

Student Evaluations of Courses/Instructors

The revised by-laws set two requirements for course evaluations. All professors will evaluate all courses each semester, and those up for review (3rd year, tenure, promotion, 5-yr post tenure) will submit course evaluations for the 4 semesters preceding the review.

To facilitate the evaluation of courses and instructors by students, we have installed an on-line course evaluation system. Doug Toti, Learning Technology Supervisor, conducted a pilot of the on-line system this summer with volunteers who were teaching summer courses. We had a good compliance rate among the students, they commented that the system allowed them to evaluate the course and instructor with ease and the students generally loved it. The faculty found it to be perfectly simple to use. The success of the pilot allowed us to begin planning this summer to institute the system college-wide in the fall. After consultation with a variety of groups on campus early this fall, we will publish guidelines and instructions for faculty and chairs. The following are some details that will serve as an introduction to how we will use the system this fall.

All faculty will be enrolled in the system automatically. The enrollment system will load in the 11 institutional and core questions from the ICES forms for each course. We have paid a fee to use the ICES questions for one year to give us time to develop our own questions and procedures for individual departments if desired. For the fall, faculty will be allowed to choose 5 additional questions per course. They may choose from the hundreds of ICES questions that will be available and may also choose from questions that come with the software for on-line evaluation. Open-ended questions requiring a written response are also possible.

Because we are just building the evaluation system for all classes this fall we will need some time to insert all of the questions that instructors will choose which is why we must limit the number of additional questions that can be asked for this semester. Office Associates in the Academic Programs, the Provost's office, and Learning Technology will load each faculty member's designated questions to customize each course for them. Once courses surveys are created, they can be reused and modified with ease in subsequent semesters.

Once the course evaluations are ready we will notify students enrolled in the course and provide them instructions for completing the evaluations. Each time they complete an evaluation for a course, the student will be notified and updated on the courses remaining to be evaluated. This will be accomplished through a bulk-email of the course evaluation software itself. Once students have completed all surveys, they will receive no further email reminders.

Evaluations will be available for students beginning the Monday after Thanksgiving break and run through the last day of exams. Students who do not complete their evaluations will likely have their grades withheld but this has yet to be determined by the Academic Policy Committee. We are exploring ways to use positive incentives to fill out the evaluations. The software does have a way to select a random winner so we could give away an iPod or other equally valued object.

Once grades are posted, the faculty member will be given access to their evaluations in an electronic report that is downloadable and printable. Department chairs will also receive reports as appropriate for members of their department and the Provost will receive a full report.

On the advice of the faculty panel that reviewed on-line course evaluation policies, narrative evaluations for tenure and promotion review will be carried out in person, in class. The process for receiving narrative evaluation forms will remain the same.

Details for the processes associated with on-line course evaluations will be circulated for comment early this fall. All indications from our pilot suggest that the transition to on-line evaluations should be smooth and easy. The system can, in fact, work without further input from faculty once they choose additional questions to add to their course surveys. Faculty members main role will be to provide reminders to students in class; we found a spike in evaluation completions after faculty gave verbal reminders in class this summer. If they choose, they may ask the class to wait to fill out the evaluation together in a computer lab or after a specific date.