

IU-EVAL

A Web-Based Course Evaluation System

Frequently Asked Questions (For Faculty)



What is IU-EVAL?

IU-EVAL is a web-based electronic course evaluation system. The system was designed by faculty and students at IU South Bend, and has been in use since fall of 2004.

My classroom doesn't have computers. How will my students be able to do the evaluations?

Your students can complete their course evaluations at any time between the time they receive their password and just before the final week begins. They can use any computer that has access to the internet to complete their evaluations.

How do you preserve the anonymity of my students?

The IU-EVAL system maintains no personal student data. Furthermore, students in class are provided with a randomly generated password. This random password can not be traced back to the student. You should rest assured that your student's anonymity is protected.

How can I be sure that one person doesn't fill out the evaluation multiple times?

The generic password given to a student will expire once the students use it to submit their evaluation.

I am worried that my students won't take the time on their own to fill out the evaluation and that only a small percentage of students will complete the evaluation. How can I avoid that?

This is a common concern for most faculty. Past experience with electronic evaluations has shown that when students were given the passwords and simply told to complete their evaluations, without providing them with any incentive, the results were quite mixed. Our data indicates a range between 20% to 100%.

Here are some suggestions to improve your student participation:

- a) *Treat the evaluation as an assignment in your class. (one with very little points) and ask that they*

provide you with the proof. (IU-EVAL allows the student to print a PROOF sheet after they have completed their evaluation.)

- b) *Treat the evaluation as bonus credits (one with very few points) and ask that they provide you with the proof. (IU-EVAL allows the student to print a PROOF sheet after they have completed their evaluation.)*
- c) *Announce in class that if some percentage of students (say 80%) complete their evaluations, the entire class gets a few bonus points.*

Options (b and c) above have been tested quite successfully by a number of faculty at IUSB.

Students prove that they completed the evaluation by printing out a copy of the web page that says they have completed the evaluation. What is to prevent them from making photo copies of this page and giving it to their friends in the class who did not complete the evaluation?

When printing the final evaluation completion PROOF sheet, most browsers will automatically time stamp the sheet by printing the time, date, etc at the bottom and top of the page. If you receive more than one final PROOF sheet with the same exact time/date stamp then that can be a clue that students may have made copies of their PROOF sheet. We don't expect that this will become a cottage industry, however, time will tell. If it does, we'll employ one or more counter measures such as printing the section number and a sequence number on each PROOF sheet. This will not compromise our privacy goals, and at the same time it can deter students from trying to copy their PROOF sheets. Another approach will be to place a non reproducible (or difficult to reproduce) watermark on the PROOF sheet.

What if students forget to print out that page? Is there any way they can go back and get a proof that they completed the evaluation?

No, not really. Here are some suggestion for handling this situation.

- a) *If they still have their passwords with them, you or*

they can try to reuse the password. The system will indicate that their password has been used and therefore can not be reused. (You may view this as a PROOF).

- b) You can simply trust them.
- c) You can decline to accept their claim.

In the past, when students included profanity in their comments, the department secretary deleted those comments. Is there any way the department secretary can remove such comments in IU-EVAL?

This question can be answered in two ways:

- a) NO, the original intent of the IU-EVAL system has been to minimize the need for manual processing of data. So reports, calculations, aggregations, etc are generated by IU-EVAL and the secretaries should not have to do any manual processing. The secretaries simply print the evaluation reports at the end of the semester. Ideally, the secretaries will not even have to read the report.
- b) YES, although the original intent of the IU-EVAL does not encourage manual pre or post processing of the evaluation data, your secretaries do have the option to import the reports in to Microsoft EXCEL spread sheet. The text of the report can be edited in this mode. However, it can not be saved back into the IU-EVAL system.

Is there a deadline after which students cannot complete the evaluation?

YES. The default period during which students can complete their evaluations start two weeks before the finals week begins and ends right before the start of the final exams. Department secretaries may change these default dates based on departmental or college policies.

Is there any way that administrators or others can get access to all of the IU-EVAL data and do their own analysis on the data?

NO, the original intent of the IU-EVAL system has been to maintain strict privacy of data. Also, the intent was to

replace the current manual system with one that is functionally equivalent (but faster and less manual).

The system has envisioned a number of different report formats, and other new formats may also be developed over time to help individual faculty or departments better understand their data. However, there are no plans to make the data available to administrators in raw form for data mining or other such applications.

What happens if the IU-EVAL system goes "down" and students can't access it for several hours or several days (as might happen in a massive power outage)?

At this point the IU-EVAL system is an experimental system. As such, the potential that it might fail (hardware, software, power failure, etc.) exists. Therefore, all the academic units that are currently participating as "Beta Testers" of the system are asked to prepare a backup plan and have it available to be put into motion before adopting IU-EVAL as their primary source of collecting evaluations. Some departments have chosen the FAST system as their backup. Others have prepared enough paper evaluation forms to use in case of emergency.

Having indicated the necessity for a backup plan, IU-EVAL has taken some measures to reduce system failure:

- a) The IU-EVAL server is connected to a UPS (uninterrupted power supply) device which will handle power brown-outs and black-outs up to a few minutes.
- b) All data stored on IU-EVAL server is also automatically stored on a secondary server. In the future this server will be physically placed in a different building to guard against theft or catastrophic event in the current location.
- c) The IU-EVAL data is backed up on a daily basis.
- d) Currently, the server is behind two locked doors. In the future the main server may be housed in the IUSB Information Technology server room which is also a highly secured area.

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