How to Increase Your Response Rates for Course Evaluations

Version 1.0

Here are eleven tips to help you increase your response rates for your course evaluations:

Tell students how important the course evaluations are to you personally.

Often students don’t know or consider the uses to which we put course evaluations. Inform them that with course evaluations, instructors adjust assignments, change texts, re-evaluate the effectiveness of assignments and readings, re-format course delivery, and most important, learn what students think and feel about the teaching and learning in the course. Emphasize that their evaluations and suggestions are the most useful aspects of course evaluations and that every semester, they do make a difference. Tell them you need their help.

Add an incentive.

Announcing an incentive at the beginning of every class meeting after the course evaluation period begins can motivate participation and completion of course evaluations. Since it is a measure of class participation, a reward to the entire class works best: for instance, for reaching a 90% response rate in the course evaluations, all students might receive 10 extra participation points.

Encourage students to encourage each other to complete the course evaluations.

Peer pressure should not be under-estimated in its impact on student effort. Students care what their classmates think.

Mention course evaluations regularly throughout the semester.

During the semester, whenever the class discusses or reviews the progress of the course, note that on the course evaluations, students might want to mention that particular moment or assignment or discussion. Pose a question for their future consideration. Placing students in the position of evaluating the course as the course progresses often generates more thoughtful evaluations and more specific comments. Also, add the course evaluation(s) as a scheduled item on your syllabus.
Every time you mention course evaluations, stress that course evaluations are anonymous.

Anonymity is a powerful factor in eliciting honesty (among other things) from students completing the course evaluations. Remind students that course evaluations are anonymous.

Guide your students to the course evaluations.

The basic course evaluations are located on eCAFE. Focus-Designation course evaluations are currently located on SurveyMonkey. You may also have other course evaluation forms that you need to have students complete, too. Find out which course evaluations are required for your course, tell students how to locate them, and ask students to complete them.

If your course has a focus-designation (E, HAP, O, or WI), you must inform students of the survey’s online location and ask them to complete the survey. These course evaluations are independent of eCAFE, so focus instructors must pay special attention to assuring students know about and complete focus-designation course evaluations.

Provide students with an opportunity to complete the course evaluations.

If your class meets in a classroom with computers, write the web address for the course evaluation on the board and set aside twenty minutes for students to complete the survey.

If your class doesn’t meet in a classroom with computers, there are three computer labs on campus; schedule a thirty-minute session during class time in one of them and have students complete the survey.

Keep in mind that twenty minutes of course evaluation time may save you many hours of future class time when you learn what students can tell you candidly on an anonymous course evaluation.

From the time the course evaluation period is announced, remind students in class every day that the course evaluations are open and when they close.

Keeping students posted on the evaluation period and regularly letting them know the current response rate percentage motivates students to complete the course evaluations.
Send weekly reminder e-mails to all students.

Using Laulima, sending a weekly reminder e-mail, which includes the web addresses of ALL of the course evaluations relevant to your course, keeps students aware of this important responsibility.

Also, you can announce the locations and dates for course evaluations by using the e-mail messaging and pop-up announcement options of any online learning tools or programs that are part of your course.

NOTE: Since eCAFE keeps a current count of student responses during the response period, place the link to your focus-designation course FIRST and place the eCAFE link LAST. Since most respondents work down a list, the response count that eCAFE reports is very likely the same response rate for the focus-designation course evaluations.

Remind students of ALL course evaluations relevant to your course.

Currently, eCAFE provides a basic course evaluation for our HCC students; usually, this evaluation either replicates or is modified from the original HCC course evaluation survey known as “Form G.” eCAFE also provides access for students to all of the course evaluations for the courses in which students are enrolled in the current semester. Encourage students to complete all course evaluations for all of their courses.

Remember the differences between eCAFE and Focus-Designation Course Evaluations, and use them to your advantage.

eCAFE course evaluations usually open a few weeks before the final days of instruction, but they close BEFORE finals week begins. Focus-Designation course evaluations usually are OPEN TILL THE FINAL DAY OF THE SEMESTER, which is the last day of finals week. As a result, you can remind students one last time during the final exam to complete the Focus-Designation course evaluations. Also, you can schedule time in a computer lab during your final exam period to enable students to complete the course evaluations before leaving the class.