

## Course Evaluations at Shepherd University

### Scheduling

The scheduling of course evaluations is based on the academic calendar. Course evaluations for Fall 2006 are scheduled as follows.

Date	Academic Calendar	Course Evaluation Calendar	Scheduling notes
Aug 21	First day of classes		
Sep 11		Course evaluation request forms sent to departments	Two weeks before form due date
Sep 25		Course evaluation request forms due to IR	One week before start of first-8-weeks evaluations
Oct. 3		First-8-weeks evaluations start	Three weeks before end of first-8-weeks courses
Oct. 18	Last day of most first-8-weeks courses	First-8-weeks evaluations end	End on same day as first-8-weeks courses
Nov. 6		Evaluation packets sent to departments	One week before semester evaluations start
Nov. 10	Last day to withdraw from full-semester class		
Nov. 15		Semester evaluations start	Three business days after last withdrawal date
Dec. 10		Semester evaluations end	Last day before finals begin
Dec. 11	Final exams begin		
After finals		Results processed and returned to faculty	Time varies, around six to seven weeks

The processing time for course evaluations is determined by the time required to type course comments after evaluations are returned to Institutional Research.

## Bumps in the Road

Some problems with the process occur often enough to be impediments. Many can be easily resolved.

- **Late requests for evaluations.** These can arise from tardy request forms, or from last-minute requests. Late forms hold up the process of preparing packets, and some late requests can come in too late for generation of evaluations.
  - Solution: IR encourages prompt return of accurate course evaluation request forms.
  
- **Students unaware of the existence of RAIL evaluations for their courses.** While several factors likely contribute to the lower response rate for RAIL evaluations, my conversations with faculty indicate that a probable contributor is student lack of awareness of the existence of a RAIL evaluation for their courses. IR is unable to inform students that RAIL evaluations are available for their courses.
  - Solution: Reiterate to students that RAIL evaluations exist for the course. Direct them to instructions for RAIL evaluations available online at [www.shepherd.edu/ir/evaluations.htm](http://www.shepherd.edu/ir/evaluations.htm).
  
- **Miscoded Scantron sheets.** Scantron sheets can only be read if completed using #2 pencils. Students sometimes fill in the sheets with pens or other writing instruments that cannot be read by the scanner. In other cases, students do not fill in the correct nine-digit ID code that is provided on the label of each evaluation packet.
  - Solution: Provide sufficient #2 pencils to students for completion of course evaluations. Ensure that the nine-digit ID number is written on the blackboard or otherwise available to students as they are filling out the evaluations.
  
- **Failure to retain previous years' data for promotion and tenure.** Incomplete records of course evaluation results are available for semesters previous to Fall 2005. If a faculty member does not retain copies of previous years' evaluations, IR may not be able to reconstruct them at a later date.
  - Solution: Faculty should retain copies of course evaluation results in a safe place.

## Statistical information for course evaluations, Fall 2005 and Spring 2006

In Fall 2005, 898 courses were eligible for evaluation. Of these, 509 (57%) were evaluated. 103 RAIL evaluations (20% of total evaluated) and 406 paper evaluations (80% of total evaluated) were requested. One of these was changed from a RAIL to a paper evaluation late in the evaluation period, so 102 RAIL evaluations and 407 paper evaluations ultimately were generated.

- 367 paper evaluations (90% of those requested) were returned with one or more responses. The mean response rate for returned evaluations was 80%, and the median response rate was 79%.
- 74 RAIL evaluations (73% of those requested) generated one or more responses. The mean response rate for evaluations with one or more responses was 27%, and the median response rate was 20%.

Implementation of the new policy regarding use of RAIL evaluations would have affected roughly 70 of the 102 rail evaluations (69%). This would have brought the total number of paper evaluations generated to 477, or 17% more than were actually administered, and would have added approximately another week of processing time after these evaluations were returned.

In Spring 2006, 896 courses were eligible for evaluation. Of these, 394 (44%) were evaluated. 56 RAIL evaluations (14% of total evaluated) and 338 paper evaluations (86% of total evaluated) were requested.

- 303 paper evaluations (90% of those requested) were returned with one or more responses. The mean response rate for returned evaluations was 75%, and the median response rate was 75%.
- 43 RAIL evaluations (77% of those requested) generated one or more responses. The mean response rate for evaluations with one or more responses was 24%, and the median response rate was 21%.

Implementation of the new policy regarding use of RAIL evaluations would have affected roughly 38 of the 56 rail evaluations (68%). This would have brought the total number of paper evaluations generated to 376, or 11% more than were actually administered, and would have added approximately another two to three days of processing time after these evaluations were returned.

**More information on the course evaluation process** is available at the Institutional Research website at <http://www.shepherd.edu/ir/evaluations.htm>. Instructions for administration of evaluations and interpretation of the results, as well as a copy of the evaluation questionnaire, may be downloaded from this page. Current evaluation policies and the evaluation schedule for the academic year are also provided.