

## INSTRUCTORS: Worried about Response Rates? Talk to your Students about Course Evaluations!

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This tip sheet provides you with simple strategies for talking to your students about course evaluations. These strategies have been found to improve online course evaluation response rates because they educate, engage, and create an open dialogue with students about the important role course evaluations play in students' overall learning experiences. Research demonstrates that engaged and informed students are motivated to complete course evaluations- you can encourage this engagement by demonstrating your involvement in course evaluations.

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1. Remind your students in-class that the course evaluation window is open for your division.
  - Evaluation window dates are available from your division and are posted on the CTSI web site at: <http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/essentialinformation/evaluation-framework.htm>
  - It's important that you demonstrate your awareness and interest in course evaluations by sharing information with students about course evaluation timelines. Make in-class announcements, post announcements or messages on Blackboard, etc., to communicate that you are aware of the course evaluation process for the course.
2. Integrate just-in-time slides into your lectures.
  - These slides can be customized each term to include the relevant dates for your division. They are available on-line through the CTSI web site at: <http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/essentialinformation/evaluation-framework/instructors.htm>
3. Educate your students on how course evaluations are used.
  - Students are often unaware that instructors review this feedback, so this is an ideal opportunity to tell your students how you use their feedback to enhance your course each year.
  - In 2008, CTSI ran a series of focus groups with students and found that a majority of students were unaware of the ways in which evaluations were used. Knowing that collected data are read by instructors and academic administrators for the purposes of course and teaching enhancement, curriculum design, annual faculty performance reviews, tenure, promotion and teaching awards, can alter how they approach course evaluations. Many students indicated that they wished they'd been informed of this by their instructors.

#### 4. Build time into your class for students to complete their evaluations.

- You may wish to provide dedicated time during a lecture for students to complete their evaluations. This can be achieved in the following ways:
  - › Allow your students to leave a bit early so that they can complete their evaluations on their mobile devices or laptops, in the library, or at home.
  - › If WiFi or cell networks are available, you may want to allocate sufficient class time for students to fill out their evaluations on their mobile devices or laptops. Keep in mind that not all students will have access to these devices and data collected by CTSI on students' attitudes toward the new framework demonstrates that many prefer to complete their evaluations outside of class when they have more time to carefully reflect on their experience in the course.

#### 5. Talk about student feedback throughout the year.

- CTSI has produced a helpful resource on how to incorporate information from student course evaluations into your course, see: <http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/essentialinformation/evaluation-framework/instructors.htm>. Remember: Whenever you make changes to your course, be sure to inform your students of these changes. This demonstrates that you value student feedback and that you incorporate it into your teaching practice – in other words, you act on their feedback. By demonstrating how you respond to their efforts to provide feedback, you build a dialogue that highlights both yours and the students' roles in their learning experiences.

#### 6. Consider administering a mid-course evaluation.

- This strategy also helps to demonstrate that you are engaged in an informed and adaptable teaching practice that encourages student feedback throughout the course.
- See the CTSI handbook on Gathering Formative Feedback through Mid-Course Evaluations for suggested strategies.

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