Provost's Guidelines on Student Course Evaluations
May 2015 [August 2016]

A. Preamble: Washington State University is committed to ensuring the quality of its academic programs, its curriculum, and of the teaching and the learning experiences of its students. Course evaluations – or student feedback on courses and instruction -- are an important component of quality assurance, conducted for the following reasons:

1. To provide formative data used by instructors for the continuous improvement of their teaching.
2. To collect data used in the summative evaluation of teaching for administrative purposes, such as annual merit, tenure and promotion review.
3. To provide one source of data on student learning and effectiveness of courses and instruction, to be used by departments, colleges, and campuses for curriculum assessment and review.

Course evaluations are part of a broader teaching and program evaluation framework that includes peer review, instructor self-assessment, cyclical program review and other forms of assessment and professional development for teaching. As part of this framework, course evaluations are a particularly useful tool for collecting student feedback on their own learning experiences in WSU courses, but should not be used as the exclusive measure of teaching effectiveness.

B. Statement of Purpose: The purpose of these guidelines are to outline the principles and parameters that guide student evaluation of courses at WSU. The specifics of how the course evaluation process will be structured and administered are determined by each college, coordinated with all campuses and locations where the college offers courses. Together these provostial guidelines and college guidelines will form an institutional framework for student feedback on courses and instruction.

C. Principles: The course evaluation framework at WSU:

1. Reflects institutional teaching and learning values.
2. Recognizes the diversity of teaching priorities, strengths, students and contexts across departments, colleges, and campuses.
3. Gathers information from students about their learning experience.
4. Protects the anonymity/confidentiality of student responses.
5. Provides opportunities for both summative and formative feedback on teaching and courses.
6. Is equitable, consistent and transparent in the collection, use and interpretation of data.
7. Provides reliable and meaningful data to instructors and administrators.

D. Administration of Course Evaluations: Scope and Access

Scope: Each undergraduate and graduate course will be evaluated each time it is offered.

1. By ~~Fall 2016~~ Spring 2017, all course evaluations will be offered in the university's online system (eXplorance Blue acquired in 2014). Each college will determine the set of questions used for their courses.
2. In courses with multiple instructors, evaluations will also collect student feedback on the individual contributions of these members of the teaching team.
3. Exceptions: Exempt from this course evaluation policy and requirements are: a) courses with five or fewer students; and b) courses of an individual/independent nature, as defined by each college (e.g. independent study courses, practica, research credits). For such courses, colleges are encouraged to obtain student feedback by alternative means. In addition, each college will determine whether and how teaching assistants will be included in course evaluations, based on roles and course context.

Access. Results for a course will not be released until after final grades have been submitted and will be made available as follows:

Instructors
- Instructors will have access to results of course evaluations conducted in their courses only after final grades have been turned in for the term.

Academic Administrators (Dean, Associate Dean, Chair, Director)
- Academic administrators in the department and college will have access to course evaluation results from their unit.

Departmental or School Committees
- Student feedback about their experience in courses is one source of data about curricular effectiveness. Colleges are encouraged to develop protocols for sharing relevant portions of course evaluation results with departmental committees that review curriculum, assess student learning, or support teaching innovation. Such protocols should protect instructor-specific results / personnel data, which will not be shared with departmental committees. WSU's new course evaluation system facilitates segregation and sharing of results, and should be leveraged to support quality curriculum, instruction and assessment.

E. Responsibilities: All members of the university community have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a manner that acknowledges the importance of student feedback to academic program excellence and that enhances the full and effective functioning of this process.

The university is implementing a centrally-supported online system for the development, distribution, administration, collection, analysis, and reporting of student feedback on courses and instruction.

University/Provost's Office: The Provost's Office has a responsibility to:
- Oversee the implementation of this policy.
- Provide education and support to students, instructors and academic administrators about the use and importance of course evaluations.
- Ensure good practice guidelines for course evaluation design, delivery, analysis and use are developed, widely-available, and periodically reviewed by stakeholder groups to support effective teaching and assessment.
- The Office of Assessment of Teaching and Learning (ATL) is available to consult with colleges and departments.

Colleges/Campuses:
- Each college has a responsibility to develop its own guidelines in line with these provostial guidelines, and to coordinate and periodically review them with all campuses offering their classes (and with other colleges, as needed).
- Guidelines should provide specific information on how course evaluations are implemented in the college. Topics may include: student feedback instrument content and format; communication about the value of student feedback on courses and instruction; report formats of results and how student confidentiality will be preserved (especially in small sections or courses); guidelines for data interpretation, use, sharing, storage and security.
- Colleges should provide their guidelines annually to departments, faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants.

Academic Administrators (Dean/Chair/Director): Academic administrators are responsible for:
- Reviewing course evaluation results including quantitative and qualitative data, as one component of the assessment of teaching effectiveness and curricular quality, and
- Applying good practices when analyzing and interpreting student feedback.

Instructors: Instructors are responsible for:
- Understanding the role of course evaluations at WSU
- Communicating the importance of course evaluations – student feedback on courses and instruction -- to students
- Reviewing their own course evaluations regularly, and
- Discussing these results with their chair or director

Students:
- Students have a responsibility to participate in the process and give constructive feedback about courses and instruction.