

Course Evaluation FAQs for Faculty

Why are we using online course evaluations rather than paper-based evaluations?

Several reasons went into the decision to adopt online course evaluations:

- They provide YOU, the faculty member, MUCH quicker feedback for your courses. Rather than having to wait weeks—if not months—for valuable feedback for your courses, you will now see your feedback almost immediately after the feedback period ends for students, which is just after final grades are due.
- Students will—for the first time in most programs—be able to offer typed comments that they know will be completely anonymous. This will provide additional feedback beyond the traditional Likert-scale feedback you have seen before. During our focus group sessions held in Spring 2011, our students were *extremely* enthusiastic about having this option of open-ended comments. For the first time, they can clarify some of the reasons for selecting certain options in the Likert scale part of the survey.
- The cost of administering paper-based surveys was increasingly prohibitive. It was getting to the point that surveys would soon cost **\$0.50 per survey** to process. And that is not even factoring in the manual labor involved in distributing the surveys via campus mail, collecting them, and then mailing them back to the processing center.
- We are among the last cohort of colleges and universities to shift to online feedback. We can use to our benefit what has been learned from more than ten years of research and practice.

What in the world is CoursEval?

CoursEval is the platform we are using for the online course evaluations. They are a partner with *Jenzabar*, the company that makes our *myDU* portal, so it ties in nicely with our online registration system. Even as a stand-alone system, however, *CoursEval* has generally received praise in the higher education community for creating very configurable surveys with superb reporting capabilities.

When will students access these evaluations?

Generally, there will be a two-week window, ending just prior to the last week of the regular meeting of classes, in which students will be able to complete course evaluations. Students will receive an email announcing when the survey period is open. Students will NOT be able to submit a course evaluation after the grade submission deadline.

How will students find their proper evaluations?

First, an email will be sent out to all students indicating the course evaluations are available in *myDU*. The survey instrument being used, *CoursEval*, ties into our *myDU* site. When students log into *myDU*, they will also see links indicating which survey(s) remain to be taken for each class.

We have created a video for students showing them how to access their surveys; you are welcome to view it, too, of course. It will be available here in the near future.

I've always read that response rates are poor for online surveys. What can I do to get higher response rates?

That is a valid concern. Response rates are, in fact, generally lower for online surveys according to most literature in the field. At the same time, the literature also points out that the responses submitted are more valid—especially with comment boxes available. Here is a link to one article available on the web indicating [general student preferences](#). The same journal has an earlier article [comparing the effectiveness of online versus traditional](#). The producers of the software we used, CourseEval, have also addressed this topic with some of their own research. Here is how you can help ensure a good response rate:

- Tell your students how much you value their feedback for a class; that you have used what you have learned in past student evaluations, and applied them for the next time you taught a class.
- Now that these surveys are online, tell them that you will receive the feedback much quicker than before, so that you can even make adjustments (if necessary) to the class between semesters, which was almost impossible before—especially from fall to spring.
- About midway through the course evaluation window, we will send out emails to you indicating the number of expected student responses for each of your course and the actual number of responses received -- you will NOT see the names of students.
- If they are available, consider reserving a computer laboratory for your students to take the survey. (However, be aware that our student focus groups indicated that they valued the fact there was no "ticking clock" when doing an online survey on their own, outside of class.) If you choose this option, you should treat the class time as you did for in-person surveys and *leave the room*.
- Students will see reminders posted on the *Campus News* page of *myDU*, and also a general Announcement posted in all *Blackboard* course sites.

How do I access the results and when can I see them?

Your survey results will be available to you in your myDU account after final course grades have been submitted.

Can I see the survey instrument ahead of time?

Yes; the general University-wide questions are available here. Individual departments or Schools also have their own supplemental questions that were agreed upon by the department or School. Such questions will appear after the University-wide questions.

Where did these questions come from?

The instrument for the University-wide questions was developed by the Task Force on Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness, which met during the 2010-2011 academic year. The questions were checked by an outside consultant from the Searle Center at Northwestern University, and then vetted by the Provost's Cabinet. Individual School or department questions were agreed upon by the faculty in each division, and were generally limited to no more than five additional questions.

I want to create some of my own questions. Can I?

Not yet. While we go through our first implementation year, we will be focusing on ensuring that the proper protocols are in place so that evaluations are appropriately administered and the subsequent student reports are disseminated in a timely manner. During the first year we will be working with the

college and schools to develop a flexible process that will allow faculty to submit their own questions that they would like included on the course evaluation survey.

What if I am teaching a course with multiple instructors?

The course evaluation has a set of questions geared towards the course and another set of questions that pertain to the course instructor(s). The course-based questions are asked only once during the evaluation. The instructor-based questions are repeated for each instructor. The instructor's name appears with the appropriate set of questions.