

PROPOSAL FOR NEW COURSE EVALUATION SYSTEM

SUMMARY (rev. ajk 032315)

Basic Set of Questions

1. What did you learn—whether in terms of knowledge, skills, or your view of the world—in this course? (qualitative) (always published)
2. What percentage of the work or reading assigned for this course did you complete on schedule? (quantitative)
3. Please evaluate each faculty instructor. What are the instructor's strengths? In what ways might his or her teaching be improved? In answering this question, you might address the clarity of the lectures or presentations and their relationship to the other elements of the course, the ability of the instructor to generate enthusiasm and facilitate discussion, the quality of feedback, availability, the timeliness of the return of assignments, etc. (qualitative)
4. What is your overall assessment of the effectiveness of the instructor? (quantitative)
5. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your teaching assistant (discussion section leader, lab section leader, grader, or other assistant) as an instructor, and how might his or her teaching be improved? (qualitative) (never published)]
6. What is your overall assessment of the course? What are its strengths? In what ways might it be improved? In answering this question, you might address the value of readings and assignments, the structure of the course (including the relationship of sections to lectures), the contribution of the course to your knowledge of the subject matter and to the development of your analytical and reasoning skills, etc. We would like you to use specific examples where possible. (qualitative)
7. What is your overall assessment of the course? (quantitative) (always published)
8. Would you recommend this course to a fellow student? (quantitative) (always published)
9. How does the workload in this course compare to Columbia courses with a similar structure? (quantitative) [Optional response box: How many hours a week did you devote to this course? (numeric)] (always published)

Thus what the students would minimally get (barring low enrollments or opt-out) is

1. What did you learn in this course? (qualitative)
 7. What is your overall assessment of the course? (quantitative)
 8. Would you recommend this course to a fellow student? (quantitative)
 9. How does the workload in this course compare to Columbia courses with a similar structure? (quantitative)
- The system will be customizable at the department and instructor level.
 - The system will include opt-outs and an enrollment minimum.
 - The system will include incentives to increase response rate.
 - The system will be subject to a mandatory reassessment after three years with particular attention to specific concerns raised at the time of adoption.

NOTES ON THE CURRENT REVISION

(Note: There remains room for improvement in the precise wording of many of the questions...)

Introductory Screen

A short preamble explaining the twin goals of evaluation system—to help faculty evaluate the course and their own teaching; to help students in course selection—which students should keep in mind, along with a reminder about civility, and about bias in evaluations (“Students should be aware that research has found that student teaching evaluations systematically evaluate women and minority instructors lower than others, irrespective of actual classroom performance.”)

1. What did you learn—whether in terms of knowledge, skills, or your view of the world—in this course? (qualitative) (always published)

This seems to be the most useful question for faculty for evaluating learning outcomes rather than student satisfaction. It is also useful for students considering whether to take a course.

2. What percentage of the work or reading assigned for this course did you complete on schedule? (quantitative)

This question allows faculty to control individual overall assessment evaluations of the course against the effort put in. Faculty will be able to sort responses according to categories.

3. Please evaluate each faculty instructor. What are the instructor’s strengths? In what ways might his or her teaching be improved? In answering this question, you might address the clarity of the lectures or presentations and their relationship to the other elements of the course, the ability of the instructor to generate enthusiasm and facilitate discussion, the quality of feedback, availability, the timeliness of the return of assignments, etc. (qualitative)

What we have done here is to combine in a single question a number of points that are separate questions in the current Columbia model. This allows students to respond on things they want to comment on rather than forcing them to come up with a number for things that they are perhaps not concerned with. For multiple instructors, the system will generate multiple pages.

4. What is your overall assessment of the effectiveness of the instructor? (quantitative)

We are not requiring this question to be published.

The pairing of the qualitative and quantitative versions of the same question may generate more thoughtful numbers.

5. **What are the strengths and weaknesses of your teaching assistant (discussion section leader, lab section leader, grader, or other assistant) as an instructor, and how might his or her teaching be improved? (qualitative) (never published)**

This will appear only for courses with sections.

6. **What is your overall assessment of the course? What are its strengths? In what ways might it be improved? In answering this question, you might address the value of readings and assignments, the structure of the course (including the relationship of sections to lectures), the contribution of the course to your knowledge of the subject matter and to the development of your analytical and reasoning skills, etc. We would like you to use specific examples where possible. (qualitative)**

This is, of course, the main question. Again, what we have done here is to combine in a single question a number of points that are separate questions in the current Columbia model.

7. **What is your overall assessment of the course? (quantitative) (always published)**
8. **Would you recommend this course to a fellow student? (quantitative) (always published)**

The pairing of the qualitative and quantitative versions of the same question may generate more thoughtful numbers.

9. **How does the workload in this course compare to Columbia courses with a similar structure? (quantitative) Optional response box: How many hours a week did you devote to this course? (numeric) (always published)**

The aim is to get students to compare seminars to seminars, lectures to lectures, etc.

Other things that will be built in

Customizability (to deal with specific concerns of departments)

- Optional department-, faculty, or course-specific questions, but these only become accessible once the main set has been answered. Modules will be automatically included for certain types of courses (e.g., language courses, Core courses, etc.)

Enrollment Minimums

- Evaluations for very low enrollment courses (≤ 5) will not be open to either students or to faculty (only to administrators/department chairs) to protect student confidentiality.

Opt-outs

- We will permit all faculty to opt-out of opening results to students for two years. Thereafter, opt-out will only be available the first time a faculty member has taught a given course.

Incentivize response

- We will encourage faculty to make time during class, at the beginning of a class late in the term, for completion of the evaluation, while keeping the evaluations open through reading period; this seems the best way to raise response rates to the levels that prevailed with the older, paper reviews. If this proves ineffective, we will introduce further incentives (e.g., access to evaluations, access to grades).

Control of Inappropriate Language

- Instructors will have the ability to petition for the deletion of egregiously inappropriate language in evaluations; the bar for such action will be very high; any changes will be kept to the absolute minimum (a word or phrase, rather than the whole response) and the fact of the deletion will be noted.