

Subject Evaluation by Students Surveys

Tips for Improving Response Rates

Subject Evaluation by Students (SEBS) surveys are an important source of information for teachers, subject coordinators and the University. However, for evaluation data to be of value, they need to be representative of the student cohort and therefore response rates need to be sufficiently high (ideally, at least 50%). With the move to our new online system, we want to ensure our response rates are maintained and to try to improve them.

What will the central team do?

The central Evaluations Team will schedule email reminders, place posts on MyUOW, and use social media to encourage students to complete surveys. We are also working on communicating to students why their feedback is valued and needed.

What can academics do?

The key to getting and keeping good response rates is academic staff engagement with students. We've listed here some of the best ways that you can increase your response rates for your **SEBS** surveys.

1. Academic Staff Engagement

- Give your students an early reminder three weeks prior to the end of the teaching session that the **SEBS** surveys will be available soon.
- Tell students in class that the **SEBS** survey period has begun.
- Allocate time in a lecture, tutorial and/or practical for students to complete the survey on their smartphone, tablet, laptop or in a computer lab.
- Tell and/or email the students to let them know how important their feedback is to you and to the School.
- Run through the questions with your students in class and explain their context to your subject. Questions are available at <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/learning-teaching/quality/evaluation-of-learning-and-teaching>
- Involve your students in the choice of optional questions to include in the survey.
- Encourage students on multiple occasions to complete their **SEBS** surveys.

2. Valuing Student Feedback

- Research* suggests students are more likely to participate in evaluation surveys if they feel that their feedback makes a meaningful contribution; that it is valued and acted upon.
- Give some examples to students of how you used feedback from the previous year. If this is in the Subject Outline it helps to repeat to them what changes have resulted from student feedback. An example could be: "Last session the evaluations from students said that you wanted more information online so this year I have posted up more course notes for you to use".
- Help students to understand how to give constructive feedback. You can reinforce this message by explaining how you give constructive feedback to them on their assessment tasks. See also our [Tips to Giving Constructive Feedback](#).

3. Address Concerns about Confidentiality

- Students are often concerned about confidentiality with online surveys. We have strict confidentiality procedures that we communicate to students; however, it has a much better impact if you reassure them that:
 - the process and feedback is confidential; and
 - Survey Reports are not provided until after exam results are declared and the session has ended.

* See over page for list of resources and research references

Resources

In addition to these tips for increasing response rates, there are a number of resources for you to use, including a PowerPoint slide that you can use in lectures. For further information visit <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/learning-teaching/quality/evaluation-of-learning-and-teaching/>

Further Reading

Chenicheri Sid Nair , Phillip Adams & Patricie Mertova (2008) Student Engagement: The Key to Improving Survey Response Rates, *Quality in Higher Education*, 14:3, 225-232.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13538320802507505>

Alderman, Lyn, Towers, Stephen, Bannah, Sylvia, & Phan, Thi (2014) Reframing evaluation of learning and teaching: An approach to change. *Evaluation Journal of Australasia*, 14(1), pp. 24-34. Link:

<https://eprints.qut.edu.au/54607/>