5.5 Course Evaluations

Effective instruction at Mines should be evaluated for different levels of courses and different delivery modes, among other potential categories. Effective teaching is defined here in terms of four components:

- Focused on learning
- Intentionally designed
- Supportive of students
- Reflective

More information on effective teaching can be found online from the Trefny Innovative Instruction Center. Below, we outline three types of evaluations that should be considered holistically in evaluating effective teaching.

Student Evaluations

Electronic student evaluations of faculty effectiveness in teaching are conducted each semester, including the summer terms and eight-week parts of term. Course evaluations are generated for all courses with enrollment of two or more students. Only certain Canvas course roles are evaluated as part of the course evaluation process. These include "Teacher", "Lead TA", and "TA". For courses that are team taught, all instructors and teaching assistants are evaluated separately.

Formal course evaluations are conducted during the last 14 days before finals for 16-week and 14-week semesters and the last 7 days of 8-week or 6-week parts of term.

Courses are evaluated based on their associated Banner designations:

1. "Lecture", "lab", "lecture/lab", "mixed face-to-face", "recitation", "seminar", "studio" and "distance courses" course types are included in the evaluation process.

2. "Research", "thesis", "internship", and "independent study" course types are not included in course evaluations, nor are courses with subject codes PAGN, MSGN, AFGN or CSM101.

3. For fully online courses ("distance courses"), evaluations are available 7 days prior to the last official day of class for 8-week courses and 14 days prior to the last official day of class for 16-week courses.

The course evaluation facilitation and communication process follows the same general outline:

1. Reminder email to all instructors and TAs associated with a course to make them aware of the upcoming course evaluation cycle sent a week before evaluations are active.

2. Email to instructors and TAs with current course/section list included in upcoming evaluation sent five days before evaluations are active.

3. Reminder emails are sent to students about upcoming evaluations one day before evaluations are active.

4. Deadline to assign/update "no evaluation" roles in Canvas is one day before evaluations are active.

5. When evaluations are active, students are notified and prompted to respond in Canvas and via an email.

6. Reminder emails are sent to students for any uncompleted surveys every two days after evaluations start.

7. Course evaluations are active and available to students until 11:59pm the day prior to final exams or on the last official day of class (for 8-week or 6-week courses).

Additional information and frequently asked questions regarding the course evaluation process are available in this Mines knowledge-base article.

To ensure high response rates, faculty are asked to:

- Allow 10 minutes during class time for completion of the evaluations. Although students can use their computers, tablets, or mobile devices to complete the survey by clicking an appropriate link, to ensure high submission rates it is recommended that faculty allow class time for evaluation completion. Academic Affairs will provide the links for each course to students in a separate email. Links to evaluations are also available in the Canvas course menu in each class.
- If classroom time is provided, the instructor should leave the room while the students complete the evaluation.

Evaluation results are available to Academic Departments one day after semester grades are posted by the Registrar and to Faculty two days after semester grades are posted.

In addition to the formal, end-of-semester evaluations, faculty are encouraged to use the optional mid-course survey available on Canvas for gathering feedback earlier in the semester. Any evaluation feedback obtained outside of the formal, end-of-semester evaluation is to be used by the faculty member only so that they may engage in ongoing course improvement efforts. After collecting mid-course feedback, it is advised that faculty address the feedback with their students with what changes and improvements will be made for the remainder of the semester.

Peer Evaluations/Observation

Peer evaluations (or observation) provide a different perspective for improving one's teaching than student evaluations and can offer another tool for faculty to holistically demonstrate quality teaching for promotion. For peer observation, the process should be supportive and formative. Faculty are strongly encouraged to seek out colleagues on campus known to be strong teachers for feedback; it may be helpful to get advice from a colleague in a different department so that they could focus their attention on pedagogy rather than being distracted by familiar content.

Self Evaluations

Self-reflection surveys are useful for faculty to evaluate their teaching, and may also be useful for documenting "continuous improvement" as required for ABET. Reflection templates will work best if designed to focus on our characteristics of effective teaching, and should include prompts for instructors to reflect on how they are working toward the four characteristics of effective teaching list above. A possible self-reflection survey may ask:

1. What changes did you make in your course this semester? Which, if any, of the changes were based on student performance or evaluations from the last time you taught this course?

2. What worked well in your course this semester? Why?

3. What did not work well in your course this semester? Why?

4. What will you do the differently the next time you teach this course? Why?

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