



**Idaho State  
University**

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **Student Feedback and Course Evaluations**

**ISUPP 4140**

#### ***POLICY INFORMATION***

**Policy Section:** *Academic Affairs*

**Policy Title:** *Student Feedback and Course Evaluations*

**Responsible Executive (RE):** *Academic Vice President and Provost*

**Sponsoring Organization (SO):** *Office of Academic Affairs*

**Effective Date:** *TBD*

**Revised:** *New Policy*

**Review:** *May 2030*

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure fair and effective solicitation and use of Student Feedback in University courses. Student Feedback and Course Evaluations inform ongoing pedagogical improvement of pedagogy and course design and provide evaluative data for Instructor review.

This policy applies to all credit-earning courses taught by the University, and to all Instructors (tenure-track, tenured, and non-tenure track) teaching these courses. Adjunct, part-time instructors, or Teaching Assistants teaching credit-earning courses are likewise subject to this policy. This policy does not address feedback for non-instructional personnel or activities, or for non-credit earning courses in continuing education.

#### **II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. **Confidentiality.** In the context of this policy, confidentiality is the expectation that a Student's name and/or evaluation comments will not be disclosed to others who do not have a Legitimate Evaluative Interest.

- B. Course Evaluation. A structured process for collecting Student Feedback on teaching and learning experiences in a particular course with a particular instructor.
- C. Faculty. All appointments described by ISUPP 4050 *Academic Rank and Other Appointments*.
- D. Instructor. Instructor is an umbrella term to describe tenured, tenure track, and non-tenured individuals who provides course instruction. An Instructor is any person who is responsible for the teaching of a class or laboratory or other instruction. These terms include, but are not limited to, professors regardless of rank, instructional staff, graduate assistants, visiting lecturers, and adjunct or visiting faculty.
- E. Legitimate Evaluative Interest. A genuine, lawful, and necessary reason for an individual to access or process information within an evaluative context.
- F. Quantitative. Numerical data to assess effectiveness, characteristics, and outcomes. This includes using statistics, scores, and other numerical metrics.
- G. Qualitative. Non-numerical data derived through descriptive rubrics, narrative feedback, or other non-quantitative methods.
- H. Student. All persons registered for courses at the University, including those registered full-time or part-time, attending online or in-person, pursuing undergraduate, or professional studies, degree or non-degree seeking, and/or pursuing continuing education classes or special programs.

### **III. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. Instructors. Encourage Student Feedback submission while protecting the confidential and voluntary nature of Student Feedback.
- B. Program Directors and/or Unit Chairs. Oversee development, design, application and standardization of quantitative and / or qualitative items for use in the department or unit's evaluation processes.
- C. Provost. The Office of the Provost/Division of Academic Affairs, through the Vice Provost of Academic Leadership and Faculty Affairs, maintains overall authority for the course evaluation system.
- D. Supervisors. Utilize Student Feedback results for Instructor pedagogical development and performance review while giving appropriate weight to the results in light of other indicators of instructional effectiveness.

#### **IV. POLICY STATEMENT**

Idaho State University recognizes that understanding Students' perspectives on their individual learning experiences provides valuable insight into the extent to which the University is fulfilling its primary educational mission. Course evaluations provide one avenue for Students to communicate feedback on those experiences. Student course evaluations are designed to solicit feedback from Students about their learning experiences to inform Instructor efforts to improve Instructors' course designs and pedagogy. The principal aim of collecting Student feedback is pedagogical improvement. Evaluation data should assist in Instructor development, mentoring, and curriculum enhancement.

The University also recognizes the limitations of Student feedback to the degree that it is often dependent on course type, method of course delivery, and Student individualized perception. Because of this, Student feedback shall not be employed as the sole measure of an Instructor's teaching performance, or as the sole measure of the value or quality of a course.

#### **V. PROCEDURES TO IMPLEMENT**

##### **A. General**

1. Faculty Participation. Faculty shall be meaningfully involved in any systematic effort to solicit student opinions for the purpose of improving instruction or evaluating Faculty / Instructor performance.
2. Student Access.
  - a. Except as stated below, all Students will have the opportunity to provide feedback on their courses.
  - b. Course feedback is not required for courses of an individual/independent nature, such as independent study courses, special individualized research, creative projects, or theses and/or dissertations.
3. Voluntariness. It is mandatory that Students be given the opportunity to provide feedback; however, Student participation in Course Evaluations is voluntary.
4. Anonymity. Instruments and processes used for collecting Course Evaluation feedback must preserve Student anonymity.
5. Confidentiality.
  - a. Students will be able to participate confidentially through an online system.
  - b. In limited circumstances exceptions to confidentiality may be permitted, such as in the event of a University investigation and in compliance with relevant laws and policies. In such circumstances, the Provost may determine that the Student

evaluator's name may be revealed to the relevant parties where such information is accessible and reasonably available.

- c. Raw data and open-ended responses must be treated as confidential, with access limited to individual Instructors, and those with Legitimate Evaluative Interest or oversight roles.
- d. Quantitative summaries of evaluation data may be shared broadly (e.g. Faculty, chairs, committees).
- e. Instructors may not disclose or share the content of course feedback to other Students.

6. Non-Retaliation & Non-Grade Impact.
  - a. Evaluation participation must not affect Student grades or standing.
  - b. Instructors may not penalize or otherwise retaliate against Students for feedback.
  - c. Course feedback must not be used in a way that impedes a Student's ability to fairly report their course experience.
7. Transparency. The instrument(s) used to collect Student Feedback, including, timing, purpose, use, and procedures must be published and made readily available to Students and Instructors.
8. Validity, Reliability & Best Practice.
  - a. Evaluation instruments should be designed to yield useful, interpretable data.
  - b. Questions must align with educational best practices.
9. Protection Against Defamation or Harassment. In limited circumstances and where reasonably available, the University may allow redaction or review of Student comments that contain harassing or discriminatory content.

B. Unit Adaptation

1. Modified Timing for Special Courses. Departments may adopt alternative schedules for courses with nonstandard schedules provided that the feedback window ends before the final exam is administered for the given course.
2. Alternate Feedback Mechanisms. In addition to formal semester evaluations, Instructors may utilize midterm feedback instruments or informal formative feedback, such as midcourse surveys. These may be designed locally so long as they do not conflict with this policy.

C. Administration & Timing

1. Access Period / Window

- a. Evaluations must open in the last weeks of the semester before the administration of final exams.
  - b. Evaluations must close on or before the first day of final exams week for the course period.
  - c. Evaluations must be open and available for student feedback for at least ten (10) business days.
  - d. Notwithstanding the preceding, Departments may adopt alternative schedules for courses with nonstandard schedules provided that the feedback is completed before the final exam is administered for the given course.
2. No instructor shall receive the gathered Student Feedback until the instructor has submitted final grades for the course.
3. Participation Encouragement.
  - a. Instructors may encourage completion of Student Evaluations via reminders.
  - b. Instructors may choose to allot class time to the completion of Student Evaluations.
  - c. The instructor must not be present during in-class evaluations.
  - d. Incentives must not compromise voluntariness or anonymity.
4. Data Retention & Archiving. Collected evaluation data, both quantitative and qualitative, must be stored for the minimum period required by law and University policy, with appropriate confidentiality safeguards.

D. Use in Faculty Evaluation & Development

1. Informing Teaching Evaluation. Student Feedback and Course Evaluation summaries may be one component of the evidence considered in Faculty Annual Reviews, Promotion, Tenure, and 5-Year PPR, but must not be the sole criterion.
2. Interpretation & Context. Evaluation results must be interpreted in context (e.g. in light of class size, course level, modality, discipline norms, enrollment fluctuations). Chairs, peer reviewers, and committees must account for context in their assessments.
3. Instructor Response & Reflection. Instructors must have opportunity to respond in writing to their Course Evaluation reports, especially where comments are critical or raise concerns. Responses should be appended to their evaluation file.
4. Developmental Follow-Up. Where Student Feedback and Course Evaluations indicate consistent weaknesses or problematic trends, the department should work with the Instructor to propose a development plan including, but not limited to, pedagogical training, peer mentoring, and / or instructional support.

## **VI. OVERSIGHT, AUDIT & QUALITY ASSURANCE**

- A. **Review of Instruments & Process.** The Office of Academic Affairs shall periodically review the evaluation instruments, processes, response rates, and department use of Student Feedback and Course Evaluations to ensure continued validity, fairness, and compliance with University aims.
- B. **Minimum Response Rate Safeguards.** To reduce distortive bias, analyses or reporting may suppress or flag results from sections with very low participation (e.g. fewer than 5 respondents). Use of low-response results in high stakes decisions must be accompanied by caution and additional evidence.
- C. **Data Quality Checks.** The central evaluation system should include mechanisms (e.g. detection of pattern response, excessive straight-lining, duplicate submissions) to guard against abuse or invalid data.

## **VII. RELATED LAWS AND POLICIES**

- A. Idaho State Board of Education Governing Policies and Procedures Section II.G.
- B. ISUPP 1030 *University Records, Archives, and Publications*
- C. ISUPP 4010 *Periodic Performance Review of Tenured Faculty*
- D. ISUPP 4020 *Promotion and Tenure*
- E. ISUPP 4041 *Grievance Procedures for Institutional Faculty*
- F. ISUPP 4050 *Academic Rank and Other Appointments.*
- G. ISUPP 4120 *Faculty Code of Conduct*