

Student Guide

End-of-Term Course Feedback Surveys

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At the end of each term, students are invited to complete *End-of-Term Course Feedback Surveys* for each of their courses (sometimes referred to casually as “course evaluations” or “student evaluations”). Surveys are administered via a tool called Blue (by Explorance), accessible via email or from Canvas, once surveys open.

This Guide is . . .

- Intended to support students’ effective engagement in this important course feedback process
- Grounded in the assumption that students want to learn in equitable, inclusive learning environments; value effective, evidence-informed instruction; and want to create even better courses for future SLU students
- Organized by the elements of the [Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm](#), a signature approach to teaching at Jesuit colleges and universities

Alternative versions of this Guide also are available.



Note: Many instructors ask students for course feedback in other ways, at mid-term or other points during a term. This Guide focuses on the End-of-Term Course Feedback Surveys administered at the University level.

Context

Primary purpose:

- 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.

Other uses:

- 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.

Context (continued)

Your context matters, too.

So Blue surveys also ask a few questions about you, including:

- 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

Such questions foster greater reflectiveness, and the responses help readers better understand the context of specific survey results.

Tip #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?



Experience

We ask about your experience in/of a course.

So, you'll see questions about specific aspects of a course's design and specific instructor behaviors.

We don't ask how you feel about a course . . .

because this is not a satisfaction survey.

The survey aims to capture specific aspects of the course and instruction that, from your perspective, supported your learning/achievement of the course outcomes.

Experience (continued)

You'll see different types of questions.

- Closed-ended items that provide scaled response options
- Open-text items that give you an opportunity to provide concrete suggestions for ways the course might be improved.
 - These 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.



Tip #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.

Reflection

This is a hallmark of Jesuit education.

It's also fundamental to responsible participation in course feedback surveys.

Just as you want 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 . . .

Reflection (continued)

So, what does this mean?

Ignatian reflection is a meaning-making exercise, an opportunity to:

- Review your experiences in a course,
- Notice the details and texture of those experiences, and
- Identify the learning and growth that has come from those experiences.

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.

Tip #3: Before you log in to complete the ETCFS 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.



Action

This is the heart of the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm.

It's the point of any learning process and a key element of the course feedback process.

When completing 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 concrete examples will be of greatest benefit to your instructors and to future SLU students.

For open-text questions, try to offer as specific feedback as possible, rather than vague comments. ([The University of Michigan](#) provides examples of less helpful and more helpful comments.)

Action (continued)

A additional note about focusing on action:

when you do this, you're much less likely to bring implicit biases into your responses.

Research shows that student course feedback is often influenced by unconscious and unintentional biases about instructors. When you focus on an instructor's specific actions, you reduce the likelihood that unconscious biases will shape your responses.

This is one way you can help make teaching at SLU *more just and equitable for all instructors*, regardless of their perceived identity(ies), age, appearance, personality, or national origin.

Tip #4: Try to focus on the specific actions each survey question is asking about and respond with those in mind. 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.

Evaluation

Evaluation is built into Ignatian reflection.

It's 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 share complaints without connecting those complaints to specific actions, instructors can't really act on the feedback.



Tip #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.

Final Thoughts

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 work, **we** want you to provide thoughtful, respectful, constructive comments about your course experiences.

This is how you can support *just and equitable teaching at SLU*.

For more information on providing effective feedback, see [the full version of this Guide](#).

