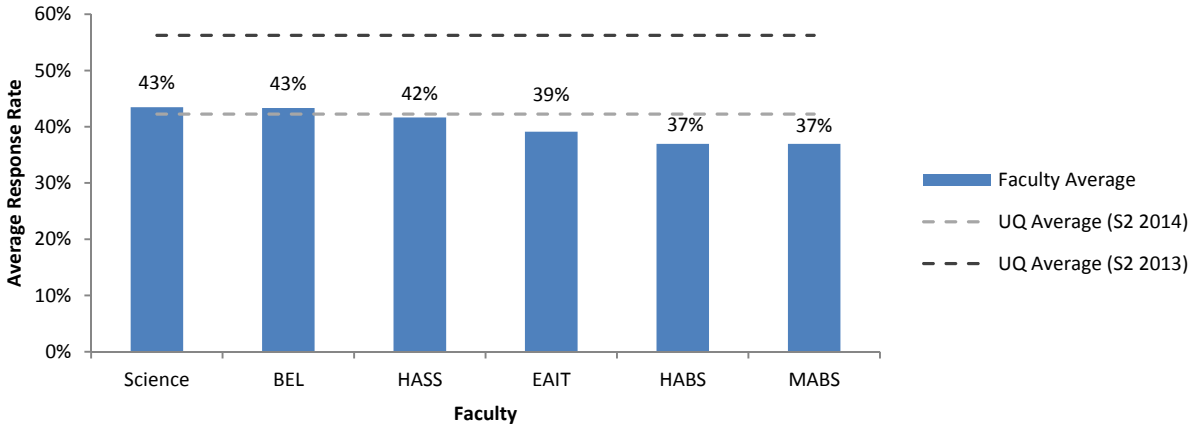
Response Rates

Response rates were calculated for each individual course, and then examined according to three levels: Faculty, School, and class size (see Appendix A: Glossary for the definition of response rate).

Faculty

Figure 5 compares the average Semester 2, 2014 response rate for each Faculty with the UQ averages from Semester 2, 2014 and Semester 2, 2013. In Semester 2, 2014 the average response rate across UQ for online SECaT evaluations was 42.26%. In Semester 2, 2013 the average response rate across UQ for paper-based SECaT evaluations was 56.25%. This represents an average drop in response rate of 13.99%.

Figure 5. Average response rate for each Faculty compared to the UQ average.



School

Table 3 lists the average Semester 2, 2014 response rate for each School. On average, almost half of the Schools obtained a response rate of over 40%. Only two Schools obtained an average response rate of less than 30%. The remainder fell between the range of 30% and 40%.

Table 3. Average response rate for each School.

School	Average Response Rate	Number of Courses Evaluated
Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Information Technology	41.70%	2
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	37.32%	5
School of Agriculture and Food Sciences	49.68%	108
School of Architecture	44.19%	16
School of Biological Sciences	42.26%	27
School of Biomedical Sciences	39.57%	41
School of Business	45.96%	149
School of Chemical Engineering	33.92%	37
School of Chemistry and Molecular Biosciences	38.33%	41
School of Civil Engineering	36.13%	19
School of Dentistry	37.83%	28
School of Earth Sciences	47.82%	13
School of Economics	44.61%	57
School of Education	44.87%	99
School of English, Media Studies and Art History	39.65%	53
School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management	48.31%	71
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences	49.49%	71
School of History, Philosophy, Religion and Classics	37.38%	53
School of Human Movement Studies	34.64%	42
School of Information Technology and Electrical Engineering	44.20%	68
School of Journalism and Communication	36.92%	21
School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies	53.88%	96
School of Law	39.39%	50
School of Mathematics and Physics	38.00%	65
School of Mechanical and Mining Engineering	34.56%	44
School of Medicine	26.46%	48
School of Music	38.26%	33
School of Nursing and Midwifery	22.29%	28
School of Pharmacy	33.31%	19
School of Political Science and International Studies	38.29%	39
School of Population Health	44.81%	46
School of Psychology	40.00%	56
School of Social Science	48.24%	46
School of Social Work and Human Services	41.26%	28
School of Veterinary Science	39.97%	30

Relationship Between Class Size and Response Rates

Prior to examining the relationship between class size (enrolment as at census date) and response rates, these variables were assessed for normality and linearity.

Figure 6. Histogram of response rate.

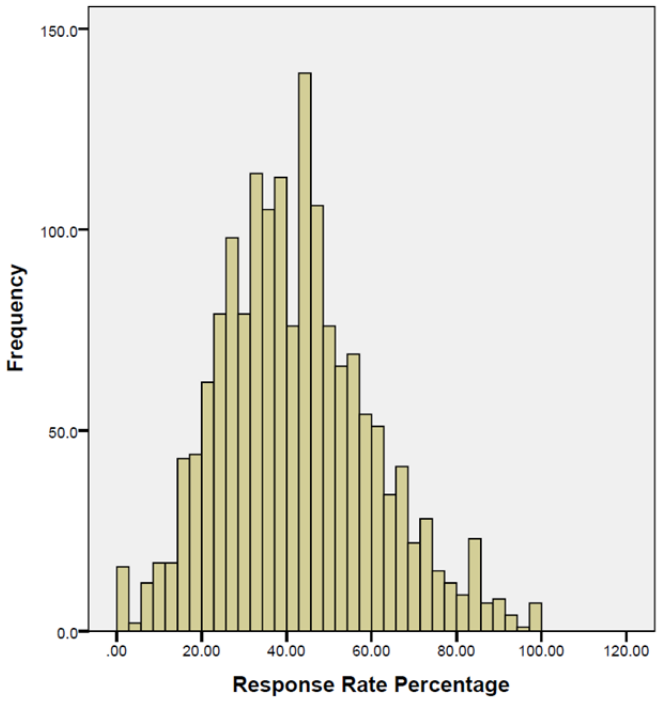
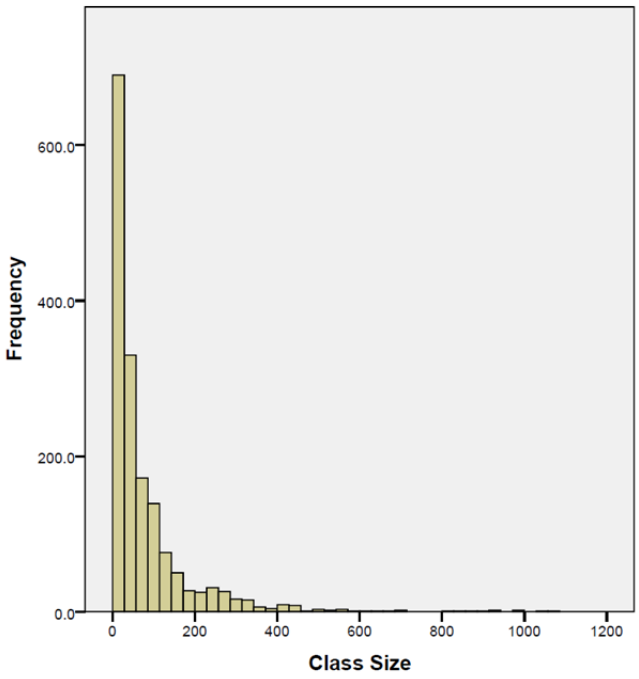
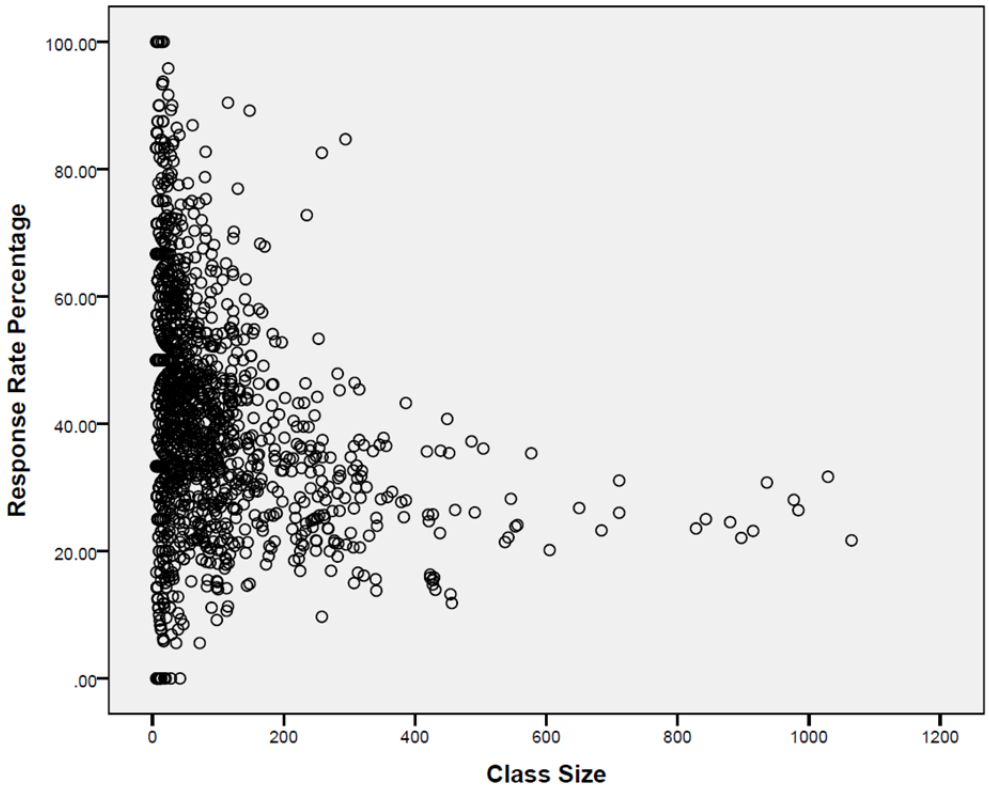


Figure 7. Histogram of class size (enrolment as at census date).



As Figures 6 and 7 show, response rate is normally distributed but class size is positively skewed. As such, parametric tests cannot be used to analyse the relationship between class size and response rates.

Figure 8. Scatterplot of the relationship between class size and response rate.



Inspection of the scatterplot (Figure 8) revealed that the relationship between class size and response rate is most likely non-linear, providing further justification for the use of a non-parametric test.

The relationship between class size and response rate was investigated using Spearman's Rho (the non-parametric alternative to Pearson's r). There was a significant negative correlation between the two variables, *rho* = -.261, *n* = 1649, $p < .001$, with larger class sizes associated with lower response rates. The coefficient of determination indicated that the two variables shared approximately 7% variance, which is considered to be a small correlation. In other words, whilst class size does partially account for response rate, there are likely to be other factors involved.

Qualitative Feedback

There has not yet been an opportunity to evaluate the qualitative feedback obtained in the evaluation process. It's expected that with the eventual abilities being developed in ITaLI, the rich data collected will be evaluated and contextualised for reporting purposes. For the moment, the qualitative data gathered has been made available in raw form with the Course and Teaching evaluation reports emailed to coordinators and teachers.

In Class Evaluations

Where possible throughout the evaluation period, ITaLI Evaluation Unit staff monitored the Google Analytics site. The purpose of monitoring was to observe any noticeable spikes in responding to particular SECaT evaluations. When a spike was noticed, ITaLI Evaluation Unit staff then cross-referenced with SI-net data to determine if a class for the relevant course was scheduled at the time of the spike. In every instance that a spike was observed, it coincided with scheduled class time for the course in question. This provides strong evidence that 'in class' evaluations were being conducted. An 'in class' evaluation occurs when staff set aside a suitable amount of time in class and ask students to use their own device to complete the SECaT evaluation online. This technique is widely known to increase response rates, and was encouraged by the ITaLI Evaluation Unit. Table 4 lists the courses which were observed utilising this technique (note that this is not a comprehensive list, and there may have been other 'in class' evaluations conducted during times when ITaLI Evaluation Unit staff was unable to monitor Google Analytics).

Table 4. In class evaluations.

Course Code	Class Size	Responses	Response Rate
ANTH1008	143	63	44.06%
BIOL1100	148	132	89.19%
CHEE2501	38	23	60.53%
CHIN2100	54	42	77.78%
ECON1010	984	260	26.42%
ECON1310	283	60	21.20%
ECON7510	29	23	79.31%
EDUC1029	173	68	39.31%
ERTH3021	20	14	70.00%
EVNT7051	81	67	82.72%
FREN2020	61	53	86.89%
JAPN3003	120	66	55.00%
LAWS1114	315	143	45.40%
MGTS1301	650	174	26.77%
MGTS1601	711	221	31.08%
MKTG2508	230	91	39.57%
PHRM1012	294	249	84.69%
PHRM4012	258	213	82.56%
PHTY1221	142	89	62.68%
PHTY7823	41	35	85.37%
PSYC2063	235	171	72.77%
SLAT7806	18	15	83.33%
SPCH1201	112	73	65.18%
SPCH4201	89	57	64.04%

As Table 4 shows, courses that incorporated an 'in class' evaluation obtained higher response rates, even in the case of some large classes (e.g., PHRM1012). The average response rate for courses which conducted an 'in class' evaluation was 61.49%, which is higher than the UQ average of 42.26%. This is a general observation only – statistical analysis of this data is not possible.

Appendix A: Glossary

Term	Definition
Session	The period of time a user is active on the site or app. By default, if a user is inactive for 30 minutes or more, any future activity is attributed to a new session. Users that leave the site and return within 30 minutes are counted as part of the original session.
Response Rate	The response rate is equal to the number of responses to a SECaT for a particular course divided by the number of students enrolled in that course as at census date. The result is then multiplied by 100 to return a percentage. The response rate at the course level is then averaged across a School, Faculty, or all of UQ.