



## IMPROVING STUDENT FEEDBACK

Faculty may choose to share the handout, "Course Evaluations: Providing Helpful Feedback to Your Professors," before students fill out course evaluations.

To encourage students to avoid rude or personally hurtful comments, the handout asks students to keep three key issues in mind:

1. Comments are intended to provide instructors with feedback to inform future iterations of their courses.
2. Specific constructive feedback is more useful than vague critiques or praise—see examples provided in the handout.
3. Comments not related to student learning—especially insults or comments on an instructor's appearance—are not helpful and actually diminish the value of feedback.

Adapted with permission from the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching and the University of Michigan.

### GETTING FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

The end-of-course evaluation is a summative one. Although it aims to help us improve future courses, it does not enable us to respond to the needs of the students currently enrolled in the course. Formative feedback collected early in a course accomplishes that goal. Collecting formative feedback is as easy as attaching a page to the back of the exam, or asking students to respond to questions such as the following on the day papers are due.

- How long did you study for this exam or work on preparing this paper?
- How/where did you study/write?
- Which class activities—lectures, discussions, reviews, online notes—helped you most in learning this material? Why?
- Which class activities helped you least? Why?
- Which topics remain most difficult?
- What has a professor done in the past that has helped?

# 5 HELPFUL TIPS FOR COURSE EVALUATIONS



## 1 SET THE NORM

Get formative feedback early. Ask students to provide feedback during the semester so this seems like part of the normal class process. This enables you to respond to the needs of students currently enrolled in the course.

- The first major paper or exam is a great time to collect formative feedback.
- Use the suggested questions on the reverse side.



## 2 EMPHASIZE QUALITY

Student ratings are not helpful when vague or irrelevant, whether positive ("Great course!") or negative (e.g., "Worst course ever.").

- When evaluations begin, post a message on Blackboard or distribute the handout "Course Evaluations: Providing Helpful Feedback to Your Professors" in class.



## 3 SHOW THE IMPACT

Show students how their feedback helps faculty members and how it benefits fellow students.

- Prepare a few slides/visuals to show students how you have incorporated past feedback into your courses.
- Explain to students how administration uses the feedback in faculty evaluation.



## 4 SAY IT OFTEN

Research indicates faculty can have a significant effect on response rates if they repeatedly communicate the importance of completing the evaluations.

- Tell students directly how much you value their feedback.
- Send reminders to students during the survey period.
- Post a link to course evaluations on Blackboard.



## 5 USE CLASS TIME

Allow students to complete course evaluations during class time using laptops and smart phones, or reserve time in a computer lab for part of class. Leave the room, but first:

- Assure students that evaluations are anonymous.
- Indicate that faculty do not see the comments or numbers until grades are submitted.
- Encourage students to use the TU mobile app to complete surveys.

Visit the Faculty Resources page at [towson.edu/provost/academicresources/](http://towson.edu/provost/academicresources/) for the handout, "Course Evaluations: Providing Helpful Feedback to Your Professors."



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