

Pre-Course Survey or Questionnaire

Circulating a pre-course survey is an effective means of gleaning your students' values, commitments, and course learning goals. In addition, identifying your students' prior knowledge and experiences allows you to recognize the conceptual frameworks they bring to your course. Asking your students about their interests can also help them feel a greater sense of belonging in the course. A survey or questionnaire allows students to share their thoughts, concerns, and considerations directly and privately with instructors.

What Might I Ask My Students?

- **Motivations and Goals:** Allows students to set and share their learning goals for your course, which you can address directly throughout the semester.
- **Prior Knowledge and Related Coursework:** Gauging what your students come to your course already knowing can help you teach more effectively. You may need to unsettle some of the assumptions your students make about your course content, for example.
- **Interest in the Course:** Knowing what drew students to your course can help you engage these interests in your class discussions and lectures. This practice can inspire your students to be more involved.
- **Activities that Promote Learning:** Asking students to share activities that help them understand and engage with new information can help you plan dynamic classes throughout the semester.
- **Access to Technology, Internet, and Productive Work Environments:** This information is crucial if there are online components to your course, so you can offer multiple forms of engagement if you know some students will struggle with access.
- **Course Load and Additional Responsibilities:** Responses influence how you formulate submission policies, deadlines, and extensions. These questions can show students that you consider their needs and circumstances.
- **Hobbies and Non-Academic Interests:** A pre-course survey can allow your students to feel that their whole identity has a place in your course. Your students can also get a sense of your personality depending on what you ask and how you ask it.
- **Additional Information:** Including an option to share concerns, potential conflicts, or anxieties relating to your course can offer students a safe and private outlet to communicate with you. Ask your students what names and pronouns they go by; this shows you respect their identity and will protect it in the classroom.

Considerations

- Allow your students to share only what they feel comfortable divulging; make all (or at least potentially sensitive) questions optional.
- When you send out your survey, preface it with a statement about how their responses will help you shape the course. This will communicate that you are taking the survey seriously and value the information you receive.
- If students share about a learning disability, you can take this opportunity to ensure your course materials are accessible and that the student knows how to seek further accommodations through the Office of Disability Services.

When Do I Share It?

- Depending on your preferences and your questions, it is helpful to circulate your survey before your course begins or during your first class.
- Leaving the survey open for a couple of weeks can provide students the flexibility to respond.
- Invite students to complete the survey as they add your course during the shopping period. Make your survey easy to circulate so you can send it quickly and efficiently. Consider including a link to it on your course's Canvas site.

How Do I Make One?

- **Canvas:** You can create an Ungraded Quiz directly within your course site.
- **Google Forms or Microsoft Forms:** These can generate individual student reports, which might make responses easier to track. You can also embed the survey in a Canvas Page or Assignment.

[Forms Sample Text](#)

- **Google Docs, Microsoft Word, or PDF Files:** You can send out blank surveys as an attachment, link them as a part of an email using the Mailtool in Canvas, or upload them as a Course File.

[Documents Sample Text](#)

- **PDF - Introduction Questionnaire**

[PDF Sample Text](#)