

Needs Assessment
Report

Review of End of Semester Course Evaluations
Internal Assessment of Process

Submitted by
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Executive Summary

The staff supervisor requested a review the end of semester evaluation process, including the reasonability of online evaluations for off-campus and internship courses. Turnover during the last year has caused the responsibility for handling of the evaluations to move around and so there is concern that some knowledge to either be lost or ignored. The needs assessment process was used to review the process to make sure that appropriate steps have been put in place to ensure confidentiality of responses and that all students are given the opportunity to complete an evaluation.

The assessment found that the end of semester evaluation process responsibility has been assigned to a new staff member that is familiar with the evaluation process. Though there were one or two areas of the process that needed improvement, the essential needs of the process, follow through and security, are in place. Department will need to further research using online evaluations to replace paper evaluations, before implementing the process.

Problem/Opportunity Statement

This needs assessment reviewed the end of semester evaluation process for the department to find out if the department was using the most efficient process. There were concerns that turn over within the department and multiple reassignments in responsibility for handling the evaluations had caused knowledge of the process has been lost or ignored. Needs assessment should review the process to make sure that appropriate steps have been put in place to ensure confidentiality of responses and that all students are given the opportunity to complete an evaluation.

The department would also like to review the possibility of using online evaluations that could make the paperwork obsolete. The supervisor wants to know if online courses would be possible for off campus locations and for students enrolled in the field practicum course. Would online evaluations increase the response rate and time for those students that are located off campus?

Organizational Description

The workplace is the School of Social Work located in Clark Hall on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. The school has experienced turnover in key staff members in the past year. The department has 26 faculty and six staff members, four of whom are either new to the department or their position within the year. The school offers a Bachelors (BSW), Masters (MSW) and Doctoral (PhD) degree program.

Audience Analysis

The main office where the three program support staff work is right off the elevators. The space is shared between the undergraduate (BSW), graduate (MSW) and off-campus secretaries, along with a desk for student workers. There is little to define the space other than a partial wall that divides the room in half. The BSW and Off-Campus secretaries share one half of the office, while the MSW and student workers are in the other half. The office is the information hub for students, faculty, staff and others.

The MSW secretary has been with the department for 10 years, the BSW will complete a year in February and the off-campus was hired last month. Both the MSW and BSW secretaries are in their early forties and the off-campus is in her early twenties. The BSW and MSW secretaries are

listed as Academic Evaluators and the Off-campus is an Office Support III. Despite the difference in titles the positions are seen peers, each report to the Executive Staff Assistant.

The BSW secretary was recently assigned the task of coordinating the evaluations. Previously, the responsibility was shared between each of the secretaries according to the course.

Primary and Secondary Data Sources

Needs assessment included the following data sources:

Primary sources include the:

- Front office staff – the three secretaries
- Staff supervisor
- Social work student and faculty

Secondary sources include:

- Articles regarding online vs. paper based surveys.

Data Gathering Techniques and Instruments

- Initial interview with staff and supervisor (*Appendix A – Initial Interview Protocol, pg. 9*)
 - Used for assess individuals own assessment of the situation
- Observe handling of evaluations (*Appendix B – Observation Instrument, pg. 10*)
 - Observe the actual handling of evaluations
- Survey faculty and students about process (*Appendix C – Survey Instruments for Students and Faculty, pg. 11*)
 - Gauge the general feeling among faculty and students about the process and paper vs. online option
- Follow up interview with staff (*Appendix A – Initial Interview Protocol, pg. 9*)
 - Re-interviewed staff and supervisor with same interview, but focused more on answers to policy and procedures.

Data Gathering Process

- Interview Process
 - Conducted initial interviews with BSW secretary, who is taking over administering the end of the semester evaluations, the other two secretaries in the office and with the supervisor to get a preliminary assessment of the situation. The Generic Performance Pyramid Interview Protocol was modified to get a general understanding of the current situation and to better understand how and where the supervisor and the staff member were involved in the end of semester course evaluation process.
- Observation Process
 - I work in the department, and not wanting to influence the behavior of individuals in the front office, I tried to make observation as covert as possible. However, there was occasionally some interaction between individuals in the office and myself. On several different occasions, while I was waiting for another person, I would enter the front office and take a seat in one of the chairs at the front of the room. To not draw attention to note taking, mental notes were made and immediately following the observation period were entered into the observation record. Observations subjects included individuals working in the office and those entering or calling the main office.

- Survey Process
 - Individuals received a hardcopy of the survey to fill out. The 10 students and 5 faculty members were told why they were taking the survey and that the results would be confidential and only a summary of any findings would be shared. In order to increase the confidentiality of responses, respondents were instructed to return their survey's a central location and that I would collect them at the end of the day.

Data Analysis Process

- Interview Process
 - Notes were taken during the interviews and compiled afterwards. Used the Performance Pyramid to analyze and categorize the responses. Interviews were structured around the Performance Pyramid to facilitate the categorizing.
- Observation Process
 - Notes from the observations were compiled and then analyzed and categorized using the Performance Pyramid structure.
- Survey Process
 - There were two different small surveys concerning student or faculty perceptions of the end of semester evaluation process. Responses were true, false or unsure along with one open ended question. To analyze the data, I compiled the data for each question to calculate the response rate from those surveys that were returned, along with the frequencies of answers. There were no issues with missing surveys, however, there were several questions after reviewing the results that would have been helpful to ask.

Data Table

Data Gathering Technique	Instrument	Source	Summary
Interview	Interview Protocol	Staff	All saw the change in responsibility from everyone to one individual as good.
Interview	Interview Protocol	Staff	Saw organizational culture moving in a direction that would increase consistency in processes.
Interview	Interview Protocol	Staff	Reward for successful process is less on the job stress and an easier job.
Interview	Interview Protocol	Staff	Staff feels they are encouraged to improve processes, if needed. They feel that this new evaluation process will work well.
Observation	Observation Instrument	Staff	Secretary seems very familiar with evaluation process and need for security.
Observation	Observation Instrument	Staff	Didn't have enough pencils for all the evaluations, but options are being considered
Observation	Observation Instrument	Staff	Faculty seemed happy with the new procedures that were implemented. (Elimination of which person to ask for evaluations depending on degree program)
Observation	Observation Instrument	Staff	Only one report issue, faculty member who requested forms early (before email was send), wasn't familiar with new process and was upset when forms weren't what she expected.

Data Gathering Technique	Instrument	Source	Summary
Survey	Survey Instruments	Students	90% of students had filled out an evaluation, 1 hadn't.
Survey	Survey Instruments	Students	90% of students were confident that their evaluations would be kept confidential. 1 was not sure
Survey	Survey Instruments	Students	90% of students would prefer to use classroom time to fill out evaluations, 1 was not sure.
Survey	Survey Instruments	Students	60% of students would take time to fill out an online evaluation, 20% would not and 20% were unsure.
Survey	Survey Instruments	Students	70% of students felt the paper evaluation was an effective evaluation of the course, 1 did not and 1 was unsure
Survey	Survey Instruments	Faculty	Four out of five faculty members are satisfied with the handling of their course evaluations, 1 is not.
Survey	Survey Instruments	Faculty	All faculty do not know the results of the evaluations until the correct time.
Survey	Survey Instruments	Faculty	Responses were equally divided two and two with one unsure between using and not using class time for evaluations.
Survey	Survey Instruments	Faculty	Three of five faculty were interested in using online evaluations and two were not interested.
Survey	Survey Instruments	Faculty	Two were confident that the results would be the same, two were unsure, and one was not confident
Survey	Survey Instruments	Faculty	Four of the five, felt that the current paper evaluations provide an effective summary of their course. One did not.
Research	Survey Research	Online Studies	<p>Online course evaluations advantages include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Provides rapid feedback. (2) Is less expensive to administer. (3) Requires less class time. (4) Is less vulnerable to professorial influence. (5) Allows students as much time as they wish to complete. (6) Allows students multiple opportunities to evaluate faculty members. <p>Online course evaluations disadvantages to this mode are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Requires computer access. (2) Is considered less accurate by faculty unfamiliar with online methods who prefer the traditional in-class paper version. (3) Elicits lower student response rates. <p>Source: http://www.ajpe.org/view.asp?art=aj690105&pdf=yes</p>

Data Gathering Technique	Instrument	Source	Summary
Research	Survey Research	Online Studies	Response rates are generally lower with online surveys, however, use of incentives, in particular grade incentives, raise the rate to be comparable with in-class surveys. Source: http://www.sbaer.uca.edu/research/dsi/2003/procs/451-7916.pdf
Research	Survey Research	Online info	Scanning and scoring of paper course evaluations are provided at no cost to the University. Source: http://arc.missouri.edu/MU/MU_ICE.htm

General Data Summary and Interpretation

Expectations and Feedback

Expectations were good among faculty and staff with assigning of one person to handle the evaluation process, that there would be less confusion. Expectations are that new process will work well. Most students expected confidential evaluations from the process and would prefer to use classroom time.

Tools, Environment and Processes

Need for pencils to be distributed with the evaluations.

Faculty responses were divided towards use of online surveys for their course evaluations and use of class time for completion of the evaluations. They also were hesitant about the results between online and paper versions of an evaluation being the same. (Some of the issues fall under knowledge and skills.)

Rewards, Recognition and Incentives

Reward for a successful process for staff, meant an easier job and less stress.

Incentives for in class responses to evaluations are in place and effective, which aren't there for online completion. However, online response rates can be increased with appropriate incentives.

Motivation and Self Concept

Staff feels encouragement and motivation to improve/change processes that aren't working.

Knowledge and Skills / Performance Capacity

Secretaries are familiar with an optimal evaluation process and the need for security throughout the process.

Knowledge/Skill Needs - Details

The assignment of the end of the semester course evaluations to one person has eliminated confusion about the process. The secretary that is assuming the responsibility is familiar with handling evaluations and has set up a process that has made most of the faculty comfortable that they will be handled properly. There was only one reported incident with the new process. Major need at for this side of the process is more pencils to distribute with evaluation packets.

Faculty and staff are not familiar with advantages/disadvantages of online or paper evaluations. Need to take steps to familiarize faculty and staff with online evaluations, inform them of advantages and disadvantages with use of paper and online evaluations. Topics could include

ways to increase response rates for online surveys, which options would be most economically feasible, etc.

Recommendations

Since the reassignment of course evaluations to the BSW secretary, there seems to be no major issues with process she implemented. Evaluations will be kept confidential and summary of the evaluations will be forwarded to the faculty at the correct time. The only recommendation at this time would be purchasing additional pencils for distribution.

Because the scanning and scoring of the paper evaluations is available free of charge to University departments, it is recommended that the Department will need to further research implementation of online evaluations, before implementing the process.

Appendix A – Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Date:

Interviewee:

Interviewer:

Department:

- 1) Vision, Expectations, Feedback
 - a) Why does the School collect end of semester evaluations?
 - b) What is your role in the process?
 - c) What do you believe you are expected to do?
 - d) How will you know when you are meeting these expectations?

- 2) Tools, Environment, Processes
 - a) Please describe the current process. Including on campus and off campus, along with field practicum processes.
 - b) What resources are presently used in process the evaluations?
 - c) What other resources do you think you need or would be helpful?
 - d) Is the process set up to help you be successful?
 - e) What are barriers within the process and do you think can they be overcome?
 - f) In terms of getting things done, are processes in place to help you be successful? (e.g., process for communicating with another division)
 - g) How do you think through the evaluation process?
 - h) What kinds of help would you most like to receive?

- 3) Rewards, recognition and incentives
 - a) In what ways will you and the School benefit if the evaluation process is successful?
 - b) How do others view your involvement in the process? (positive and negative)
 - c) In what way are you encouraged to do different things?
 - d) Are there incentives that would interest you in doing more?

- 4) Motivation, Capacity
 - a) Are you motivated to get the evaluations done?
 - b) What things about the process are just tough for you to deal with? (e.g., collecting supplies; coordinating returns, office environment)

- 5) Knowledge/Skill
 - a) What skills do you need to help you be successful?

- 6) Organizational Culture
 - a) How consistent is your organization in terms of how it carries out day-to-day operations? How consistent is it in terms of working to achieve long-term objectives and addressing major challenges?
 - b) Does the organization's culture, its resources, and activities fit together in such a way that the organization accomplishes things that are important?

Appendix B – Observation Instrument

Observation Site

Person(s) observed

Position(s) observed

Selection factors

Date of observation

time started

ended

1 – Reasons for this observation (check all that apply)

Seeking details of optimal job performance

Seeking details of actual job performance

Seeking the reason for problems or successes

2 – Description of the Problem

3 – Observation Guide

Behavior

Comments

Work environment

Evaluation handling

Issues with:

Students

Faculty

Staff

Reasons for success/failure

Appendix C – Survey Instruments for Students and Faculty

The following questions are for students filling out semester evaluations

Statement	T(rue) – U(nsure) – F(alse)
I have filled out the evaluation for my instructor's course.	T - U - F
I'm confident that my instructor will not see my responses.	T - U - F
I prefer filling out the evaluations during class time.	T - U - F
If an online course evaluation option was offered outside of class time I would take the time to fill it out.	T - U - F
I feel that the paper evaluation was an effective evaluation of the course and the instructor	T - U - F

If you could change something about the evaluation process, what would it be?

The following questions are for faculty about the end of semester evaluations

Statement	T(rue) – U(nsure) – F(alse)
I'm satisfied with the current office procedures for distribution and handling of my course evaluations.	T - U - F
I do not know results of the course evaluations until after student grades are distributed.	T - U - F
I prefer that students filling out the evaluations during class time.	T - U - F
I prefer that students complete the evaluations outside of class time.	T - U - F
I would like to use an online evaluation for my students	T - U - F
I'm confident that the results from either the paper or online evaluation would not differ.	T - U - F
I feel that the current paper evaluations provide an effective summary of my course and teaching.	T - U - F

If you could change something about the evaluation process, what would it be?