

## Course Evaluation FAQs for Students

### ***Why should I complete course evaluations?***

There are several reasons course evaluations are critical for everyone at Dominican University:

- Course evaluations help your instructors develop their courses and improve their teaching. Dominican University has historically been considered an excellent teaching university, and our faculty members value your input.
- Our vision statement, "Dominican University aspires to be a premier, Catholic, comprehensive, teaching university," carries with it a responsibility to have an excellent teaching faculty. This survey is your opportunity to indicate how well we have fulfilled that vision.
- The online course evaluation being offered allows several opportunities for you to **type in your own comments**, in addition to the traditional style of questions where you select a number from a scale. Our student focus groups told us that these were especially valuable, as students can now type in *specific comments* explaining why certain responses were given on the survey—and they remain anonymous.

### ***Is there an incentive to complete them now that they're online rather than taken in class?***

You should understand that these evaluations help our faculty improve the quality of their courses, and as such are a part of the educational process—both yours as well as your faculty member's. The information is shared with each faculty member's Dean and/or department chair, so your input helps shape important curriculum decisions for that class and, indeed, the entire department or School.

You should be aware that faculty members will receive emails indicate the *percentage* of participation, but NOT the names of individuals who did or did not complete the surveys.

### ***Are my responses completely anonymous?***

YES. Even though we know which courses you are taking and, therefore, which course evaluations you are to complete, all results within that survey are anonymous. Your instructors can NOT see who completed which survey. The most information your instructors will receive is an email indicating the *percentage* of students who completed the survey in each class, as a way of encouraging 100% completion. In the report distributed, faculty members will see the aggregated results for those responses that require a numeric input; typed comments are grouped together in each section. There is no way to tell who said what.

You are welcome to check out a video we created showing the instructor's viewpoint available [here](#).

### ***I thought I could take these on my own, but my instructor is having us go to a computer classroom to take it as a class.***

Some faculty members—to encourage as close to 100% participation as possible—will reserve a computer classroom for the class to complete the course evaluation. This is only because your instructor values your feedback, and because (historically) online surveys have tended to have lower return rates than surveys distributed on paper in a class. As always, the results are *completely*

anonymous. (Additionally, your faculty member should leave the classroom, just as though a paper survey were being completed.)

***How do I access the course evaluations?***

You will receive an email with a link to each survey to complete. Additionally, every time you login to *myDU* with your ID and PIN, you will see a portlet on the screen notifying you which surveys are to be completed with links to those surveys.

***Can I see the questions ahead of time?***

Yes; the University-wide survey is available here in PDF format. (Individual departments or Schools may have also developed additional questions that are not listed on that form.) The University-wide questions were developed during the 2011-2011 academic year by the Task Force on Student Ratings of Teaching Effectiveness, and included feedback from several student focus groups.

***Why is there no "neutral" option for most of the questions?***

Many students in our focus groups asked us this, too, and this is one area where we chose *not* to go along with student opinion—at least for the University-wide questions. (School or departmental questions may vary from this.) We strongly believe that you should be able to honestly evaluate each of the statements posed in the University-wide survey. Research has shown that a neutral response option basically tells us nothing about what is being measured. Given the importance of teaching at Dominican University, these are all statements for which you should have an opinion and not be "neutral" about.

***When can I complete the 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.

***I see the CourseEval name mentioned? What are they?***

*CourseEval* is the name of the company that provides the software for the surveys. They are a partner with *Jenzabar*, which makes our *myDU* portal. This close alliance makes it easier to deploy the surveys to the correct students, since it ties in with our registration system.

***I'm worried that this will affect my grade. Will my instructors see the results before final grades for the semester are due?***

NO. Faculty members will not be shown results in their specific courses until *after* the date final grades are due. Additionally, survey results are anonymous, and even typed comments cannot be traced to specific students.

***I might have completed the wrong survey for the wrong class; I thought I was completing a survey for ABC 100, when in fact it was really for ABC 105.***

Contact the survey administrator and your evaluations will be reset.

***I am taking a class that is cross-listed, but I'm only one of two students from the class of 20 who registered for the class in ABC discipline, while the rest are enrolled in XYZ discipline. Can my instructor see the results broken down by each discipline?***

No; the reports sent to the instructors are merged together, so that cross-listed courses receive but one report for that class period, with no distinction of discipline. A class from ABC discipline that is cross-listed with XYZ discipline will still generate only one report to the faculty member.