

## Preparing Students to Evaluate Their Courses

### Why you should talk to your students about course evaluations:

1. **Improve your response rates:** A common belief among students is that neither the instructor nor the administration really care about their opinions and do not use the evaluation results. This is one reason for low response rates. By demonstrating that student feedback matters, you can boost your response rates and get a more accurate representation of student opinions.
2. **Improve the quality of your evaluations:** As with most tasks, giving feedback is a skill that must be acquired. Students need to see models of good feedback and to receive feedback on the feedback to know if what they write is helpful or useless. We know from motivation research that if someone does not think he or she can successfully engage in a task, motivation to do the task fails. Without a clear understanding of how to give feedback students might give none at all or they might give generic responses that they cannot be criticized for. If they are bubbling in a form, they might give the highest rating to each item without discrimination among the teaching practices that are being rated.
3. **Improve student engagement and learning:** A conversation about the evaluations can establish rapport with students. You can communicate what is important to you and how your teaching practices relate to learning goals. Students are more likely to be engaged in learning if they understand the connections between what you are doing and their learning goals.

*I told my students that their evaluations were very important to me in term of improving my teaching skills and learning abilities of my students. I emphasized the fact that I am giving my all for them and the evaluations are as important to me as their diploma at the end of their university journey.*

### Some talking points to use with students:

1. **The online course evaluation system, PICA, is designed to protect student confidentiality.**
  - When students login to the PICA system using their netid and password, the netid is used to confirm that they are enrolled in the classes they are evaluating. Their names are NOT associated with their responses.
  - When students submit the evaluation, the UIN is used to verify that the student making the submission is the same one who logged in to start the evaluation.
2. **Instructors do not see any results of course evaluations until after final grades are turned into the registrar.** Results are compiled and are not connected to any student names. Written comments are provided exactly as students wrote them.
3. **Instructors can see response rates while the evaluations are open but not who submitted them.**
4. **Students may edit and resubmit an evaluation as often as necessary until the deadline for submission.** Previous versions are not saved. Only the most recent version at the time the evaluation period closes is saved and entered into the database. Students are encouraged to write lengthy comments offline and return to the evaluation to paste the comments into the comment boxes.
5. **Students receive two confirmations of successful submissions.** The first confirmation appears online immediately upon submission. It is formatted for printing on a desktop printer. The second confirmation is sent by email to the student's official university email account. Students are advised to save these confirmations to verify submission of the evaluation, should the instructor request verification. Each confirmation contains the student's name, the course, and the date and time of submission.