University of St.Gallen

The way to higher response rates –
factors that impact on the response rates of course evaluations at the University of St.Gallen

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2 Management summary

This study aims at identifying the factors that impact on the response rates of course evaluations at the University of St.Gallen. Based on literature research, the theoretical part of this thesis lists a number of factors, which are allocated to three different areas: process-related factors, environmental-related factors, and motivational-related factors. The thinking behind this is twofold: to establish whether there is an emphasis on one specific area and to understand how the three areas relate to each other.

By applying a qualitative method, the author could identify a number of factors in each of the three main areas for the University of St.Gallen. The data for the qualitative analysis was obtained from – in total – four focus groups on assessment, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral study levels, as well as three expert interviews with teachers from different teaching areas.

The main results for the process-related area are the factor timing of the evaluation, thus when the evaluation takes place, and online evaluations. In the environmental-related area, the HSG culture, teaching culture, as well as the focus of the evaluations have the highest impact on the response rates. The main factors in the motivational-related area are buy-in regarding the importance of the evaluations and the feedback loop. This study found that there is a correlation between the three areas, as well as factors.

This study has two research objectives. The first objective is to find out which factors impact on the response rates of course evaluations. The second objective is to understand how these factors relate to each other and how they can be used for improvement. This study proposes the adaption of methods for collecting and disseminating student feedback and the implementation of student evaluation measures that reflect the varied teaching approaches, as well as the diverse learning environments, as possible solutions in answer to the question posed in the research objective. Furthermore, it proposes a refinement of the procedures for administering and communicating the student evaluation practice and, lastly, it proposes to define and clearly articulate a statement of purpose for conducting student evaluations.

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5 List of abbreviations

EQUIS   *European Quality Improvement System.*

AACSB   *Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business*

QD   *Quality Development*

IBEEM   *Institute of Business Education and Educational Management*

PEM   *Process – Environment – Motivation*

SET   *Student Evaluation of Teaching*

CHE   *Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung*

6 Introduction and central questions

The word "motivation" stems from the Latin word *movere*, which means "to move." Your motivation level is what moves you to participate in an activity and it affects your desire to continue with the activity. Ryan & Deci (2000), for example, describes motivation as follows on p. 54:

> "To be motivated means to be moved to do something. A person who feels no impetus or inspiration to act is thus characterized as unmotivated, whereas someone who is energized or activated toward an end is considered a motivated person."

What motivates our students and faculty to participate in a course evaluation? According to Ryan & Deci (2000), motivation is hardly a unitary phenomenon. Therefore, the degree of motivation that a person shows (motivation level), as well as the type of motivation (motivation orientation), determine how much action is undertaken. For example, a student can be highly motivated to fill in an evaluation purely out of interest and because he or she wants to contribute towards improving the course; or he / she fills in the evaluation at the teacher's request and because it might help getting a good grade. The nature and focus of the motivation differs in this example. At the University of St.Gallen, the end-of-course evaluations are the main instrument that is used to improve and further develop teaching and learning. It is therefore important to learn what motivates faculty and students to participate; it is also important to learn which factors affect participation in such evaluations.

This study aims at the following:
- To identify factors that impact on the response rates of course evaluations at the University of St.Gallen; and
- To show how these factors relate to each other and how they can be used to increase the response rates of course evaluations.

This study collected qualitative data through focus groups and expert interviews. The focus was twofold: On the one hand, students of four study levels participated in focus groups and discussed evaluation topics in an open, but also moderated, conversation. On the other hand, three expert interviews with faculty members of different programs were conducted. The interviews focused on the same evaluation-related questions as the focus groups. Both student and faculty perspectives will be dealt with in this study.

6.1 Structure of the study

This study begins with a general introduction of evaluation and subsequently considers different aspects concerning the use of student course evaluations.

In order to help identify the factors that impact on the response rate, this study first focusses on the available literature in this field. The conclusion of the theoretical section defines and shows – according to the collected literature – an overview of factors that impact on the response rate.

In this study's practical section, data was collected via focus groups and expert interviews. A qualitative methodology was used to analyse the data. Following the model that resulted from the theoretical chapter, the factors were categorized and divided into the following three groups: process-related factors, environmental factors, and motivational factors. The analysis resulted in a number of categories – for the focus groups and the experts – that could be identified as the main factors, which have an influence on the response rate. The results were then interpreted, followed by suggestions for further improving and developing the evaluation process at the University of St.Gallen.

7 Definition and purpose of an evaluation

7.1 What is evaluation?

There are numerous diverse definitions of evaluation. Since Scriven (1991, p. 139) features prominently in the topic of evaluation, his definition will be used:

Evaluation is the "process of determining the merit, worth, and value of things, and evaluations are the products of that process."

By "merit," Scriven (1991) refers to the "intrinsic value" of the evaluation object and by "worth," he refers to the "market value" of the evaluand (the subject of an evaluation, typically a program or system rather than a person) or its value to a stakeholder, an organization, or another collective. By "value," Scriven considers the notion that evaluation always involves value judgments. Scriven contends that this valuing process operates for both formative and summative evaluations.

7.2 Why do we evaluate?

Nowadays evaluations seem to be everywhere. People appear to continuously yearn for further improvement, checking, controlling, and understanding what we are doing right, and what we are maybe doing wrong. People want – or have to give feedback about – nearly everything they do; they eat in a restaurant, they go on holiday or they buy something. It is easy to discover what other people think. That feedback is often used to make decisions about, for example, the next trip or hotel reservation. Needless to say, without a number of people actually giving feedback, the system does not work. People need respondents to know how good or bad a particular restaurant is, or – for example – how good or bad the course of a teacher apparently is. The respondents are a decisive "piece" of the evaluation; what they say, why they are saying it, and how many of them are saying it will directly impact on the evaluation's output.

An evaluation is an opportunity for all stakeholders to contribute and share their knowledge. Through the collected feedback one can find ways to further improve and develop a program, course, project, or process. Generally, the primary purpose of evaluation is to decide about future changes. Through evaluations, people also want to gain insight about how ongoing projects are dealt with or they want to compare, for example, courses, programs, or other activities. In an academic environment, different evaluation models are used. The common goal of all models, however, is to gather data for improvement and further development. Student evaluations have become routine at most schools and universities. Although the style of

course evaluations differs from university to university and from country to country, the ultimate purpose is to ensure accountability, benchmarking, and continuous improvement. The tool that institutes typically use for evaluating their courses is surveys – either paper-based or online. The content, length, and purpose of the questionnaire depend on the institution, whereas the focus of the evaluation is often on teaching and learning, as well as curriculum development and assessment.

8 Student course evaluations: a closer look

As soon as an evaluation is done, data for course development and improvement will be available. But how can we interpret the data that has been collected through an evaluation? How many students did actually complete the survey; thus, how high is the response rate? What response rate is required for representative data? Many factors determine the response rate and the validity of the gathered data. As stated, the respondents are an important "piece" of the evaluation. Their feedback will have a direct impact on an evaluation's outcome. The response rate is equal to the number of participants that answered the survey divided by the number of participants in the sample. The response rate is an important indicator of the survey quality. If many participants reply, one will get a fairly good indication of the entire group's opinion and the data will be representable. However, with a response rate of 50%, the group of participants that did not complete the survey may possibly have answered differently compared to the group that did indeed complete the survey. Supposing that a group of respondents enjoyed the course very much, but a group of non-respondents did not think very highly of it and didn't participate in the survey. The outcome would have been very different if all the students had completed the questionnaire. This so-called bias is a term one often finds in literature concerning course evaluations.

8.1 Bias in student evaluations

A great deal of research has been devoted to bias in student evaluations. This research helped identify a number of facts that influence ratings. A positive self-esteem, as well as energy or enthusiasm regarding the instructor's personality positively influence the ratings, according to Benton & Cashin (2014) and Davidovitch & Soen (2011). The students who got the highest marks in their examinations and believe that they have learned a great deal in the course, give the highest ratings, claim Theall & Franklin (2001) in their study. There appears to be a correlation between the "amount learned" from a student's perspective and the overall rating of the teacher, as well as the course.

Teachers receive a higher rating in courses that students were interested in prior to their participation in the course, for example when students are taking an elective, according to Marsh (1991). Centra (2014) states in his study that the class size also affects the rating, although the increase is small ; smaller classes do have a positive effect on student ratings. Furthermore, a great deal of research has been devoted to gender bias in evaluations. Students often expect male and female professors to behave differently or to show certain "masculine" and "feminine" traits. Male professors are typically perceived as objective, professional, and effective, whereas female instructors are often expected to be accessible and to have strong interpersonal skills.

Are women rated differently from men, based on their gender behavior? The opinions vary. Certain researcher say it is a fact, while others claim it is not true – based on their research. Boring (2017) data analysis shows that, on average, less effective male instructors receive higher student ratings than more effective female instructors. The experiment in the study of MacNell, Driscoll, & Hunt (2015) was done in an online environment and their results showed that the bias is not a result of gendered behavior on the part of the instructors, but of actual bias on the part of the students. Regardless of actual gender or performance, students rated the perceived female instructor significantly more harshly than the perceived male instructor, which suggests that a female instructor would have to work harder than a male to receive comparable ratings (MacNell et al., 2015). Chamberlin & Hickey (2001), evaluated male and female instructors from the same discipline and used the same questionnaire in their study. The results showed a clear difference in the evaluation of male and female instructors with regard to presentation and classroom structure. It is also a common belief that student evaluations are often filled out by students who are either highly satisfied or highly dissatisfied with the class. Kherfi (2011), however, reported that students who were likely to have a strong opinion about the course (because they replied earlier) had, on average, very positive views, which would partly contradict this statement.

8.2 Are student evaluations an adequate tool for assessing faculty?

In many academic institutions student evaluations is the way to assess teaching quality. Students essentially give their opinion about the way in which the class is structured, how well the teacher explains the topics, and how competent he or she is in his or her field. The ratings are often used as a base for promotion and tenure. The evaluation aims at summarizing the responses of both the teacher and the program heads, which is usually done through a questionnaire that includes rating scales and open-ended items, according to Richardson (2005). This questionnaire is filled out by students who attended the lecture and observed the ability of the instructor. However, the question arises whether students are the right group of people to assess a teacher's competencies. Braga, Paccagnella, & Pellizzari (2014) state in their study that the objectives of students can, and most probably will, be different from faculty; students could be mainly focused on their grades, whereas faculty cares more about student learning. Students give feedback on how they experienced a course – for example, about the audibility of the instructor, the availability for consultation after class, or the course structure, according to Becker, Bosshardt, & Watts (2012). But can they assess aspects that fall outside their experience – for example, about the course pedagogy? Hornstein (2017) asks according to valid criteria students can determine how knowledgeable an instructor is about his or her subject area.

Spooren, Brockx & Mortelmans (2013) did an extensive study in which they used 158 journal articles and 2 book chapters in total to learn more about the validity of student evaluations in the context of teaching effectiveness. They conclude that the validity of student evaluation in teaching should still be probed, simply because conclusive research with evidence of the contrary has not been found thus far.

8.3 Student perception of an evaluation

In the study of Campbell & Bozeman (2007) students perceived their role of evaluators as important and thought that student ratings have value. However, this study also showed that students were not sure if their evaluations had an effect on teaching. A second study of Beran, Violato, Kline & Frideres (2005), showed that half of an institution's students did not use ratings at all. Some of the possible reasons for this could be that students do not have access to the ratings or depend on other students to inform them. "Thus, it is difficult to determine the consequential validity of student use of the ratings as lack of student awareness will limit their use" (qtd. in Beran et al., 2005, p. 67). A more recent study of Jaquett, VanMaaren & Williams (2017) showed that students express a strong preference in terms of which course factors have a positive or negative impact on the end-of-course evaluations. The results showed that students find it most motivating to fill in the evaluation when they receive an extra credit or can expect a good grade. Negative course factors, such as a bad grade or difficult test, were perceived as less motivational.

8.4 Teacher perspective of an evaluation

Student evaluation of teaching serves three purposes: improving teaching quality, providing input for appraisal exercises (e.g., tenure/promotion decisions), and providing evidence for institutional accountability (e.g., showing that adequate procedures are in place for ensuring teaching quality); (Kember, Leung & Kwan (2002). However, one of faculty's major concerns is whether students are capable of assessing teaching competencies. Student perception of "good teaching" can – and most probably does – differ from the faculty's viewpoint on the characteristics of good teaching. Very many studies on the validity of student evaluations have appeared and they primarily focused on the validity of student opinions, as well as their relationship to possible bias (Spooren et al., 2013). These also concluded that, because of different perceptions about the characteristics of good teaching, all stakeholders (e.g., students and teachers) should participate in the process of defining good teaching and designing a questionnaire. Beran & Rokosh (2009) surveyed 262 teachers in total and concluded that 84% of this group support the usefulness of evaluations. In total, 62% of the respondents think that program heads and deans use the evaluation reports properly. In their study, they

also showed that an evaluation's results are mainly used for improving general teaching quality, refining overall instruction, and improving lectures. Conversely certain studies have a different perspective. Burden (2008) interviewed 22 teachers to find out how they perceived the evaluation process and how, in their opinion, evaluations help improve teaching. The participants generally recognized the importance of an evaluation, but only 4 of the 22 participants stated that evaluations helped in terms of providing teacher feedback – helpful in providing little more than hints and tips, since the evaluation did not reflect what they would define as good teaching. Nasser & Fresko (2002) conducted a study at a teacher's college and found "that evaluations are of little value for improvement of their teaching and teachers make little or no use of student feedback" (qtd. in Spooren et al. 2013, p. 628).

Although student evaluations have become the norm at many academic institutions, the validity of the instrument should be probed when assessing teaching effectiveness. Stark & Freishtat (2014) are also quite skeptical about the validity of student evaluations and refer to the following recommendations with regard to the usefulness of student evaluations of teaching (SET) (p. 6):

1) Drop omnibus items about "overall teaching effectiveness" and "value of the course" from teaching evaluations, since they are misleading.

2) Do not average or compare averages of SET scores – such averages do not make sense statistically. Instead, report the distribution of scores, the number of responders, and the response rate.

3) When response rates are low, extrapolating from responders to the entire class is unreliable.

4) Pay attention to student comments, but understand their limitations. Typically students are not well placed to evaluate pedagogy.

5) Avoid a comparison of teaching in courses of different types, levels, sizes, functions, or disciplines.

6) Use teaching portfolios as part of the review process.

7) Use classroom observation as part of milestone reviews.

8) In order to improve teaching and evaluate teaching fairly, as well as honestly, spend more time observing the teaching and studying the teaching materials.

9 Factors that have an impact; what does the literature say?

9.1 Method of evaluation – online and paper-based

At the University of St.Gallen, the response rate is defined as the ratio of the number of students who completed an evaluation in relation to the number of students who registered for the course. For paper-based surveys, the response rate is 65% on average. For online surveys that have been conducted thus far, the percentage is on average approximately 30%. Online surveys do not achieve response rates that are even close to which is achieved with paper-based surveys. The difference in response rates concerning paper-based and online surveys is a topic that is often mentioned in literature. When changing the evaluation process from paper-based to online, the faculty members' concerns can emerge, because they may be afraid that a lower participation rate will affect the evaluation results. Layne, Decristoforo & Mcginty (1999) studied how the method of evaluation (in-class versus online) affected the response rate to a faculty evaluation. They found that the in-class survey produced a higher response rate than the online method (60.6% versus 47.8%). However, their study also showed that "students who completed the survey electronically were much more likely to provide comments about their course and instructor than were students in the paper-and-pencil group"(qtd. in Layne et al., 1999, p. 230). In the traditional paper-and-pencil group 50% of all students gave comments; in the electronic group it was 76%.

Furthermore, Rosemary J. Avery, W. Keith Bryant, Alan Mathios, Hyojin Kang & Duncan Bell (2006) observed in their study that the online evaluation method led to lower response rates, but that lower response rates apparently did not affect the mean evaluation scores. Dommeyer, Baum, Hanna & Chapman (2004) showed "that gathering teaching evaluations online is a viable alternative to the traditional, in class-method" (qtd. in Dommeyer et al., 2004, p. 620). In their study, a small grade incentive was used to achieve a response rate that was comparable to that of the paper-and-pencil survey. Some would argue that using incentives is unethical or that it could cause bias and tilt the survey results in favor of students who are more concerned about their grades. However, Dommeyer et al. (2004) found no bias in the evaluations that used a grade incentive. Consequently, one of the factors that affect the response rate is the evaluation method (paper-and-pencil versus online) through which it is carried out.

Nulty (2008) compared eight research examples concerned with differences in response rates to paper-based and online surveys. The data shows that the response rates for online

surveys are significantly lower than the ones achieved with paper-based surveys (on average, 33% compared to 56%; thus a difference of 23% on average). However, the online surveys in his study are not conducted face-to-face. If that had been the case, the response rate of these surveys may also have risen to the same level as the paper-based ones. Clearly, one of the main benefits of an online survey is to avoid conducting the survey in class. However, does that work in practice? Do students fill in the evaluation when they are not in the classroom and there is no teacher present to actively ask them to participate? This issue is closely linked to students feeling motivated to complete a survey and their willingness to make an extra effort of giving feedback.

9.2 Timing of the evaluation

The example above shows that the moment when the evaluation is conducted, is important. The timing plays a significant role and impacts directly on the response rate. When a course is evaluated online, institutions try to increase the response rate by sending out reminders. Campbell & Waters (1990) ascertained that reminders have an influence on the response rate of online surveys. The frequency of reminders varies in different studies. In his study, Perkins (2011) reported on three reminders: 56.2% in total submitted the survey without a reminder. The first reminder that was sent three days after the initial e-mail, resulted in a 24.5% increase of the total completed responses. This means that within approximately one week, almost 81% of the total completed responses had been collected. The second reminder e-mail increased the percentage to 93% in total. The third reminder added another 5.5% – thus, almost all students filled in the survey. This example shows a very high response rate; the average response rate of online surveys tends to be lower. Generally, academic institutions administer two reminders, because students may possibly be overloaded with frequent reminders, which can cause irritation. This, in turn, can lead to a lower response rate. It seems most appropriate to conduct the evaluation at the end of the class, because in this instance students can give feedback about their complete experience during the course. However, Narasimhan (2001) stated that collecting feedback at the end of the course does not benefit the students who participate in the course at that moment in time – earlier feedback would be of more immediate value. In their study, McGowan & Osguthorpe (2011) ascertained that an improvement in student learning and faculty teaching can be defined via midterm course evaluations. They also mention the importance of keeping the survey as short as possible so that students only need a couple of minutes to fill it out. It should not be perceived as an additional burden, but rather as a tool that helps implement feedback before the end of the course.

9.3 The survey's design and understandability

The user-friendliness of surveys is a further consideration. Paper-and-pencil surveys must have straightforward instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire. Online surveys must be easily accessible through a link and on different devices. Saleh & Bista (2017) suggest that students should be informed in an invitation letter of the approximate time it will take to complete the survey. They also mention personalized invitations to participate in the evaluation and having a professional set-up. How a survey is presented to students, how easy it is to fill it in, and how easy it is to access the system are factors that influence the response rate. The length of a survey also affects the students' response rate. Longer surveys tend to have a lower response rate, according to Roszkowski & Bean (1990). Furthermore, according to Bogen (2009) the increased burden causes respondents to be less likely to participate. It can be said that the accessibility of the system, the understandability of the survey information, and a personalized approach for participating in the evaluation impact on the response rate.

9.4 Anonymity

Assuring students that procedures are in place to protect their confidentiality and anonymity, can influence the response rate. Several studies such as the one from Saleh & Bista (2017) and Dommeyer, Baum & Hanna (2002) signify that anonymity plays an important role. If students are assured that their responses will remain anonymous, the response rate is likely to increase. Campbell & Waters (1990), however, claimed that the anonymity factor does not have a direct impact, but that the reminders, which were sent out, caused the response rate to increase from 50% to 72%. In their study, Murdoch et al., (2014, p. 10) stated that "greater privacy and larger incentives do not necessarily result in higher disclosure rates of sensitive information than lesser privacy and lower incentives." Students probably find it easier to give critical feedback about a course or lecturer when the comments cannot be traced back to the individual. At the same time, students may think that they can be more direct and severe in their feedback, because there will not be any consequences afterwards. Others may think that the anonymity in surveys facilitates their freedom of expression and therefore they feel more comfortable in expressing their views. Subsequently, the anonymity of the responses can be identified as a factor that has an impact on the response rate.

9.5 Set-up and implementation of the evaluation procedure

How institutions design the evaluation procedure is most important and impacts on the response rate in many ways. All the stakeholders who are involved need to know what their role is and how they should carry out that role. Staff must timeously set up the forms or online surveys with a proper system; lecturers need to know when the evaluation takes place

and how it has to be carried out. A clear process is indispensable. If an institution has a centralized approach – it thus organizes the evaluation process through one central office – the communication, implementation, and processing of the evaluations is probably a fixed process. When institutions have a decentralized set-up, many stakeholders will be involved in defining and developing the evaluation process and therefore it will most probably be more difficult to manage. The following steps are helpful when setting up an evaluation process:

1. Define the stakeholders in the evaluation process (Who is involved?)
2. Define the objectives of the evaluation (Why do we need to do this?)
3. Plan a suitable implementation procedure (How are we going to plan everything?)
4. Collect the data and present the results to the stakeholders (How do the results come across and who will receive them? Close the feedback loop.)
5. Decide on ways to use the data for improvement and development purposes (How will we use the results for further improvement?)

If these steps in an evaluation process are unclear or lack implementation, they visibly affect the response rate. The evaluation procedure shown in Figure 1 is an ongoing process that starts with the engagement of the stakeholders.
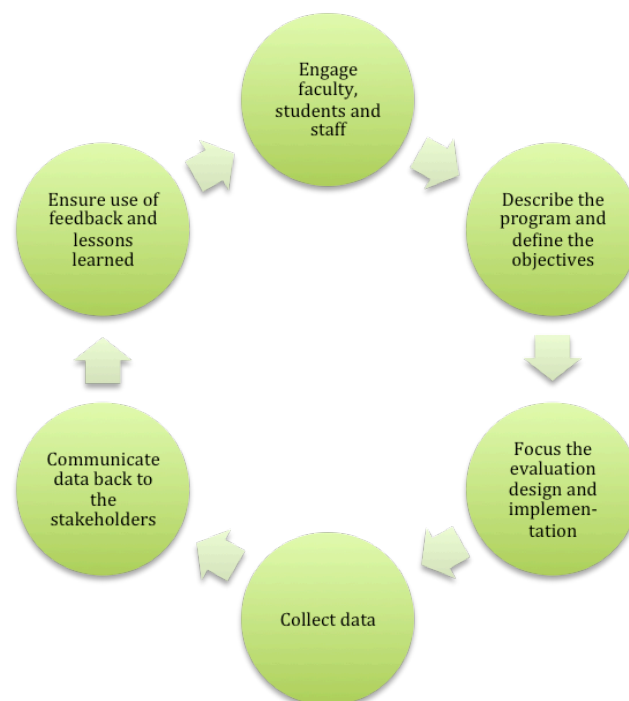
Figure 1: Suggested Framework for an Evaluation Process (extracted from CDC, 1999)

9.6 **Feedback culture**

Additional considerations regarding factors that have an impact on the response rate may be found within the organization's feedback culture. Perhaps a feedback culture already exists or is being developed throughout the course. Is the teacher open for feedback and does he or she show an interest in giving feedback? One of the prerequisites for building a feedback culture is that the participants need to have *the skills to give and receive feedback*. It is also built on *trust*, because participants need to believe that that their feedback will not have any negative repercussions – for example, a lower grade. In a feedback culture, it is necessary to have a *clear idea of what feedback is*. Students need to know through which channels they can give feedback and what its purpose of is. Lecturers, on the other hand, need to know how to deal with student feedback. Negative feedback is difficult to reflect upon. Lecturers can react defensively and conflicts may arise. Or people can even feel disengaged, as Bakker & Leiter (2010) showed in their study. Giving and receiving feedback is not an easy task, according to Steelman & Rutkowski (2004). Besieux (2017) developed a feedback ecosystem. It is a simple, but effective tool that shows four steps towards the continuous development for the feedback recipient.
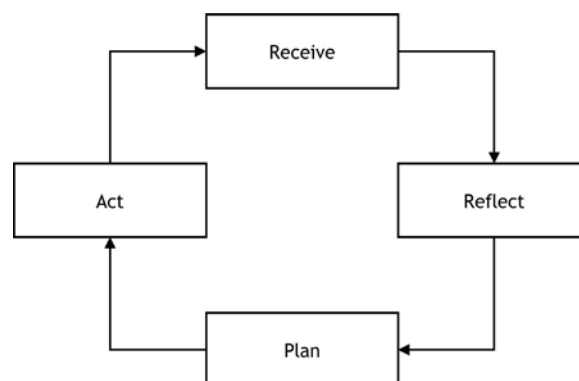
Figure 2: The Feedback Ecosystem, Tijs Besieux

In a feedback ecosystem, the participants essentially give and receive reactions to a performance, which are used as a basis for improvement. These reactions have a subjective quality, which also differentiates feedback from an objective and measurable evaluation. If a feedback system exists as part of the academic environment, students are more likely to give their feedback during the end-of-course evaluations. However, if the students' feedback is not taken seriously, it will affect the response rate. Even if students are generally willing to participate in an evaluation, but notice that their feedback will not change teaching practices, they can conclude that their opinion does not really matter, as Spencer & Schmelkin (2002) mention in their study. Conversely, it also depends on the teachers' perspectives. If he or she

doubts that students have the competencies to give constructive feedback about their teaching and effectiveness, the given feedback's acceptance and implementation is lower, which – in turn – has an impact on the response rate. However, according to Schmelkin, Spencer & Gellman (1997) the majority of teachers do think of course evaluations as a useful source of information.

9.7 Feedback loop

Students often think that they will not benefit from any changes that result from their feedback during the end-of-course evaluations; only the next group of students may benefit directly. Institutions should have processes or tools in place that clearly show how the feedback was used and how this affected the institution. If students believe that the institution acknowledges their feedback as a contribution, then it has a major effect on the response rate. Evaluation results should not only be communicated to students and faculty; it should also be communicated if the results are used for improving a course and, if so, how such measurements were implemented. Students need to understand that their voice is critical and that it provides valuable information to the institution. They also need to understand that their feedback is acted upon. Engaging students and faculty in the evaluation process is a factor that does have an influence, and it is often mentioned in literature. In their study, Nair, Adams & Mertova (2008, p. 230) state that it is important to not only "establish multiple contacts (pre-notification, multiple mail-outs, emails, telephone contacts) with participants but also the need to communicate appropriate information to participants (e.g. explanation of the value of student feedback to the university)." They also conclude that it is important to have a link between evaluation, quality, and engagement. This will encourage students to change their mindset and trust that the provided feedback will be acted upon.

9.8 Survey fatigue

Literature often refers to a decline in response rates, because of over-surveying the students. Survey fatigue is a common phenomenon in many academic institutions. Meting out multiple surveys to students will eventually result in less cooperation, claim Porter, Whitcomb & Weitzer (2004). At a particular point in time, students may possibly be of the opinion that they have simply done enough and no longer feel engaged in order to give more feedback. According to Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant (2003), students in higher education belong to the most surveyed population groups in society, which can cause a lack of engagement in responding to the survey. Various factors play a role in survey fatigue, such as how the respondents are approached or if the survey is linked to an incentive, for example. Non-response due to survey fatigue can decrease if there is a stronger focus on the survey process as such by, for example, providing strong guidelines for the survey process and defining how the institution

can control this process. Communicate, for example, to students and teachers why certain courses are evaluated each semester while others are not, and how that is embedded in the strategy of the institution.

9.9 Incentives

Research shows that incentives have a positive impact on the response rate. Students are more likely to give feedback if, for example, they will receive their grades afterwards or if filling in an evaluation will earn an extra point in the exam. By offering a small amount of extra credit for submitting a course evaluation, Jaquett, VanMaaren & Williams (2016) could attain a response rate of nearly 100% in their study. Other incentives, such as reminding students in class to complete the evaluation or to communicate how the feedback will be used for improving teaching can also lead to an increase in the response rate, as Goodman, Anson & Belcheir (2015) have showed in their study. In their case, the response rate increased by 8% when using incentives. The kind of incentive that will pay off more in the long run, is open for debate: the direct benefit that students see when they get extra points for the exam or the less visible benefit of knowing that their feedback will have an impact and will change something. The feedback's accuracy can also be debated. Do students complete the survey quickly without much thought and reflection simply because they aim for scoring extra points quite easily? Or do students provide more accurate feedback, because they can influence and change something, which would require at least some kind of intrinsic motivation?

10 PEM Model

When thinking of the response rate of course evaluations a high number of influencing factors can be identified. Does the survey itself or the way in which the process is communicated have an impact? Is time set aside for the evaluation during the lecture or can students do this in their own time? Do teachers motivate the students to participate in an evaluation and do they experience the benefit of the evaluation? In the author's opinion, this short list of possible factors relates to the process, the motivation, or the environment in which an evaluation takes place. The three areas are interlinked and are subject to the observer's interpretation.
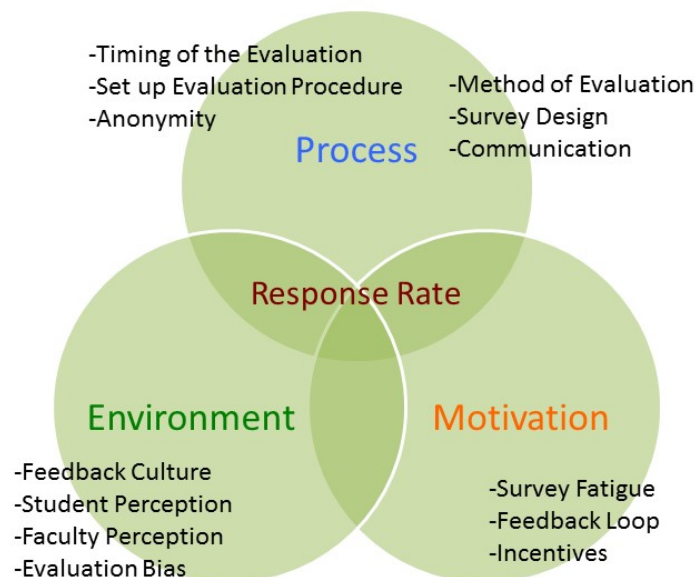
Figure 3: The PEM Model (Process-Environment-Motivation Factors)

All the factors mentioned in chapter 7 and 8 relate to these categories. The literature regarding response rates shows that researchers focus on all three areas, but – again in the author's opinion – the literature does not offer a qualitative analysis in which the individual areas of process-related, environment-related, and motivational-related factors are categorized. The author developed a specific framework that is shown in Figure 3 (PEM model). The model reflects the factors according to process, environment, and motivation. The response rate appears in the center of all three areas and shows a partial overlap, which indicates the correlation. The underlying objective is to establish the characteristics of these areas and how they correlate with the response rates of course evaluations at the University of St.Gallen. The practical part of this study will use the PEM model as a base for categorization.

11 Quality Development at the University of St.Gallen

At the University of St.Gallen, the Quality Development Office (hereafter called the QD) is in charge of course evaluations, rankings, and accreditations. Since 2001, the university is accredited with the European Quality Improvement System for business schools (EQUIS), and also with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) since 2003 – the two most prestigious international seals of quality for business schools. The university focuses on three rankings of international importance: The Financial Times ranking, the CHE (*Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung*) ranking and the *Handelsblatt* ranking. Presently, St.Gallen holds the 4th place in the Financial Times ranking, is rated as the best European Business School, and is ranked in the top group of the CHE and *Handelsblatt* rankings.

Course evaluations help monitor and develop learning, as well as teaching, for internal purposes. They are also necessary for external purposes, such as accreditations. EQUIS and AACSB have different standards that schools have to meet in order to gain accreditation. One of the standards focuses on the evaluation process and the Assurance of Learning (subsequently called AoL), for which data has to be delivered. Therefore, course evaluations also have a definite external use.

11.1 Cooperation within the University

QD works closely with the Institute of Business Education and Educational Management (subsequently called IBEEM). The cooperation is predominantly noticeable in two of the QD's three main focus areas, namely evaluations and accreditations. Within the student evaluation context, the IBEEM plays an important role in setting up the surveys. Based on the available literature and the available competencies within the institute, the IBEEM and QD created surveys that have been in use for the past seven years. The surveys' main goals were to gather data that not only focuses on teacher learning, but also conveys information about the students' learning behavior and their own learning reflection. Although the surveys focus on the achieved results of the students and not on the implementation of teaching activities, the surveys should also convey information about what the set course goals have achieved.

Furthermore, once the evaluation results for a specific semester have been compiled, the IBEEM becomes involved in the process of giving feedback to the faculty. Courses with a below average result or that have faced certain difficulties according to student feedback, are scrutinized more closely. The IBEEM representative (usually the director) actively approaches the faculty member and/or program head to discuss possible improvements for the upcoming semester and how these measurements can be implemented. The IBEEM also offers coaching to faculty members and supports them in changing their course's curriculum – if necessary.

11.2 Assurance of Learning (AoL)

In the area of accreditations, the IBEEM representative is mainly active in the AoL theme. Together with QD, a process is being set up for all programs at the university that are involved in the accreditations. AoL primarily aims at having data available that shows if and how the course objectives and goals are met; if they are not met, the available data needs to show what measures the university is taking to change this and to develop the course further. This is a challenging process, due to the following reasons: The different programs have always independently set up their *curricula* and collected data about the course objectives and further course development. Thus far, there has not been a combined and centralized approach. Furthermore, there is no tool that collects all the data from all the different programs. Simultaneous to setting up a process, a tool (or database) must be in place to ensure that the data is collected and can be used for accreditation purposes.

11.3 Focus groups

QD is also involved in focus groups in which students act as representatives of their coursemates and gather feedback from the other students. Focus groups are intended as a relatively informal, low-maintenance way to improve student-lecturer feedback and enable a quick response. Each focus group ideally meets regularly during the semester. At the initial meeting, the lecturer explains to the students what his/her goals are for the course. The lecturer also explains what the students should know and/or be able to do by the end of the semester. Subsequent discussions usually cover the course's positive and negative aspects – from the students' perspective – as well as possible improvements. Is the lecturer meeting the goals he/she set for the class? In the final lecture, the lecturer should briefly present the focus group's results, as well as the steps that are being taken, thereby aiming to enable lecturers to further improve their teaching quality and respond more quickly to the students' suggestions. Although QD acts more as an independent body, it advises faculty members and students regarding focus groups. Focus groups are a voluntary initiative of the respective program head(s) and are actively supported by QD.

11.4 Teaching Analysis Poll (TAP)

In cooperation with the IBEEM, a feedback tool, which is called the Teaching Analysis Poll (TAP), is made available to faculty members. TAP is a mid-semester feedback method whereby it is possible to establish what students perceive as most helpful and most obstructing to their learning in a specific course. Feedback obtained from a TAP can be used for focused reflections on teaching to enhance classroom interactions, student learning, and teaching strategies. The teacher receives feedback during mid-semester when he/she can

meaningfully include students in the feedback loop. The TAP concept is based on three questions:

1. What is helping your learning in the course?
2. What impedes your learning in the course?
3. What suggestions for improvement do you have?

Students will answer these questions in small groups and afterwards that the consultant will review these comments with the entire class. The lecturer is not present during a TAP. Only the observations that are approved by the majority of students will be discussed with the lecturer at a later stage. The TAP concept was developed by the Teaching Resource Center of the University of Virginia, USA in the late 1990s[1]. The University of Bielefeld was the TAP pioneer in the German speaking region where the first TAPs were conducted during 2010/11. At the University of St.Gallen, the TAP feedback method was first used in the spring semester of 2016. In the past two years, the TAPs have gained popularity and are now a fixed part of the portfolio offered by QD and the IBEEM. Presently, all faculty members can register – on a voluntary basis – for a TAP. Approximately twenty TAPs per semester take place.

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[1] http://cte.virginia.edu/resources/the-teaching-analysis-poll-everyone-wins/

12 Evaluation Process at the University of St.Gallen

At the University of St.Gallen, course participation is not mandatory. Students can therefore decide whether to attend or not attend a particular lecture – it will barely make a difference in their grade. But what does this mean for the evaluation? Do we actually reach the group of students that can give feedback, which – in turn – is based on attending the course? Typically, evaluations take place during the third last session of the course. In case of a pen-and-paper evaluation, the students who attend that particular lecture will participate. In case of an online evaluation, the students who registered for the course at the beginning of the semester will receive a link to the online survey. Whether all the respondents actually participated in the course cannot be controlled, because there is no mandatory participation rule.

Each semester, the Quality Development Office chooses programs that are selected for a mandatory evaluation. At the beginning of a semester, all faculty members are notified of this and receive a step-by-step memo regarding the evaluation process. In addition, faculty members have the option to request a voluntary evaluation, which resulted in the total number of evaluated courses per semester increasing since 2009. As a result, students have to complete many evaluations each semester. A certain level of survey fatigue is therefore conceivable.

Thus far, the faculty can choose between a paper-based and an online survey. The survey has closed questions (with a scale from 1 to 5) and 3 open questions at the end. Once the forms are completed or the online survey is done, the Quality Development Office will process the forms or online data and send the evaluation results before the last session takes place. Thus, in practice, teachers can present and discuss the outcome of the evaluation with the students before the course ends. The results of the closed questions will be published on the StudyNet, which is a platform for students on which they can find all the relevant course information. At the end of the semester, the aggregated quantitative results will be compiled and shared with the program responsible person. Should there be a need and a wish for additional training, coaching, or curriculum development, the university offers various courses through the IBEEM to all faculty members. This process has not changed much during more or less the past ten years and is now an established process that faculty and students carry out each semester.

12.1 Feedback culture at the University of St.Gallen

In its vision, the University of St.Gallen states that "we are committed to a culture of trust and co-operation between the students, academic staff, and the HSG administration based on mutual respect, flat hierarchies and a willingness to communicate in a non-bureaucratic manner." If a university claims – in its vision – to identify itself through community culture, then

communication must be high on the list. How does this reflect on course evaluations? Is there a culture of communication and feedback between the staff, students, and faculty members? According to a survey that was conducted in the autumn of 2016 as part of the "TAP it better" project, faculty members use (next to the mandatory end-of-course evaluations) different methods to obtain feedback about their courses. Of 229 respondents in total, nearly 60% stated that they organize a feedback session at the end of the course by themselves. Another 50% said that they conduct a voluntary evaluation, which is organized via the Quality Development Office. Only 25% of the respondents mentioned that they organize a feedback session in the middle of the semester. These numbers reflect a satisfactory level of feedback, although the midterm feedback option is rather low.

At this juncture, a more detailed view of the difference between feedback and evaluation will be stated. Evaluations form part of the QD cycle and their main purpose is evaluating lectures – that have already taken place – from different perspectives. By using the results, changes can be introduced for further learning development and promoting a development culture. An evaluation is successful if its implementation has consequences and enables, as well as promotes, change. Feedback, in contrast, is about sharing information in a way that encourages the recipient to accept it, reflect on it, learn from it, and hopefully make changes for the better. Feedback can be positive or negative: In the performance review context, positive feedback should reinforce good performance and negative feedback should correct or improve inadequate performance. Feedback – as an interaction – is a subjective method, which reflects the participants' immediate reaction. As a method, it focuses more on impulse perception, whereby not only language, but also facial expressions and gestures can be included. Analyzing feedback is often confused with evaluation. However, feedback as an immediate response has a different goal, namely mirroring information that was subjectively perceived. Feedback is therefore always formative and designed as a continuous process; it is not summative or measured according to quality criteria.

The advantage of feedback manifests in the exchange of immediate responses among the participants who have an opportunity to draw their own conclusions – without any direct influence on the QD process. In the learning culture context, feedback can nevertheless contribute to the improvement of quality by seriously considering the participants' personal motivation for feedback and allowing them room for change. The TAP method encourages precisely these topics; students can give feedback from which they may benefit before the course ends and via this process they sense that they are taken seriously, and – because of their feedback – small adjustments and/or changes can be implemented.

13 Methodology

The methodology used in this study was to collect qualitative data through moderated discussions in focus groups on four study levels, as well as expert interviews with faculty members of different programs at the University of St.Gallen. Three to six students participated in the focus groups and therefore they can be defined as mini focus groups. A focus group is a special type of group whose participants have certain (similar) characteristics and provide qualitative data in a focused discussion on a particular topic. Focus groups enable students to gain in-depth knowledge about the experiences, reasons, and feelings of other participants who support the understanding of complex issues. They, therefore, enable an insight into group-specific perceptions, interpretations, and value judgments on specific topics, as stated in Zwick & Schröter (2012, p. 24-27). The focus group discussions took place in the Behavioral Lab of the University of St.Gallen, which made optimal facilities available for this purpose. The discussions of approximately one hour each were recorded and transcribed via a common software program, which resulted in nearly 140 pages of information.

The voluntary expert interviews of approximately thirty minutes each, were conducted at the researcher's request. All three interviews were conducted in a semi-structured way. The qualitative data that was collected, was later on recorded and transcribed in the same way as was done with the data of the focus groups.

13.1 Research objectives

The research aimed at ascertaining – through qualitative data collection – which factors influence the response rate of course evaluations at the University of St.Gallen. The study focuses on the students', as well as the teachers', points of view. Essentially, the study also aims at identifying similarities, overlaps, or differences in the given information. Another objective was to recommend how these factors can be used to increase the response rate of course evaluations.

13.2 Recruitment of the participants

The reason for setting up focus groups at four study levels, was to establish whether there were any significant differences in the level of awareness and importance regarding student evaluations. As mentioned above, the students were recruited through the Behavioral Lab of the University of St.Gallen. The Lab was created to support researchers with experimental research in human behavior and offers an impressive infrastructure for this purpose. All the groups had both male and female participants who were fluent in English. All the groups consisted of students who completed their prior studies here and were thus quite familiar with the evaluation process, as well as the students who recently joined the University of

St.Gallen. Therefore, both the inside and outside evaluation perspectives could be included in the focus group discussions. The students signed up voluntarily via Sona Systems, which they could access directly on the Behavioral Lab's website.

In order to obtain the faculty members' input on factors that influence the response rate, a total of three expert interviews were conducted and later on transcribed. All three faculty members had been teaching (and still teach) for several years on different study levels and programs at the University of St.Gallen. The goal of choosing a mix of professors from different programs (School of Humanities and Social Science, School of Economics and Political Science, as well as the Institute of Business Education and Educational Management) was to gain evaluation input from various teaching departments. The interviews were semi-structured; next to the prepared questions, there was also room for additional topics that arose during the conversation.

13.3 Interview guide and moderation

At the commencement of the discussions and interviews, an explanation of the researcher's role and brief information about the study was given. Furthermore, the participants were informed that the information will be dealt with anonymously and they were asked if the discussions may be recorded. Any questions that arose at that stage, were answered.

The interview guide, which was prepared in advance, focused on the following topics:

- *Culture at the University of St.Gallen* (related question: what is it like to study/teach at the University of St.Gallen?)
- *Degree of evaluation perception* (related question: what goes through your mind when you think about course evaluations?)
- *Degree of experience with evaluations* (related question: can you walk me through an evaluation that you did in the past?)
- *Degree of motivational commitment* (related question: why do you participate in an evaluation?)
- *Degree of awareness* (related question: what factors – in your opinion – play a role when completing an evaluation form?
- *Degree of motivation to change* (related question: can you tell me what must change in the course evaluation process in order to reach higher response rates?)

During the discussions with the focus groups, similar topics arose several times; however the different topics of discussion in the focus groups on each specific study level were also noticeable. During the talks, the open questions were visible on a white board for the students. This was done to keep the students slightly focused on the main questions and to ensure

that the topics were addressed in the available time. The main goal was to develop a discussion that originated from the participants and to use the group dynamic that can be found in focus groups. Sometimes the moderator had to steer the discussion in order to obtain more detailed information about certain aspects and to ensure that all students were involved, because in certain groups people hesitated to state their opinion.

13.4 Transcribing and analysing the data

Once the focus groups and expert interviews were completed, the recorded audio was transcribed via F5, which is ordinary software used for these purposes. The analysis was done according to Mayring's qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2016). In order to structure the qualitative data, other software, namely Atlas.ti, was used and this offered flexible ways to restructure the data when necessary.

Initially, three main categories were defined: **process-related factors, environmental-related factors and motivational-related factors**. Then, quotations were coded and assigned to one of the three main categories. If, for example, a quotation stated that the evaluations take place too late in the semester, this quotation was coded with "timing of the evaluation" and was assigned to the main category "process-related factors." Certain quotations fit into more than one of the main categories, because they stated a process, as well as a motivational-related aspect. In these instances, the quotation received multiple codes and was assigned to several main categories. If, for example, a quotation stated that the evaluations take place too late in the semester, but it is also not known how the evaluations are processed afterwards, this quotation was coded with "timing of the evaluation," it was assigned to "process-related factors," but it was also coded with "feedback-loop evaluations" and assigned to "motivational-related factors." The author's interpretations determined the coding and assignment to categories.

The analysis for the focus groups and the expert interviews were done separately, but with the same method. This enabled both stakeholders to state their point of view individually.

The results in the next chapter give a general overview of the main categories and their codings for all focus groups, followed by a short, more detailed perspective of each focus group. After that, the expert interviews are discussed by using the same approach as described in the focus groups.

14 The results of the focus group discussions

The complete overview under Figure 3 shows the three main categories and their respective codes displayed in a code cloud. The bigger the font, the more quotations were assigned to that particular code and category. Each code had between three and thirty-five quotations assigned to it. The codes are ranked according to the number of the quotations they received. In this chapter, the top five will be showed in more detail. Annex A contains a complete overview of all the codes and their respective quotations. Annex C contains a list of codes without the quotations. The qualitative data analysis of all four focus groups showed the following ranking of factors that influence the response rate at the University of St.Gallen:

Table 1: An overview of factors that influence the response rate of all four focus groups according to their rank

Rank	Category	Codes	Quotations
1	Environment	HSG culture	35
2	Process	Timing of evaluation	28
3	Process	Online evaluations	19
4	Motivation	Buy-in for importance of evaluations	18
5	Motivation	Feedback loop evaluations	18
6	Environment	Feedback culture HSG	16
7	Motivation	Incentives	14
8	Environment	External platforms for evaluations	13
9	Motivation	Change through evaluation	13
10	Process	Method of evaluation	12
11	Environment	Focus (research versus teaching)	11
12	Process	Anonymity students	9
13	Process	Communication of evaluation process	8
14	Process	Paper-based evaluations	7
15	Process	Survey questions	7
16	Environment	Meaning of evaluations at universities	6
17	Environment	Evaluation bias	5
18	Motivation	Peer pressure	5
19	Motivation	Survey fatigue	4
20	Environment	Pressure because of study load	3
21	Motivation	Motivation to fill in an evaluation	3

[Environmental: Evaluation Bias] [Environmental: External Platforms for Evaluations] [Environmental: Feedback Culture HSG] [Environmental: Focus of the Evaluation (research versus teaching)] [Environmental: HSG Culture] [Environmental: Meaning of Evaluations at Universities] [Environmental: Pressure because of Study Load] [Motivational: Buy In of Importance of Evaluations] [Motivational: Change through Evaluation] [Motivational: Feedback Loop Evaluations] [Motivational: Incentives] [Motivational: Motivation to fill in an Evaluation] [Motivational: Peer Pressure] [Motivational: Survey Fatigue] [Process: Anonymity Students] [Process: Communication of Evaluation Process Internally] [Process: Method of Evaluation] [Process: Online Evaluations] [Process: Paper-Based Evaluations] [Process: Survey Questions] [Process: Timing of Evaluation]

Figure 4: Focus groups - 3 main categories and codes in a code cloud

14.1 Environmental-related factor: HSG culture

Although the official name of the institution is the University of St.Gallen, in the German speaking regions the school is still better known as the HSG, which refers to the *Hochschule St.Gallen*. In the focus groups, the students often mentioned "HSG" when they referred to the university. There seems to be a general feeling of having to fight against prejudices, because the school has an image of being elite and expensive. In addition, the competitive aspect, the community feeling, pride, and the hierarchy among students and professors at the HSG, all play a role. Here follows examples of quotations from each study level:

Assessment level:

"Yes. More or less. And only like the classic 'Maximilian' from Germany."

"Only the very rich parents' children, which is – in fact – not true."

"Yes. Although I also think that you need to defend yourself at the university, because there are so many people who are competing against you."

"You always have to ensure that you do not fall behind. For example, if you work in a group, you should not say 'I don't care' and leave the group, because you need those credit points."

"And I want to identify with my university and for that I want also to help improving it."

Bachelor's level:

"Yes. I also like being a student of the University of St.Gallen. But what I find a little bit annoying is when I tell somebody else, perhaps in Zurich or – I don't know – Berne, that I am a student at the HSG, they automatically think 'Yes. He is a snob and a rich kid' or something like that. I think that these clichés are quite annoying. Obviously there are rich people's children – I cannot say for certain – but the majority of the people are very ordinary, very normal people and cannot be associated with the cliché."

"Well, as I already mentioned, I think group work is a big advantage. If each group member does his / her bit, the students become really focused and realize that they can work with other students. I think you can also notice that in the culture. You are not merely a number. It is actually the network that is growing."

Master's level:

"I would also like to add that, in my opinion, student body generally consists of very ambitious people. Perhaps you do not have the kind of student life that you could have at other universities where it is more about your free time and lots of leisure activities. Here – I think be-

cause it is a business school – everybody is very ambitious and quite career focused. My experience is therefore that the culture generally also pushes you in a certain direction and motivates you to perform at your best levels. In my opinion it is, therefore, a very demanding, but also a very rewarding culture – for your self-development and for your career as well."

Doctoral level:

"I think along similar lines. However, I also think that one has to be progressive enough to be a regular student here. You therefore have to be quite disciplined and hard working. You cannot be lazy. You need to adapt a lot at the University of St.Gallen, because it is very demanding."

"At my previous university in Copenhagen at the business school, I was also working as an assistant. It was completely different. You were always free to comment and say 'I really think that you did not do a good job on this project and maybe you can do better next time.' There is a completely open culture, whereas here my experience is that Switzerland is very DACH countries oriented and the hierarchy actually is such that one has to address the academics as "Herr Doktor, Professor."

"Yes. Here you really have to be careful when you open your mouth and talk to the professor."

14.2 Process-related factor: timing of the evaluation

"It takes time away from my break," was a statement that students mentioned more than once. The evaluation is done during the last five minutes of the lecture: quickly, no time to really reflect, and therefore of little importance to them – so it seems. Students do not actually understand why the exams are not included in the evaluations, because then they can give feedback about the link between the content of the course and the exam. The wish for evaluations earlier in the semester was expressed several times. Furthermore, students mentioned that all the evaluations take place at the end of the semester, which has an impact on their motivation to participate. The more evaluations they have to fill in, the more their level of motivation declines. Here follows examples of quotations from each study level:

Assessment level:

"Oh, I think we need many, many more – and just randomly – for example, after two weeks and then again after two months. It should not be merely in the midterm at the end of the course."

"I agree, because at the end of the course you have already forgotten a lot."

Bachelor's level:

"I agree that the evaluation can be done after the examination, because then the course content is connected with the exams. I would therefore like to see whether what we are doing during the classes corresponds with what we were asked in the exams."

"They do the evaluations during the course. I think that it tells the students that the course is better evaluated – also from the professor's side. Conducting an evaluation during the break encroaches on your free time and therefore I think it would be a good sign to show the students that the academics are willing to use lecturing time for evaluations."

Master's level:

"It seems to me as if all the evaluations take place at the same time at the end of the semester. If you have many courses, you are still willing to put your time into it and do the first ones, but by the sixth and seventh ones, you just tick the boxes and do not write anything."

"Yes. Maybe that would also be an incentive for us as students. It can happen that you get to the end of the semester and think: "I have only taken this course and the evaluation will not change anything. I don't care.' But if you did an evaluation after three weeks and think that the lecture is not well structured, the professor will receive direct feedback and have an opportunity to improve. In a way, you will also be rewarded and obviously it will be an incentive to state your opinion and further improve your own learning process."

Doctoral level:

"Maybe the evaluations happen too late. I agree with all the comments and I really like them. I also think that the evaluation is critical; it is super important. But maybe it should be done throughout the course."

"But that is something that your professor can do. They can already start before or after the break, get the results, and improve the course. So that depends on the professor."

14.3 Process-related factor: online evaluations

A factor that was often discussed in all groups was the fact that the majority of St.Gallen's evaluations are still paper-based. There was a sense of incomprehensibility of why this is still done on paper. Often the students did not know that the teacher could choose between paper and online surveys. In the bachelor's and master's groups the discussion focused on the participation in online surveys. For example, should they take place in class or outside of the classroom, what should the timing be for sending the links to access the survey, and do the students have the motivation to actually participate in an online evaluation?

On doctoral level the anonymity of the students was in the foreground. Student stated that, due to the typically small group sizes in PhD courses, the evaluations should be done online to guarantee a better level of anonymity. Here follows examples of quotations from each study level:

Assessment level:

"I must be honest with you: I think nobody will actually fill in the evaluations. I have many courses for which I have to complete online evaluations. But I just look at it and tell myself that I will do it in the next five minutes. In those five minutes, I have already forgotten about it. So I never do it."

Bachelor's level:

"If you have a voluntarily, online evaluation, you are tempted to do it the next day, or the day after that. But you never really come back to it. Therefore, it will definitively be better to have it online, but to do it during class time or on a specific day. Otherwise you will tell yourself to do it, but you never actually do it, because actually you do not have something to say."

Master's level:

"Students rather do it online, especially – as you mentioned – then you are not really concerned with time or a certain slot that you have to be in class to do that evaluation."

"I also had to do it online in the past and I never heard anything about the response rate. I think it was very, very low – maybe below 20% or 15%, because it was done through e-mail. You would receive an email with a link to the evaluation, but then they would all send emails at the same time. Suddenly you receive seven emails with instructions to fill them in. Five days later, they send you a reminder. I really thought of it as spam. It did not feel as if I was doing something to help this class. It was almost a case of me getting emails and doing the evaluations just to stop the emails. But I did not do it for the right reasons. Between online and paper evaluations, I think that there is a difference in how you do it online."

"The last time, nobody had a pen. We therefore had this attitude of 'How should we fill it in?' I think that is going to change, because we are all there with our laptops; nobody brings pens anymore."

Doctoral level:

"Especially because the courses are not as big as master courses or sometimes there are only a few students sitting there. And they know who did the course evaluation."

"That's my biggest question: HSG, why don't you do it online?"

"But would you then complete it? In my opinion the response rate is obviously a problem when you do online."

14.4 Motivational: buying into the importance of evaluations

This motivational factor was discussed in the bachelor and master group mainly. The remarks in the assessment group showed that students feel nothing really changes through evaluation, and they generally believe that evaluation is part of a process and one has to do it. Students in the bachelor's and master's groups mentioned that the teacher should act as a role model, thereby showing – throughout the course – that the evaluations are important. Here follows examples of quotations from each study level:

Assessment level:

"As I have already mentioned, we did evaluations in high school and for me it was merely a process: I just fill it out. It was only a process we had to go through and then they tried to change something, but actually, in the end, everything remained the same"

Bachelor's level:

"In the past at my school, we always had lots of evaluation papers, but things never really changed. It always remained the same. Also at the university, I do not take them very seriously, because, if you have done a course and you did not like it – maybe it is your fault, maybe it is the professor's fault – and you were the only one who did not like it, then nothing will change. I therefore mostly do it very quickly so that I can leave class."

"We also did it during the last lecture. The professor was there and even said that we had to do it, because it is in university policy or something to that effect."

Master's level:

"We had an evaluation last week and it was right at the end of the class. He announced the evaluation and handed out the papers. Everybody wanted to leave. We just sat there and ticked boxes. Almost no one wrote something on the other side of the form, because we only wanted to go and catch the bus."

"I think that the professor really shows how important it is for him, that it will also have an impact, and that it is not something trivial."

"And I do not want something superficial, such as an email telling me that I am important. I prefer something more face-to-face. I prefer him or her saying in class – in our presence – how important those evaluations are to him / her, to us, and to the university."

Doctoral level:

"According to me the problem also entails that certain professors do not actually care."

"If only the professor will ask us to please fill in the evaluation form, because it is important for him and he will use the feedback. Explain it – that is the best approach, I would say."

14.5 Motivational-related factor: feedback loop evaluations

Knowing that something is done with the feedback that the students provide, was one of the main topics in the group discussions. The assessment group stated that they do not know what actually happens with the results and they do not know where to find them. The bachelor's group also mentioned that the knowledge of their feedback being heard and passed on to the next group of students, will have an impact on the motivation to participate in an evaluation. The information that is currently missing as a result of this gap in the feedback loop, is obtained from external platforms. Similar topics came up in the master's group; they also claim that their feedback apparently does not have an impact and they enquired if it was processed at all. Here follows examples of quotations from each study level:

Assessment level:

"You also don't see it. You only fill out the form and give it to the teacher, but you don't see what actually happens. What do you do? Do you meet and discuss the final results – or what do you do? We just give the paper in and that's that. Then we forget about it."

"For example, if you fill in a form, then the results are put up somewhere, such as in the B mensa or in the main building, so that you can see that they have done something and that the forms were not filed away somewhere."

Bachelor's level:

"If you can make the difference or if you can change something with your opinion, I think that is the basis of the evaluation – if you experience what you can do with your opinion."

"In my opinion, it does not make a difference to me after I had evaluated the course. The results are not so important to me, but I think they may be important to the new students. For example, we give our opinions on face book groups to people who want to sign up for the courses."

"I will do it if I can be sure that someone will see it and base their decision about enrolling for the course on that. In my opinion, that would be useful for them, as well as for us."

Master's level:

"I do not know. I think almost 90% of the people do not know that they can view it in StudyNet and establish whether someone has actually evaluated the sheets. Otherwise, it is a waste of energy for everyone: from the students to the people who actually scrutinize all the material. I think that trying to visualize it – to show the people that something is happening – that would motivate me to participate in such evaluations."

"I think it is better to make students feel part of the big picture: We are involved and we are not excluded from the future of the university. Maybe we are only here for a few years, but we are still part of it and we can do something for the university: for its future and its improvement."

Doctoral level:

"It would be amazing to know that what you write actually has an impact, because it is always a case of giving your feedback, but not knowing what happens next."

14.6 Focus of the results on assessment level

Table 2: An overview of factors that influence the response rate on assessment level according to their rank

Rank	Codes	Quotations
1	Environmental: HSG Culture	17
2	Motivational: Change through Evaluation	6
3	Process: Communication of Evaluation Process	6
4	Process: Method of Evaluation	6

The assessment level focus group's discussion concentrated significantly on the HSG culture. Students are relatively new to the university and deal with lots of new impressions; they are basically in the process of organizing their time around their studies and personal life. The link between the HSG culture and the response rate will be explained in the chapter dealing with discussions and prospects. The second code – "Change through Evaluation" – includes quotations that mainly refer to the students' experience with evaluations before joining the University of St.Gallen. Their impression is that nothing really changes after the evaluation. The third code showed that the process – internally – was not clear, because the students did not know where to find the results of the evaluation or what happens with their feedback afterwards. The fourth code refers to quotations that showed the wish and need for different evaluation methods during the semester and preferably in a different format (more interactive, personalized).

14.7 Focus of the results on bachelor's level

Table 3: An overview of factors that influence the response rate on bachelor's level according to their rank

Rank	Codes	Quotations
1	Process: Timing of Evaluation	11
2	Motivational: Buy In of Importance of Evaluations	7
3	Motivational: Feedback Loop Evaluations	6
4	Environmental: External Platforms for Evaluations	6

The students who were in the bachelor's level focus group discussed the timing of the evaluations in detail. They take time away from coffee breaks, they are not done in class, they all arrive at the same time at the end of the semester, and the fact that evaluations do not cover the exams was a topic that arose several times. Through this, they doubted if the evaluations are deemed as something important and, similar to the assessment group, the students were unsure of what happens with the feedback afterwards. One topic that did not arise in the assessment group, but was clearly a discussion point in the bachelor's group, was the use of external platforms. Students use these platforms to obtain information about courses, especially before the bidding process. The University of St.Gallen has a bidding process for electives: Students have to choose their courses in advance and are of the opinion that the university makes too little information available before the bidding. Thus, students visit external platforms, such as "Kursbewertung," "My.Prof," or "Jodel."

14.8 Focus of the results on master's level

Table 4: An overview of factors that influence the response rate on master's level according to their rank

Rank	Codes	Quotations
1	Process: Timing of Evaluation	9
2	Process: Online Evaluations	8
3	Motivational: Buy In of Importance of Evaluations	7
4	Environmental: Feedback Culture HSG	7

The discussion in the group of students on master's level was similar to discussion in the bachelor's group. The timing of the evaluation often takes time away from their break or is done during the last five minutes of the class, thereby pushing the discussion in a direction that focused on motivation. Students doubt whether the evaluations are important if the teacher does not actually reserve time for it.

The group also talked much about online evaluations, mainly because certain members in the group came from other universities and had done their evaluations online thus far. They discussed the pros and cons of online processes. The group members, however, generally agreed on the benefits of online evaluations. The feedback culture at the HSG was another topic that came up frequently. Students spoke about the general feedback culture at the university: There appears to be a mutual agreement that one receives lots of feedback on papers, group work, and exercises in general. The feedback culture in the class played a big role: This means that when the teacher showed that he is open for feedback and making changes throughout the course and not only at the end via the evaluations, there is a very different atmosphere and students feel that they are taken seriously.

14.9 Focus of the results on doctoral level

Table 5: An overview of factors that influence the response rate on doctoral level according to their rank

Rank	Codes	Quotations
1	Environmental: Focus of the Evaluation (research versus teaching)	11
2	Environmental: HSG Culture	9
3	Environmental: Feedback Culture HSG	9
4	Motivational: Incentives	8

On a doctoral level, the focus group discussion showed that there are clear differences in the way doctoral students believe they are perceived in an academic environment compared to the students on the assessment, bachelor's, or master's level. Although they are students, they often also teach or work for a professor. Their relationship is different and more personal towards faculty, which – according to their discussion – has an influence on how you evaluate. The students in this group spoke much about the importance of research at the university and the much lower meaning of teaching. Then, they discussed incentives. They stated that the incentive to teach is relatively low compared to the incentive to do research; this impacts on the motivation to have your teaching evaluated.

15 Results of the expert interviews

In Figure 4, the overall results of the expert interviews are displayed in a code cloud. The bigger the font, the more quotations were assigned to the code. In this chapter, the top five will be displayed in more detail and in Annexure B a complete overview of all the codes and their respective quotations are given. A list of codes without the quotations can be found in Annexure D. The qualitative data analysis of all three interviews showed the following ranking of factors that influence the response rate at the University of St.Gallen:

Table 6: An overview of factors that influence the response rate of all three expert interviews according to their rank

Rank	Category	Codes	Quotations
1	Environment	Focus from a teacher's perspective	12
2	Motivation	Buying into the importance of evaluations	12
3	Process	Timing of evaluation	11
4	Environment	HSG teaching culture	9
5	Process	Method of evaluation	9
6	Motivation	Feedback loop evaluations	8
7	Environment	Feedback culture HSG	8
8	Process	Communication of evaluation process	5
9	Process	Course format	5
10	Environment	Evaluation bias	3
11	Motivation	Results, contribution to teaching and learning	3
12	Motivation	Incentives	3
13	Process	Survey questions	3
14	Environment	External platforms for evaluations	2
15	Environment	Pressure because of study load	2
16	Motivation	Survey fatigue	2
17	Process	Use of evaluation results	1

[Environmental: Evaluation Bias] [Environmental: External Platforms for Evaluations] [Environmental: Feedback Culture HSG] [Environmental: Focus of the Evaluation from a Teachers Perspective] [Environmental: HSG Teaching Culture] [Environmental: Pressure because of Study Load] [Motivational: Buy In of Importance of Evaluations] [Motivational: Evaluation Results, Contribution towards Teaching and Learning] [Motivational: Feedback Loop Evaluations] [Motivational: Incentives] [Motivational: Survey Fatigue] [Process: Communication of Evaluation Process Internally] [Process: Course Format] [Process: Method of Evaluation] [Process: Survey Questions] [Process: Timing of Evaluation] [Process: Use of Evaluation Results]

Figure 5: Expert-Interviews - 3 main categories and codes in a code cloud

15.1 Environmental-related factor: focus of the evaluation from a teachers' perspective

The university has a standardized survey for all evaluations on assessment, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level, regardless of the type or format of the course. However, what teachers expect and what they want to get out of an evaluation differs, depending on their teaching focus. The focus seems to be twofold: Is an evaluation done, because this is what the university requires and it is important towards the accreditations, or is the focus rather on really understanding what the students think, and then to reflect on and learn from this – from a teaching and a learning point of view. The experts seem to agree that the evaluation is often seen (by students and teachers) more as a compulsory exercise, and less as something that is part of the learning and teaching culture. Here follows a few quotations as an example:

"The issue, of course, is that forms are standardized and the courses are very different. Can this be a good fit? No. Not for different courses. That is an issue."

"Or I can also learn something about the content and the precise findings that we may have had. The focus is therefore not only on the processes, but also on the value of what we have been doing for the class."

"It is not so much about improving the very process of evaluating, than it is about reframing what an evaluation is and establishing why this is important. And this has a lot to do with what the learning culture is."

"In our culture, which is a very mathematical and logical culture, one can say that it is not so much about transforming and transformational knowledge, but more about the instrumental alignment to and a supposed given amount of knowledge: Then the evaluation does not make so much sense, because what you have to evaluate, is not your key interest. Your key interest is to know about the exam questions, or to have better slides, or to have a teacher who gives you well prepared questions that have already been digested."

15.2 Motivational-related factor: buying into the importance of evaluations

All experts understand the importance of an evaluation and communicate the importance to the students once an evaluation comes up. It helps getting a general impression of what students think. They also mention that the evaluation is perceived as something extra and students do not actually want to make an extra effort to do an evaluation. It is not part of their studies and it is not part of the present learning culture. Here follows certain quotations as an example:

"And somehow I always sense that students perceive evaluation as an extra effort. They do not approach it as part of their work and study, but as something extra. And I think that this is also an aspect that needs to be investigated."

"If you want a more general impression of how the course is perceived, you need a representative sample of students who answer these evaluations, and then you get a much better impression."

"To start with, I think that they take it as an obligation – as something that they have to do, because they are supposed to use their freedom to evaluate the professors."

"I often take approximately twenty minutes at the beginning of the last session and clearly ask them to reflect and to write their thoughts in full sentences so that I can understand. Otherwise it is of very little relevance to me whether they merely tick a box with a 2 or a 3 or a 4, which does not really tell me what the students thought was meaningful in this class."

15.3 Process-related factor: timing of the evaluation

All three expert tried to carefully plan the timing of the evaluation. Generally, they seem to have little time, but they all made time to conduct the evaluation during class. The fact that the evaluation was not linked to the exam (it takes place before the exam), is an aspect that one of the experts mentioned a number of times. All three experts stated that they use additional evaluation methods to obtain feedback before the end of the course. Here follows certain quotations as an example:

"I mean, at present a crucially important part of the evaluation is missing; we have no points for and no ideas on evaluating the assessment regime and the grading."

"I really try to create space in the course so that there is sufficient time to fill it in during class and not afterwards. I think that this is also very crucial. There must be time within the course so that it is not an additional task for the students."

"My experience has been that it is much better in terms of turnout if you do it when the students are present anyway – be it in lectures or in the tutorials. Then, the response rates are there. You reserve a specific time slot. Then, the opportunity costs of not doing the evaluation is very low."

"But the very moment that you do not give them time, namely a scheduled time, my experience was that they do not take the time, they do not think about it, and thus they have impact of very limited reach."

15.4 Environmental-related factor: HSG teaching culture

The interviews showed that the perception of the teaching culture at a business school, such as the University of St.Gallen, is such that applying learning and putting it into practice are very important. Faculty members from the department of contextual studies have a different view on that, since their teaching focuses on other competencies. The interview with the third expert showed that the teaching culture has an impact on evaluations in his teaching area, namely contextual studies. Here follows a few quotations as an example:

"Make the students aware of the different assignments and challenges, and what academic writing is all about. Try to empower them to work from the beginning, to apply the information, and to apply the theories, as well as the models, that we introduce to them."

"I think I emphasize application quite a lot. Therefore teaching – for me – is to create tasks and assignments on which the students can really 'act' when they are learning."

"My impression is that the teaching quality – on average – is fairly high and fairly competitive compared to other universities. There is a lot of focus on teaching and teaching quality."

"I come from a formational background in the humanities and for me this is challenging. Here, the humanities are viewed as something that contributes to the primary goal of educating business students. I therefore find myself in a discursive environment that constantly forces me reflect on who I am and what I teach. To be a professor here means intense reflection work on what it means to be a professor who teaches. You cannot take your position for granted, as something solid and valid, and appreciate it; instead, you should take it as a constant renegotiation about the question why the competencies and knowledge that I offer should be important for the education of future leaders or managers."

15.5 Process-related factor: method of the evaluation

All three interviews showed that teachers use more than only one method of evaluation. The main reason for this is that they want to obtain feedback during the course so there is time to adjust for the group of students that is participating. Another reason is that they prefer to have a qualitative evaluation method. How this impacts on the response rate of the end-of-course evaluations will be discussed in the next chapter. Here follows a few quotations as an example:

"Sometimes – but not always – it is TAP. At other times, it is also an open form of evaluation, such as a type of traffic light evaluation: What is ok, what is not ok, what is critical, and stuff like that. With a new course or a new course design, I am often unsure whether it fit the students' needs and therefore I also need more feedback to design it further."

"I also do surveys during the lecture. They are similar to online polls, because the opportunity cost is simply not there. You can click yes, no, or answer one, two, three, four, or five. It is completely anonymous."

"The evaluation methods that comes about with TAP are a completely different take, because they really focus on improving the working condition while writing in the class. This is completely different. And this has, of course, changed the way of doing the evaluation."

15.6 Focus on the results from the first expert

Table 7: An overview of factors that influence the response rate of the first expert according to their rank

Rank	Codes	Quotations
1	Motivational: buying into the importance of evaluations	6
2	Process: timing of evaluation	6
3	Environmental: HSG teaching culture	3
4	Motivational: feedback loop evaluations	3

According to this expert buying into the importance of evaluations is not actually happening. It has "no special position" for the students. The end-of-course evaluations are more like an assignment that students have to do. The first expert thinks that the feedback loop is not closed and that the assessment of the exams should be part of the end-of-course evaluations.

15.7 Focus on the results from the second expert

Table 8: An overview of factors that influence the response rate of the second expert according to their rank

Rank	Codes	Quotations
1	Environmental: feedback culture HSG	7
2	Process: communication of evaluation process internally	4
3	Process: course format	4

According to this expert, it is important to create a feedback culture in the classroom. This is done by introducing alternative evaluation methods during the semester. He gives a lot of feedback during the course on assignments and exercises, which helps create a constructive feedback culture. In his opinion, the course format – for example, if the course is mandatory or not – plays a significant role during evaluations. He is generally satisfied with the present situation.

15.8 Focus on the results from the third expert

Table 9: An overview of factors that influence the response rate of the third expert according to their rank

Rank	Codes	Quotations
1	Environmental: focus of the evaluation from a teacher's perspective	11
2	Environmental: HSG teaching culture	5
3	Process: method of evaluation	5

The third expert clearly states that his area of teaching (contextual studies) makes it more difficult to conduct evaluations according to the standardized evaluation forms. In his opinion, the question "why do we evaluate?" requires attention and should be the topic of discussion, which is needed to change the current learning culture. He understands the advantages of the Teaching Analysis Poll, which is a midterm qualitative feedback method.

16 Interpretation of the results

The main objective of this thesis was to identify the factors that have an impact on the response rate of course evaluations at the University of St.Gallen. Based on the theoretical chapters, three main areas were defined: the process-related factors, the environmental-related factors and the motivational-related factors. The purpose of defining these areas was to establish whether a focus area can be discovered via the qualitative data analysis.

16.1 Student perspective

Throughout the discussions, the HSG Culture was predominantly mentioned from the students' perspective. Generally, a culture determines what is acceptable and what is not, what is important or unimportant, what is workable and what is not. It encompasses what we have learned, our beliefs, and assumptions, as well as our values and norms. But how can this HSG culture have an impact on the response rate? First of all, what is the HSG culture? After analyzing the focus group discussions, the culture appears to have a sense of "pride to be part of the HSG, historical element of being a prestigious business school, competitiveness, application focused, arrogance, an upper-class university, strong community feeling, exam-focused, grade-focused and career focused." If the HSG portraits this image and attracts the kind of student who fits into this picture, it can be assumed that students want to be part of the ongoing improvement via evaluations. Therefore, it can also be assumed that they are motivated to participate in an evaluation. The culture of performing and applying also implies that students probably focus on these matters when evaluating a course.

However, the timing of the evaluations appears to play an important role in the response rate. Students often think that they have to sacrifice their break or do not get enough time to reflect and think their feedback through. They either do not complete the form or they do it quickly, because they want to catch the bus, for example. Another aspect is that they participate in an evaluation when the course is almost finished and therefore they do not experience the impact that their feedback may have. They particularly think that the feedback loop is not closed, because they do not know how their feedback is processed. They have a full study schedule, they feel stressed, and say that student life at St.Gallen is not as "chilled" as other campuses – but being part of a prestigious business school is worth the sacrifice. For this reason, certain students think that online evaluations may help manage the timing of the evaluation better. With more freedom to fill in the surveys, they can take their time and really think, as well as reflect, about the course. Others claim that, in this case, they will not even bother to fill in the form.

Buying into the importance of evaluations has a direct impact on the response rate and the accuracy of the feedback. The discussions showed that this factor is closely linked to the

teacher who, according to the students, should act as a role model in this matter. The buy in factor is also directly linked to the feedback loop of the evaluations. If students think that their feedback is not considered and taken seriously, the importance of evaluations clearly declines.

Concluding note:

The culture, which is part of the environment in which evaluations occur, has a direct impact on the response rate. Compared to the other factors, the HSG culture factor apparently has overriding importance. It is conceivable that the HSG culture sets the boundaries for the other factors. When the culture changes, this will have an influence on the motivational and process-related factors. When the opposite happens, the impact is much less. One can change the process and motivate students to participate in the evaluations, but when their mindset, beliefs and assumptions have not changed, the effect will be much less.

16.2 Teacher perspective

The expert interviews show that there is a strong link between buying into the importance of evaluations and the focus on the evaluations from a teacher's perspective. All experts understand that evaluations are important. However, depending on the teaching area, faculty members are either satisfied with the present situation, or they believe that it should be much more tailored for their needs. The focus also differs according to what they believe an evaluation is. Is it an exercise that gives them a general idea of how the course is going? Or does the evaluation reach further? Should it make students really think about what they have learned, reflect on this, and contribute actively towards learning and teaching?

The focus on the evaluation appears to be closely associated with the HSG teaching culture. The teaching culture pictures a mindset that focuses on application, implementation, and how to use models in practice. Therefore, it portrays a mindset that does not leave much room for interpretation and purely thinking about models or, as one of the experts put it, "to challenge the notions of the given." The interviews also showed that, depending on the area of teaching, faculty members either have to prove that their teaching is important for the education of future leaders, or the competencies and knowledge they offer are viewed and accepted as – without doubt – indispensable. The HSG teaching culture merely has an indirect impact on the response rate – it bears more on the mindset of teachers and their opinion of what an evaluation actually is.

The experts use different evaluation methods to obtain feedback from the students before the course ends. All of them experimented with different methods, which implies that the feedback culture is growing. It also appears that there may be a need for additional ways of evaluating. The wish for more qualitative feedback during the course was noticeable during

all expert interviews. This implies that the timing of the evaluations is an issue and therefore the need for further evaluations can be discussed during the semester.

Concluding note:

The teaching culture as part of the academic environment gives direction to the focus of the evaluation. If the main scope of an institution is application, it is to be expected that the evaluations have a similar scope. If, however, the institution focuses in its curriculum design on additional areas, such as contextual studies, then the teaching culture and the focus of the new programs' evaluations will differ. An important topic in this regard is to establish how the evaluations are positioned from a strategic point of view.

17 Prospects and recommendations

This study identifies factors that have an impact on the response rate of course evaluations at the University of St.Gallen from both a student and teacher perspective. For each of the stakeholders, the main factors are as follows:

Figure 6: PEM Model – Main factors for the students

Figure 7: PEM Model – Main factors for the teachers

The results of this study can support further improvement and development of the evaluation process at the University of St.Gallen. The golden thread running through this study is the main categorization of process-related, environmental-related and motivational-related factors. The same framework is used in the final chapter.

17.1 Prospects regarding process-related factors

Both students and teachers view the timing of the evaluation as one of the main factors that impact on the response rate. A main concern of the students was that they have to sacrifice their free time. They prefer to do an evaluation after the exam, but before the end of the semester, because then they can benefit directly from the adjustments and possible improvements. This shows a need for additional feedback methods. In addition to the end-of-course evaluations, the university may consider adopting alternative methods for collecting and disseminating student feedback. The University of St.Gallen can, for example, implement a midterm evaluation on a voluntary basis to avoid the perception of putting an extra burden on faculty members and students. The Teaching Analysis Poll is a method that partially meets this need, but due to the high costs and resources involved, TAP will hardly be a solution that can be institutionalized for all courses. Although our experts claim that they conduct the evaluation during lecture time, the focus groups' comments often indicated the opposite. A further recommendation is therefore to communicate the timing of an evaluation once more to all

faculty members – preferably through the Quality Development Office. Furthermore, the university may also consider introducing peer feedback for faculty, whereby a colleague will conduct an external assessment in the area of expertise.

The students in the focus groups also thought that online evaluations would be a good approach, because according to them this is simply "how it is done nowadays," – and it will also save them time. However, investigating the main factor in the motivational area, there is a risk – when switching from paper-based to online evaluations – that response rates will decrease significantly, because both stakeholders have not actually bought into the importance of evaluations generally. This requires a careful development of the online evaluation process together with students and faculty. They should be involved in all levels of the project so that their opinions and suggestions are taken into consideration. Through this, they should also feel as if they "own" the process and that they are part of the solution. Involving the stakeholders in the process of finding and implementing a solution, also achieves their buy in, because being part of the implementation team will lead them to take ownership.

17.2 Prospects regarding environmental-related factors

At the University of St.Gallen, the purpose of evaluations are predominantly to give feedback to teachers in order to improve their courses – improve in the sense of optimizing the organization and/or structure of the course (slides, readings, course objectives, etc.) from a student perspective. Students want to know how they can apply what they have learned and how useful the course was in terms of exam preparation. This is not surprising, because the evaluation puts much less emphasis on the learning development of students and reflection on their learning. The evaluation has an outcome-oriented focus. What can effectively be done with the models and theories? How can this be implemented? What impact does it have? The application focus of evaluations is a framework that fits the majority of the offered courses quite well. However, contextual studies are an important feature of the University of St.Gallen and the concentration of courses offered (media, cultures, history, society, responsibility, creativity, law, and technologies) requires a different approach to evaluation. In order to meet the needs of all faculty members, the university should therefore consider implementing student evaluation measures that reflect the varied teaching approaches and diverse learning environments.

17.3 Prospects regarding motivational-related factors

Students would like to move to online evaluations, but the qualitative analysis of both stakeholders showed that buying into the importance of evaluations is not presently at the required level. This implies that the purpose and impact of evaluations ought to be clarified and communicated – repositioning evaluations from "an exercise that we have to do," and "we just do

it because the teacher wants us to," to point showing that faculty and students are convinced of the evaluations' importance and believe that they contribute to teaching and learning. Closely linked to the buy in factor is the feedback loop, especially from a student perspective. In this regard, the university can refine procedures for administering and communicating the student evaluation practice through the Quality Development Office and Student Union. Through this, the students will know that their feedback has an impact, they will also know what happens with the results, and they will also know where to find them. Basically, it concerns defining and clearly articulating a statement of purpose for conducting student evaluations. Such a statement can be communicated through the Quality Development Office, but the university can also consider implementing a code of conduct that states the university's expectation of students in relation to academic matters. Clear standards for conducting evaluations, as well as clear standards for the expectations and obligations of faculty, staff, and students, can be defined.

18 The used method: a closer look

Using focus groups and expert interviews resulted in data that has huge qualitative value for this study. All students were randomly chosen. The composition of the focus groups, however, had the following predetermined criteria: female and male students are represented (on a roughly 50/50 basis), students are selected from different programs within a study level, new and old students are represented, meaning those who recently enrolled at the university and those who have already been at St.Gallen for some time. Regarding the experts: The author selected one female and two male professors from various teaching areas and different backgrounds, but all the experts have been lecturing at the University of St.Gallen for at least four years. The sample in this study was indeed highly suitable.

During the focus groups discussions, a different level of participation on the part of the students became noticeable. Some of the students were quite vocal, while others appeared to be rather shy. The moderator tried to intervene and ask direct questions to include everybody in the discussion. The moderator also tried keeping the discussion on the right track; therefore, ensuring that all the questions in the interview guide were answered.

However, it can be reasonably asked whether the qualitative study's results should not be translated into tools of for quantitative study. In the authors opinion, this approach will not be the purpose of qualitative research – which does not mean that a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative studies cannot be considered. The results of this study can be used to generate hypotheses to be tested and verified by using a quantitative analysis. Or after collecting the qualitative data – in a second quantitative step – a representative sample is used for examining the extent to which the results of the qualitative findings can be generalized.

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20 **Annex**

21 Declaration of Independence

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