

SPRING 2018 COURSE EVALUATION SURVEY FAQ'S

3.29.18

What is the nature of the change?

Albright will again administer online course evaluations via Moodle in all of its classes, both traditional and SPS.

What happened? This was to change for the spring semester.

A lengthy review of vendors yielded a product that gained wide approval, but the contract ultimately fell through because of concerns about data security, a growing concern for all of us.

Why did the College change how it used to evaluate courses?

The prior system for traditional course was heavily dependent on manual effort and relied upon antiquated technology which has stopped functioning. We were solving an immediate need.

Is Moodle intended to be the future of this process?

No. This remains a stop-gap. The Provost and Professional Council will identify and implement a long-term solution.

What does the survey look like?

The survey questions are still the same that the traditional program has had for years. It will remain in the form of a series of questions using a point scale, with an option not to answer questions that do not apply to the course, and with some narrative questions at the end.

What about the "Instructor Summary" item on the old survey?

This unnumbered item in the old survey averaged instructor-related questions above it (#7-18). It was essentially a convenience, since the question scores are already there. Because of this, and because the only way to provide this convenience is to manually export the data, in the fall department chairs and ACRT indicated this was not a critical feature of the reports.

How does this affect SPS/ADP courses?

SPS has been using Moodle for its evaluations for some time, but the content of the surveys differed somewhat. Due to constraints in Moodle, last fall SPS adopted the content of the survey used in traditional courses.

Why will it be online and why Moodle?

The College does want to go to an online option since it is so much more efficient, less labor-intensive, and much better for collecting and reporting data. Moodle was a proven vehicle for SPS evaluations and is the College's official learning management system, so it is familiar, usable, and already available. Importantly, Moodle also mobile-compatible and so offers both in-class and out-of-class access to the evaluation (as long as it is accessed via a web browser, not by a downloaded Moodle app).

How will this online approach impact student participation?

Since evaluations should continue to be administered during class time, there should be little impact. Since there is ability to do them outside class as well, it can also capture those who could not attend. In the fall, the response rate was over 76% in lecture courses, and can be higher if faculty communicate their value to students and allow appropriate class time for the survey.

How will students access the evaluation survey?

By entering the course Moodle site and clicking on a link that says “Course Evaluation,” which will appear on the right side of the screen.

What if I don’t use Moodle in my course?

Every course has a Moodle site, whether it is “turned on” by the instructor or not. The Moodle coordinator will ensure that every site is turned on and visible.

What if a student doesn’t have a “smart” device, either that day or at all?

Almost every student has such a device, but in any case the student can use any College computer lab to complete the evaluation within the time window defined below. They should be reminded by faculty that they are expected to evaluate all of their courses.

Whom do I contact if having trouble or want more information about using Moodle?

George Missonis, Moodle Coordinator (gmissionis@albright.edu, 610-921-7203). He will work with you individually.

Can we still ask optional questions that are determined by the instructor or department?

Yes, the form will still have 4 blank questions (#27-30) that can be supplied by the instructor.

How do we implement optional questions for an online survey environment?

If you choose to use optional questions, provide the class with a handout of the questions they are to answer. As always, any custom questions must be in the same format as the other quantitative questions. Using a handout, rather than writing on the board, will allow any student who cannot complete the evaluation in class to do so later.

When will we do the evaluations?

The Moodle system requires that there be a window of time in which the evaluation process is open, and we can define a different window for traditional courses and SPS courses. In consultation with Professional Council, the window for traditional courses was set for the final two weeks of class to the start final exams (which in the spring term will be April 23 – May 8). In SPS, the window is seven days before the class ends to seven days after. The course evaluation link will be visible on the Moodle page during the entire window, so we encourage you to set a specific day to do your evaluations and advise students not to access the survey until then. This will be especially important if you plan to use optional questions that they need before doing the survey.

Why won't faculty have full control over when the evaluation is visible and available to their students?

This is a Moodle constraint. The evaluation will be live throughout whatever time window is set for all courses.

Can a student do the survey more than once?

No, it can be submitted only once.

What about the instructions that we always give students in class prior to completing the evaluation? And weren't those approved by the faculty?

Those instructions have been adapted to fit the current survey environment. This adaptation was undertaken collaboratively with the chair of PC. Like the previous version, it includes text to be read to students before completing the evaluation survey, and it closely mirrors the previous instructions. Those instructions are posted on the same web page as these FAQs.

What about online courses?

There is a version of the instructions to fit online courses as well. There are no online courses in the traditional program during the spring term.

What about team-taught courses?

There are only a handful. Since Moodle can accommodate only one electronic survey per course, those instructors will be given the choice whether to have one instructor evaluated electronically and the other(s) on a paper form, or to have all instructors evaluated on paper forms, to be scored manually.

When will results be available to faculty?

Faculty can access results approximately 3 weeks after grades are due for the course.

Can the instructor see who has completed the survey during the evaluation window?

Yes, the response rate is accessible before the reporting window opens.

How do faculty access the results?

A link to evaluation reports will appear on all Moodle course pages; it will become active on the date that results become available, again, approximately 3 weeks after grades are due. Clicking on the link will take you to a reports menu. If you have trouble accessing results, contact George Missonis. He gives this advice if you are having access troubles: try using Chrome or Firefox as your browser, and also try clearing your browser cache and history.

What will the results look like?

Faculty will be able to select different reports: the number of students who completed the evaluation; a profile of class responses to each question (# and % of who rated it a 4, a 5, etc.), both graphically and as a bar graph; and access to individual student submissions. Data is exportable to Excel and can be further organized in that form.

When/how will chairs see results?

Chairs can use the reporting link in any Moodle course to reach the reports menu; from there they will have access to information on all their faculty.

Why aren't we trying to change the content of the evaluation?

Doing so is a longer-term process, managed by Professional Council with the Provost. Changing the way we administer the current survey was an urgent and major step in itself.

Should we continue to use student course evaluations in the first place?

There are many opinions on this question, but student course evaluations can be very valuable if designed and used well, and they will continue to be used at virtually all colleges. Students are the most important resource of information about our teaching and their learning, if they are asked the right questions. A robust discussion of survey content can lead to a better tool.