

## Student Guide | End-of-Term Course Feedback Surveys

[This is a **brief version** of [the complete Student Guide \(PDF\)](#). A [slide view \(PDF\)](#) and [web view](#) also are available.]

At the end of each term, SLU invites students to complete **End-of-Term Course Feedback Surveys** for their courses. This Guide provides information to support your effective engagement in this important course feedback process. It is organized by the elements of the [Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm](#), which is a signature approach to teaching at Jesuit colleges and universities.

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### Context

The primary purpose of End-of-Term Course Surveys (ETCS) is to help instructors better understand how students experience courses and how courses may be enhanced in the future. Most instructors review the results regularly and use them to inform changes (sometimes small, sometimes more substantive) to their courses over time. Survey results also may be used by University administrators (department chairs, program directors, and academic deans) to better understand how students are experiencing courses in their academic units. Results also may be used as one small part of an instructor's annual performance evaluation, their tenure and/or promotion evaluation, and/or nominations for teaching awards.

Because context matters, Blue surveys also ask a few questions about you – what motivated you to take a course, whether you had the background you needed prior to the course, how you prepared for and engaged in the course, etc. Such questions foster greater reflectiveness, and the responses help readers better understand the context of specific survey results.

### Experience

Most questions are about your **experience** in/of the course – questions about specific aspects of a course's design and specific instructor behaviors. But the survey does not ask you how you feel about a course, because this is not a satisfaction survey. Instead, it's a survey meant to capture information about the specific aspects of the course and instruction that, from your perspective, supported your learning/achievement of the course outcomes.

In addition to closed-ended items that provide scaled response options, you'll also see open-text items that give you an opportunity to provide concrete suggestions for ways the course might be improved. These items can provide instructors with some of the most useful feedback in the survey, assuming students take the time to reflect thoughtfully on particular aspects of their experience in a course.

### Reflection

**Reflection** is a hallmark of Jesuit education. It's also a fundamental commitment to responsible participation in course feedback surveys. Just as you want your instructors to be reflective when providing feedback on your course assignments, we ask you to approach this feedback opportunity as

an act of Ignatian reflection. Even spending just a few minutes reflecting on your experience in a course can better prepare you to provide useful feedback.

So, what does this mean? Ignatian reflection is a meaning-making exercise – an opportunity to review experiences, notice the details and texture of those experiences, and identify the learning and growth that has come from those experiences. Before you go into Blue to complete a course feedback survey, then, you are encouraged to review/remind yourself of key aspects of your experience in the course – including the units covered, the activities and assignments completed, the “light bulb” and struggle moments you experienced, and specific actions taken by the instructor that supported your learning and achievement of the course outcomes.

## Action

The heart of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm is **action** – it’s the point of any learning process and a key element of the course feedback process. As you complete the survey, try to pinpoint concrete actions you took, actions your instructor took, and actions your instructor could take in the future to support learning in the course. Feedback that is grounded in examples of concrete actions will be of greatest benefit to your instructors and to future SLU students. When responding to open-text questions, try to offer as specific feedback as possible, rather than vague comments. (These [tips from the University of Michigan](#) provide examples of less helpful and more helpful comments.)

***A note about focusing on action:*** when you do this, you’re much less likely to bring implicit biases into your responses. Research has shown that student feedback on courses is often influenced by unconscious and unintentional biases about instructors. When you focus on the **specific actions** your instructor has taken in the course – reading each survey item carefully and responding to exactly what is being asked – you reduce the likelihood that those unconscious biases will shape your responses. This is a concrete way you can help to make teaching at SLU more just and equitable for all instructors, regardless of their perceived identity(ies), age, appearance, personality, or national origin.

## Evaluation

When you engage in Ignatian reflection, **evaluation** is built in – an essential step in reflecting on your experiences, the actions you’ve taken, and the actions your instructor has taken, all with an eye toward possible enhancements for the future. Through an Ignatian lens, **evaluation** should be offered in a constructive way, grounded in a focus on the instructor’s actions. When students criticize an instructor in personal terms, or voice complaints without connecting those complaints to specific actions, instructors can’t really act on the feedback.

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Ultimately, we hope you will approach the End-of-Term Course Feedback Surveys as an opportunity to practice Ignatian reflection. Just as you want instructors to provide thoughtful, respectful, constructive comments on your coursework, you also should provide thoughtful, respectful, constructive comments about your experience in a course.

## An Ignatian Approach to Course Feedback Surveys: Tips for Students

The following tips will help you approach End-of-Term Course Feedback Surveys in a way that will prove most useful to instructors. They are grounded in the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm and the information shared above.

1. As you prepare to respond to questions about the course and the instructor, spend a little time reflecting on the relationship between why you took the course, what you put into the course, and how you experienced the course. In other words, how did your **context** shape your **experience** of the course?
2. We hope your **experience** of completing an End-of-Term Course Feedback Survey will be one of thoughtful **reflection**, with attention to the particular context in which the course took place and your experience of the whole term, including awareness of your own learning and growth since the start of the term.
3. Before you log in to complete the ETCS for a specific course, take a little time to **reflect** on your full experience in/of that course, using some of the prompts listed above. Be sure to consider: what **actions** you took to support your learning in the course and what **actions** your instructor took.
4. Try to focus on the specific **actions** each survey question is asking about and respond with those in mind. This will help reduce the likelihood that unconscious bias will shape your responses. Focus, too, on specific actions an instructor could take to enhance the course. Doing so will help the instructor **evaluate** how well things went this time around and what they might do differently in the future.
5. Ground your **evaluation** of a course in concrete details and descriptions of past or future **actions** so the instructor will see how your feedback can better inform future changes to the course.