Course Evaluation at Shepherd University

Around 1995 the current evaluation form was created by a faculty committee and accepted by the faculty senate. The current procedure for administration began in 1997, and was modified in 2011. The option for online evaluation was implemented in Fall 2004.

General Procedures

1. Early in the semester, as soon as most of the "Staff" designations in the schedule have been replaced with instructors' names, each instructor is sent a list of courses from which to select those to be evaluated.
   a. Tenured faculty should evaluate at least two courses each fall semester. The faculty member should choose both courses. RAIL evaluation is an option for tenured faculty, as well.
   b. Tenure-track faculty should evaluate at least two courses each semester. One is to be selected by the faculty member, and one by his/her chair. The course evaluation form should be signed by the department chair.
   c. If no courses are selected for evaluation by two days after the due date, the Dean of the faculty member's school will select the courses to be evaluated.
   d. These procedures are a partial summary of the official Shepherd University Board of Governors Policy #19A. Please consult that document for the full evaluation procedure.
2. If the instructor is unsure of which courses should be evaluated, he or she should consult the Chair or Dean for guidance.
3. After checking the courses and the method (traditional paper and pencil or online), the form is returned to the Office of Institutional Research by the due date provided on the form, unless your department chair or administrative assistant specifies another procedure.
4. **Please note. As of Fall 2006, online (RAIL) evaluations are to be used only by tenured faculty. Non-tenured faculty and adjunct instructors should request paper evaluations, *not* RAIL evaluations.**
5. One week before the course evaluation period begins, the packets of materials (traditional method) for the evaluations are delivered to department offices and administrative assistants distribute them to instructors.
6. The instructor should read the directions for administration on the front of each evaluation packet. She or he should also check the envelope contents to be sure there are both questionnaires and answer sheets, and that there are enough of both. If there are insufficient sheets, the instructor should contact the Office of Institutional Research for more.
7. The instructor should also be sure to have a sufficient supply of No. 2 pencils on hand for those students who do not have them. These are required for the Scantron forms.
8. The instructor selects a day for evaluation and allows 15-20 minutes, usually at the end of class. The instructor writes the course ID on the chalk board/white board and reminds students to write this on the Scantron answer forms. (This is vital, as forms which do not have the course ID filled in cannot be counted toward the evaluation results.)
9. A student is selected or volunteers to oversee the process. The instructor gives the student the envelope, pointing out any particular instructions on the cover, and leaves the room. This is important. The instructor has no further involvement in the process and must leave the classroom area so that students feel free from observation.

10. After the evaluations are completed, the student will seal the completed and blank forms in the envelope and take it to the department office or other location as identified on the label. These will later be returned to Institutional Research.
11. The Scantron answer sheets are analyzed to produce statistical results for each class section and the comments are typed.
12. Online evaluations are available throughout the evaluation period, and may be accessed via RAIL.
13. Results are returned to instructors with copies to the department chairs, deans, and VPAA, usually around the end of January (fall evaluations) or June (spring evaluations). There will be an accompanying form with guidance for interpreting the statistical results.

Please note:

- Soon after packets are received they should be checked to be sure that there are enough forms. Also, the instructor should read the cover sheet and fill in the information about the return of the packets. Some administrative assistants may have done this when they received the packets. The instructor should also note the dates during which evaluations may be conducted, as indicated on the packet. (The evaluation schedule is available at http://www.shepherd.edu/ir/evaluations.htm.)
- It is highly appropriate for the instructor to try to motivate students to be thoughtful and complete in their responses, perhaps by telling them that the results will be important for improving the course and that students' input is valued. If the instructor has attempted something new or different, it is fine to remind students of that and ask for comments about it. Comments are all too often compliments or insults; that is unfortunate because neither is very useful for evaluation. Some students appear to believe that instructors do not care about their comments, so it may be worth some effort to try to change that belief.
- Note that one CRN (course request number) = one course. The schedule database is used to organize course evaluations and the CRN is the identifier of a course. Two courses with different CRN's, even if they are taught in the same location at the same time, must remain two courses for this purpose. If both are selected, the instructor will receive two packets of forms. If the instructor wants them all to be evaluated as one course, all the forms could be put into one envelope and the results will be analyzed according to the ID the students write on the Scantron forms (statistical results) and that on the label (comments); both are the same.

Final Note

Although department chairs and deans receive copies of course evaluation results, it is in the interest of the individual instructor to retain copies of evaluation results. Whether seeking promotion and tenure at Shepherd, submitting annual reports, or seeking employment elsewhere, the absence of a record of course evaluation could be a handicap.

Information and schedules are available at http://www.shepherd.edu/ir/evaluations.htm.

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