

EPPC Recommendation

Course evaluations, student surveys, and faculty surveys in spring 2020

To: Executive Committee

From: EPPC

Re: Course evaluations, student surveys, and faculty surveys in spring 2020

Although the COVID-19 pandemic made spring semester 2020 unusual in many ways, administrators and faculty should still be able to receive feedback on what worked, what did not work, and how operations can be improved. This information should be gathered, however, only for purposes of administrative or individual improvement; it must not be used for promotion, review, retention, or tenure decisions.

Accordingly—following discussions with the Policy and Planning Committee (PPC), Junior Faculty Advisory Board (JFAB), and the Lecturer Advisory Committee (LAC)—the EPPC makes the following recommendations for the spring 2020 semester:

1. Arts and Sciences should not conduct course evaluations for this semester.
2. Even though evaluations of individual courses should not be conducted, the Arts and Sciences should still try to learn what students thought about the academic conduct of the semester, and what worked and what did not work. To that end, it should conduct an anonymous survey of all Arts and Sciences students who are enrolled in at least one course. This survey should start the day after the last day of classes and run for 10 days. To the extent possible, it should be coordinated with Barnard and SEAS. Attached is a draft survey that the EPPC has developed. This survey may contain questions about types of courses (e.g., lectures or labs) and about size of courses, but should not be designed to learn anything about individual courses. The Arts and Sciences should protect the data this survey generates, and strictly forbid any data-mining exercises that would reveal information about a particular course, instructor, or TA.
3. Those faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants (TAs) who want to gather feedback on their own courses should be free to do so.
 - a. To help those who wish to conduct evaluations, we worked with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) to prepare a list of questions that might be helpful in course evaluation. This list should be made available to faculty, instructors and TAs as assistance in tailoring the questions they ask their students. We have also prepared a guide on using CourseWorks to conduct anonymous surveys.
 - b. TAs may survey their students even if the instructor of record is not conducting a survey. If the instructor of record is conducting a survey, TAs should coordinate their surveys with that of the instructor.

- c. These evaluations are solely for the benefit of the instructor or TA who conducts them. No department or dean may request to see the results, or learn whether an evaluation has been conducted. No department or dean may encourage or discourage faculty from taking surveys, and faculty may neither encourage nor discourage TAs.
 - d. The Arts and Sciences and GSAS should place the following notice on their websites, and maintain it there for at least a decade: “Course evaluations administered by Arts and Sciences were suspended for the spring 2020 semester because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the unusual conditions which prevailed in New York City at that time.
4. The Arts and Sciences should also conduct a survey of faculty and TAs to learn about their teaching experiences this semester, and their suggestions for improvements. This survey should also be coordinated with Barnard and SEAS. We do not have a proposed draft of this survey yet, but hope to have one by April 30.

Cc: PPC, JFAB, LAC