



Resources and Guidance for Collecting and Using Student Feedback in Qualtrics

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 in Qualtrics for collecting student feedback about your overall course and specific course activities. For general information about using Qualtrics please visit the [WashU Information Technology Qualtrics site](#).

Recommendations for Obtaining Useful Student Feedback from Qualtrics 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) if a certain percentage of the class completes the survey (e.g. 90%). This can encourage participation.
- ***Keep it anonymous:*** Students may be more comfortable and honest if surveys are anonymous (and you can still easily provide credit for completion). Anonymity helps prevent bias – and importantly, the perception of bias – for or against students who give positive or critical feedback, respectively.
- ***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 Qualtrics Templates

Download the corresponding .qsf file from WashU Box for the survey you would like to use. Then [import the .qsf file into your Qualtrics account](#) to edit and distribute the survey. The survey is set by default to be [completely anonymous](#); no



identifying information is collected by Qualtrics. Once you have modified the survey to meet your needs, distribute it using the [anonymous survey link](#) via email, in a [Canvas announcement](#), or add the survey link to a Canvas page.

Word files are also available for download to allow you to preview the survey prior to import.

- Quick Course Pulse: Snapshot of how the course is going overall [[.qsf](#) / [Word](#)]
- Quick Activity Feedback – General: Feedback on a specific course activity [[.qsf](#) / [Word](#)]
- Quick Activity Feedback – Group Work: Feedback on a small group activity or assignment [[.qsf](#) / [Word](#)]
- Quick Lecture Feedback: Feedback specific to the lecture portions of a course & the content students find most difficult [[.qsf](#) / [Word](#)]

Interpreting and Using the Feedback

- You can see your [survey results in Qualtrics](#) and/or [download them](#) for analysis in another program.
- 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

[Incorporating Midterm Course Evaluations](#) / [Tips for Student Evaluations of Teaching](#) / [Qualtrics Support at WashU](#) / [Importing .qsf files into your Qualtrics account](#)

The Center for Teaching and Learning also offers [individualized consultations](#).