

## **Our experience with online student feedback**

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Collecting informal feedback from students is an essential part of program assessment. While the nature of students' feedback is often highly subjective, we have found that it can be quite effective in helping us to identify areas of improvement and investigation. We used to rely on paper surveys which required manual tabulation and physical storage. We have found that web-based survey tools greatly improved the quality and quantity of feedback received. Here we briefly describe the surveys, the software tool, and future directions for improvement of our feedback mechanism.

We conduct various surveys periodically to collect feedback from students and other individuals. These include: undergraduate, graduate, capstone, senior exit interview, alumni, and employer. In addition, our institution requires students to complete a "student evaluation of instruction" form, which is normally given during the final week of class.

We use phpESP, a free and open-source tool for web-based surveys, to collect the feedback for all of the above surveys. phpESP provides a simple interface for building surveys, reporting and analysis tools, and uses a MySQL database for storage. Access to the surveys is limited to appropriate individuals and is anonymous. We have also integrated phpESP with our course management system. Surveys are archived for analysis and review by the department and other organizations.

While surveys are providing us with valuable information, they tend to be discrete in nature as they are normally collected at one time. With the recent excitement in web logs, or "blogs," we plan to implement a secure and anonymous blog site to solicit student input on selected topics. We hope this will also allow for thoughtful exchanges of ideas among participants.

*For additional information and references, please visit: <http://compass.cs.westga.edu/>.*