MU Course Evaluations:

How to Increase Student Participation

Faculty play an important role in encouraging student participation in course evaluations. Here are a few things you can do to ensure higher response rates in your courses.

Students Need to Know Their Feedback Matters

Research shows that this is one of the most important drivers of student participation. Here are some ways to let students know that someone is listening:

- A few days before the evaluation period begins, **talk to students about the process**. Reinforce the idea that they have a responsibility, as part of shared governance, to offer feedback to improve the course design, teaching, and learning experience. Explain to students how evaluations are more informative to everyone when a large percentage of the students in the class provide their feedback rather than just a few.

- **Explain how you have used or intend to use results** to improve the course. Give concrete examples. Tell them how personally valuable the results are to you.

- **Stress that you see only anonymous results —** nothing with their name on it. Tell them that you won't be able to see any results until after final grades are submitted and even then you won't be able to identify who responded or which

student said what. Share with them a previous report, or direct them to a sample report to reassure them.

- **Ask students if they intend to complete an evaluation** with a show of hands. Asking students about their intended behavior can boost participation. It can also surface reasons why students don't want to complete them, providing an opportunity to correct misinformation.

- **Ask students to think about what they would say.** Encourage them to look at the syllabus, specifically course learning outcomes and objectives, to see what the syllabus said the course would be about, what they would learn, and then think about what actually happened in class. Use this as a teaching moment, to help them learn how to offer objective, constructive feedback.

- **Encourage students to complete all of their course evaluations**, not just your course only. Encouraging broad participation showcases the importance the university places on them.

EvaluationKIT
Student Feedback Made Simple®

Make it a Competition:

Build some excitement about the evaluation. Set a high target response rate for all your classes and start a friendly competition (for example, the 300-level class is beating the 200-level class, or one section is beating another section. Expand the competition to be program-wide!

Automated Email Reminders to Students

EvaluationKIT will send students a series of email notifications to remind them to complete their course evaluations:

- An early notice one week before the start of the course evaluation period

- An announcement with a link to the surveys on day 1 of our evaluation period

- Two reminders sent to students who have not yet responded.

- Pop-up windows in Canvas for non-responders throughout the evaluation period.

Consider adding a personal reminder from you to your students.

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Allow Class Time for Students to Complete the Evaluation Electronically

- **Set an in-class "evaluation window"** during which students can complete their course evaluation from their laptop or mobile device. Giving this time encourages students to respond and also shows them the value the instructor places on their participation.

- **Offer incentives.** Offer your students a reward of your choosing: extra credit if the class as a whole reaches a target response rate, a pizza party, an extra ten minutes on an exam, etc.

- **Give students periodic updates** about the response rates.

- **Include the evaluation in the syllabus,** as part of the ungraded requirements for the course.

- Incentives can include **non-credit options**, like early access to an assignment or course grades.

Talk to Students:

"How can you provide feedback that is helpful and informative?"

Be honest and direct.

Include constructive criticism that is focused on the course.

- Examples include: "The instructor should allow more opportunities in class for students to ask questions about the material" or "I would have benefited from more feedback on my paper."

- Comments that reflect your opinion of the instructor's personality or appearance (e.g., "The professor is funny but needs a new wardrobe") do not help the instructor improve the course.

The best comments give instructors specific feedback on which techniques and assignments helped you learn.

- Comments like "Being able to choose my own final project really motivated me to do the research" or "Professor X used many different techniques to make sure we understood the material on a deeper level" are more helpful than "Great professor!" or "I loved this course."