Resources and Guidance for Collecting and Using Student Feedback

The aim of this guide is to help you effectively and efficiently collect student feedback to use in assessing and improving your course. We begin with general guidance followed by instructions for accessing and using pre-built survey templates on Canvas for collecting student feedback about your overall course and specific course activities.

Recommendations for Obtaining Useful Student Feedback from Canvas Surveys

- *Collect Something*: Don't get overwhelmed with possibility. Even a single piece of feedback can help you improve your course. Think about what you most want to know about your students' experience in your course.

- *No need to reinvent the wheel*: Use one of our ready-made templates to get started. You can always customize the questions to meet your specific needs, but there's no need to start from scratch.

- *Wait a bit*: Refrain from collecting feedback during the first two weeks of class; this will help you avoid investing effort into fixing issues that will naturally improve as students settle into the course.

- *Explain*: Tell students what types of feedback you plan to collect and why.

- *Keep it brief*: Try to use surveys that students can complete in a minute or two.

- *Make it convenient*: Embed surveys into Canvas modules to streamline the process for students.

- *Be strategic*: Don't overwhelm your students or yourself by collecting feedback on every activity. Focus your efforts on activities you suspect are not working well or those you've had to alter significantly.

- *Provide clear response options*: Aim for response options with clear practical meanings (e.g., Needs Improvement/Meets Expectations vs. a 1-5 scale). This approach may help you view, interpret, and respond to feedback more quickly.

- *Give credit*: If possible, consider tying surveys to a small amount of points (i.e., completion credit) to encourage participation. For example, this can be easily done on Canvas with an graded survey.

- *Acknowledge*: Thank students for their feedback and emphasize its importance for improving the course.

- *Follow-Up*: If necessary, make changes and assess their effect with a follow-up survey. For changes made to specific activities, the follow-up can be conducted the next time students complete the activity. For more general course-level changes, allow at least 3-4 weeks for the changes to take hold before reassessing. It's also good idea to tell students explicitly that you're making changes based on their feedback. If many students ask for a change that you decide not to implement, you might want to explain why you made that choice, if appropriate. This lets the students know that they were heard.

Pre-Built Templates Available in Canvas Commons

Available Templates

- Quick Course Pulse: Snapshot of how the course is going overall

- Quick Activity Feedback – General: Feedback on a specific course activity

- Quick Activity Feedback – Group Work: Feedback on a small group activity or assignment

- Quick Lecture Feedback: Feedback specific to the lecture portions of a course & the content students find most difficult

Locating & Importing Survey Templates in Canvas Commons

Dashboard

Courses

Calendar

Inbox

Commons

Help
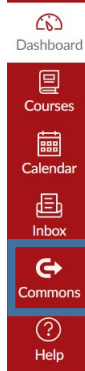
Sign into Canvas and you can find the templates using the links above, or by searching Canvas Commons:

1) Log into your Canvas account.
2) Click the "Commons" button on the Global Navigation bar (see image on the left).
3) Search for the survey you wish to retrieve using its title plus "CIRCLE" and/or "CTL"
4) Click on the title of the survey to open the resource page. The surveys provided by CIRCLE and the CTL will contain the image to the right.

Importing Survey from Canvas Commons into your Course

Once you reach a survey page, import the into your course:

1)   Click the blue "Import/Download" button.
2) In the pop-out menu, check all courses where you plan to use the survey, then click the blue "Import into Course" button.
3) Use the Canvas Dashboard to navigate to your course. The survey will now appear in the "Assignments" and "Quiz" sections, and can be relocated and customized within the course. Note: it can take a few minutes for the import to complete.

Customizing an Imported Survey

Surveys will be imported into your course with their default settings and questions. If you wish, you can change default settings and edit the survey questions to better fit your needs.

1) In your course on the Course Navigation bar on the left, click "Quizzes", scroll to the "Surveys" section, and click the title of the survey you wish to edit.
2) Click the "Edit" button at the top right.
3) Change survey settings while in the "Details" tab.
   - By default, imported surveys are not worth any credit. To give completion points:
     1) Scroll to Quiz Type dropdown and change from "Ungraded Survey" to "Graded Survey."
     2) In the "Score" box, input the number of points students should receive for completing the survey.
   - By default, imported surveys from our templates are "anonymous," meaning that results will not be automatically associated with specific individuals in reports. However, because of the way Canvas works, complete anonymity should not be promised to students who complete these surveys.
4) Click on the "Questions" tab to see the list of default questions, and check the "Show Question Details" box to view the response options.
   - To revise a question, scroll to it and click the pencil icon on the right. Edit the question and/or response options, and be sure to click "Update Question" at the bottom left to save your changes.
   - To delete a question, scroll to it and click the X-shaped delete icon on the right.
   - To add a question, click the "New Question" button at the bottom, select a question type from the dropdown, fill out question working, response options, and other information as needed. Be sure to click "Update Question" at the bottom left to save your changes.
   - To reorder a question, scroll to it, click the dotted icon on the left, and drag to a new location.
5) Be sure to click the "Save" button at the bottom right to save all quiz edits.

More detail on creating and editing surveys can be found in [this Canvas Community post about surveys](#).

Accessing Survey Results

1) In the Course Navigation bar on the left, click the "Quizzes" link and then click on the title of the survey.
2) In the right-side menu bar, click the "Survey Statistics" button. This page shows you summaries of how students answered your multiple choice questions. Note: each question includes a percentage of students who answered "correctly." This number is meaningless and an artifact of the fact that in Canvas surveys are implemented within the Quiz feature.
3) To access open-ended survey questions, you must download your data. At the top of the Survey Statistics page, click "Student Analysis." This downloads a .csv file to your computer that can be opened with Excel or Numbers. The file contains the answers from all students' responses, including open-ended and multiple-choice questions. Columns in the file labeled "1" in the first row, and those referencing correct or incorrect scores, are an artifact of the way surveys are implemented in Canvas and can be ignored (they indicate "correct" answers as if the survey were a quiz).

Interpreting and Using the Feedback

- If your data indicate to you that improvement is needed, start by identifying one concrete change you can make rather than making a major overhaul
- A small percentage of students will always indicate that something "Needs Improvement." It's also normal to receive some contradictory results, especially with open ended questions (e.g. discussions are too long / discussions are too short).
- Identify potential changes by consulting open-ended feedback (if you've collected it), soliciting follow-up feedback from students, seeking input from colleagues, or consulting with the CTL.
- Be sure to make "easy" fixes (broken links, pdfs that are hard to read, not be audible during lecture, etc.); even if only one student has mentioned them others have likely had the same problem.
- Collect another round of feedback to assess the change you make. If this is a course-level change (and not just a change to a specific activity), give several weeks for the change to take effect before assessing

Potential Advantages and Challenges of Open-ended Survey Questions

While designing your survey, consider the advantages and challenges associated with open-ended survey questions.

Advantages:
- Provides a low-barrier opportunity for students to share concerns and suggestions
- Can help you interpret and respond to results of the closed questions without additional follow-up

Challenges:
- Reviewing open responses can be time consuming, especially for a large course.
- Open questions require more effort from students and can reduce response rates.

Some form of open-ended feedback is crucial to pinpoint problems and identify potential improvements. If you chose not to initially ask open-ended questions, you might consider following up with students via class discussion, email, or another survey on any specific areas of concern identified by your initial survey. While leaving open-ended questions for follow-up steps can help you control the amount and type of feedback you receive, there are also drawbacks to this approach. It creates extra logistical steps for yourself and your students, and surveying people frequently can significantly lower response rates. In general, open-ended questions are easiest to implement in smaller courses and more difficult (although not impossible) to use in larger ones.

Additional Resources

WashU Canvas Support Hub / Incorporating Midterm Course Evaluations / Tips for Student Evaluations of Teaching / Canvas Community - View Survey Results / Canvas Community - Quiz Types / Canvas Community - Commons

The Center for Teaching and Learning also offers individualized consultations.