

SFS Student FAQ

- [What is the Student Feedback Survey \(SFS\)?](#)
- [Why is there a new SFS questionnaire being introduced in 2015?](#)
- [What are the items in the new end-of-semester SFS?](#)
- [When does the SFS take place?](#)
- [Do I have to complete the SFS?](#)
- [Why should I complete the SFS?](#)
- [Why should I bother when the SFS appears to make no impact on improving subjects/teaching?](#)
- [Can I be sure that my responses will be treated confidentially?](#)
- [Why are there so many SFS email reminders?](#)
- [Couldn't the SFS remain open during/after exams?](#)
- [What do I do if the class, lecturer \(teacher\) or other subject information is wrong?](#)
- [My subject has more than one lecturer. Do I complete a separate SFS for each?](#)
- [Is it possible to evaluate the same subject/class more than once?](#)
- [Can I return to the SFS website and change my responses later?](#)
- [What if my computer crashes before I submit my SFS?](#)
- [What are Incentive Points?](#)
- [Can I divide my Incentive Points between charities and/or credit?](#)
- [Are you able to provide more/better incentives?](#)
- [How do I qualify for the Prize draw?](#)
- [Will I be able to see any of the SFS results?](#)
- [Why do some subjects show SFS results and others do not?](#)
- [How and when can I view SFS results from previous semesters?](#)
- [Can you explain features more clearly \(e.g. incentives, anonymity, survey deadline, etc.\)?](#)
- [Why doesn't the SFS have questions on UTS facilities or other physical teaching space suitability?](#)
- [Why doesn't the SFS offer an analogous survey for a whole course/faculty/school?](#)

What is the Student Feedback Survey (SFS)?

The Student Feedback Survey (SFS) is a UTS-approved method of collecting student evaluation of teaching and learning.

The aim of the SFS is to provide all enrolled students studying eligible subjects with an opportunity to provide their feedback. For subjects being evaluated online (the vast majority), students are required to login to the [SFS website](#) complete the survey. The online version of the SFS replaced the original paper-based forms and has been in use since 2008. Students can either evaluate a subject by submitting a completed or partially completed survey, or indicate that they want to opt out of that particular evaluation by submitting a blank survey.

In 2014 a formal Review of the SFS led to the development of a new three-tiered, end-of-semester SFS questionnaire. This new questionnaire is being phased in during 2015. An analogous but shorter early-semester SFS has also been developed to gather early student feedback, in order to allow sufficient time during the current semester to address any issues of concern aiming at improving the learning experience of the current cohort of students. It is deliberately short, three items only and one open comment, and is focused on student engagement with their learning.

For more information on the SFS Review and its recommendations, please visit this [page](#).

The [Student Feedback Survey Vice-Chancellor's Directive](#) provides detail on how the survey is administered and how the data and information are used.

See the [Student Feedback Survey](#) page on the UTS student portal for more information.

Why is there a new SFS questionnaire being introduced in 2015?

The new end-of-semester SFS questionnaire strengthens the focus on student engagement and learning and the customisable Learning Modes allow each subject's SFS to be customised to be more relevant to their respective subject delivery and learner experience. Faculties are asked to assign up to 2 Learning modes for each subject's SFS.

The revised, three-tiered SFS (Core, Learning Mode and Optional items) was developed in consultation with, and input from, faculties and students, and has been tested with students and refined accordingly.

What are the items in the new end-of semester SFS?

The three core subject evaluation statements are:

- *The learning opportunities provided helped me meet the stated objectives of this subject*
- *I made the most of my opportunities to learn in this subject*
- *Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of this subject*

The core teacher evaluation statement is:

- *Overall, I am satisfied with how this staff member facilitated my learning*

The Learning Modes are based on various elements of the UTS Model of Learning. These Learning Modes are subject to change and revision in the future, as new Learning Modes may be introduced whilst others may be switched off. At present, the suite of Learning Modes includes:

- Professional Practice/Disposition
- Global Workplace or Internationalised
- Inquiry-based
- Research-integrated
- Critique-based
- Trans-disciplinary Course
- Assessment
- Indigenous Professional Competence

Each has two pre-set items. Up to two Learning Modes can be chosen for a subject's SFS, by Associate Deans (Teaching and Learning) and/or subject coordinators..

Two optional items from the Item Bank can be added, by teaching staff.

The two open-ended questions are:

- *What did you particularly like in this subject?*
- *Please suggest any improvements that could be made to this subject*

When does the SFS take place?

The early-semester SFS are run in week 4 of Autumn and Spring Semesters. The end-of-semester SFS are run during the last 3-4 weeks of Autumn and Spring semesters and close just prior to the exams commencing. Students are notified by email when the surveys become active and receive a number of reminder emails during the open period, including one on the day of closing.

Do I have to complete the SFS?

The surveys are not compulsory, but we do encourage you to give us your feedback so that we can fix any problems you have experienced or continue offering the things you have enjoyed. If you feel you have nothing to say about a subject, please go to the survey anyway and submit a blank form, so that the SFS system can register that you have 'opted out' and credit you with Incentive Points. This will also stop the system sending you further reminder emails in the future!

Why should I complete the SFS?

It's your best opportunity to make your voice heard about the quality of learning and teaching experience you receive at UTS. The only way staff can improve what they do – or keep doing the good things they do – is by hearing about what you liked and didn't like about your learning and teaching experience. UTS also uses your feedback to evaluate every subject taught and to help develop new subjects and even new degrees. So your feedback really does count, and UTS genuinely wants to hear it.

Why should I bother when the SFS appears to make no impact on improving subjects/teaching?

This is not the case. All the results get sent back to the faculty management and also gets benchmarked against the university key performance indicators. As you can understand, with the large number of subjects and staff involved, it takes time for actions to become apparent. As a result, you will not often be able to see direct and instant results. This is also partially because by the time changes are made you will have completed that subject, but also because teachers do not always announce the changes they have made strongly enough.

The Planning and Quality Unit (PQU) is working with faculties and teaching staff to better inform you of the concrete actions taken directly due to SFS data gathered. We aim to make the process more transparent to all students and, in time, to better see how their feedback benefits all.

Can I be sure that my responses will be treated confidentially?

Absolutely. Once you hit the Submit button your responses are stored in a database without your student ID information – only demographic information that can't directly identify you are attached to your response. A totally separate database retains your student ID information and records the fact that you have submitted a survey (so we can reward you) but does not record your actual responses.

Once the survey period is over, and your subject grades are finalised, the whole class' survey responses are collated and forwarded to the academic staff members on the surveys, without any data linking them to individuals. There is no way for any of the academic staff members to find out who completed the survey and who didn't. They are only told how many people in the class participated.

Why are there so many SFS email reminders?

The Online SFS System is configured to send out automatic emails to students who have not yet completed their surveys. The only way to stop receiving the email reminders is to submit a survey (completed or blank). If you are not willing to participate you may choose to ignore the emails, but please also be prepared to receive further emails until the close of the survey period.

The SFS is an important part of your course as teachers and faculties make changes to subjects based on the feedback received from students. This helps improve individual subjects for future students. Every single response counts, in order for the subject results to be a true representation of the whole class and not just for a small group of students. Furthermore, many students do find the emails to be quite useful in reminding them to provide subject/teacher feedback and to redeem their incentive points.

Please note as the SFS is an official university system, it only sends emails to your UTS student email account. Any SFS email reminders sent to non-UTS email accounts are due to email forwarding rules put in place by the students themselves.

Couldn't the SFS remain open during/after exams?

The majority of surveys are run over a four-week period ending just before the exams start. The exact timing is determined by your faculty and is influenced by a number of factors. It requires that sufficient semester time has passed for you to form clear opinions on your subjects/teachers.

The main reasons why the SFS does not currently remain open once exams begin are:

- The potential exists for unbalanced feedback after you've sat the exam (i.e. you may judge a subject purely on the ease/difficulty of the exam, not on your overall experience across the whole semester).
- Most students will be focused on studying during this period and will be less likely to read their SFS email notifications or access the surveys.
- Once the examination period is over, many students are no longer on campus and are less likely to keep up to date with university-related emails.

What do I do if the class, lecturer (teacher) or other subject information is wrong?

If the teacher's name is wrong, let us know by clicking on the 'incorrect teacher' box next to the teacher's name. You will still be able to provide feedback on the subject, but you won't be able to evaluate the teacher. If the subject information is wrong simply email PQU@uts.edu.au and provide us with the Subject Number.

My subject has more than one lecturer. Do I complete a separate SFS for each?

No. The survey will appear with a separate set of questions for each staff member who taught you. You can then enter separate responses for each staff member and evaluate them individually.

Is it possible to evaluate the same subject/class more than once?

No. The system records your completions and won't allow you to submit another for the same subject.

Can I return to the SFS website and change my responses later?

Yes, you can edit previously submitted survey responses. When you hit submit you will be shown a summary of your responses and once you confirm them, any previously recorded responses will be overwritten. Before you submit, it's a good idea to double check that you've entered the right responses on the right survey and that you haven't got mixed up between surveys, lecturers or subjects. You can go back and edit your survey responses right up until the survey period ends.

What if my computer crashes before I submit my SFS?

Annoying as it is, any information that you entered into open (unsubmitted) surveys will be lost. You'll need to restart your browser and log back in to start the survey again.

What are Incentive Points?

Incentive points are earned each time you fill in an online survey for a subject or class. You can use these points to credit your UTS account and put it towards your own printing. You can also donate your incentive points to some worthy charities. When you use your incentive points to make a donation to a charity, UTS will match the value of your points, effectively doubling your donation.

Can I divide my Incentive Points between charities and/or credit?

Yes, but because the incentive points are credited as soon as you complete an individual survey, you need to click on the My incentives tab immediately after you complete each survey. You can then redeem the points for the desired reward, go back and do the next survey, etc. If you wait until you complete all surveys, the incentive points are aggregated and you can only redeem them for a single reward option.

Remember that all unredeemed points will be automatically credited to your UTS printing account after the close of the survey period. If you didn't choose a redeeming option and you have already completed all your surveys, you can still log in and redeem the points at any time before the survey period closes.

Are you able to provide more/better incentives?

At present, for each survey completed, you can choose to personally receive \$0.11 (deposited into your UTS account at the end of the semester) or donate \$0.22 to a charity. Although this incentive appears small and insignificant at the individual level, it adds up quickly when you consider that up to 15,000 students participate in the SFS every semester, each completing up to five surveys. In addition, we are always looking to improve the whole SFS experience, so we do welcome any ideas for new incentives.

Most importantly, you should think of the incentive points as a small token of appreciation for your participation in the SFS. Don't forget that we do also have more tangible prizes to give away; at the end of each semester 20 lucky students each receive a \$100 Co-Op book voucher or pre-paid credit card.

How do I qualify for the Prize draw?

To be included into the prize draw you need to have 100% participation for surveys for the current Autumn or Spring semester.

Will I be able to see any of the SFS results?

Yes. Students can view the aggregated results of surveys for their own subjects. However, only those students who have been enrolled into the subject and allocated to the specific subject activity can view their corresponding results. In addition, only the aggregated results for the questions relating to the subject will be made available to students. The only exception to this is in cases where staff who are the sole teacher for that subject have chosen to withhold these results.

Why do some subjects show SFS results and others do not?

SFS results are only provided for subjects where there were 5 or more surveys completed. Similarly, only subjects with 5 or more students enrolled can be surveyed. With less than 5 responses it can be hard to protect the anonymity of the students surveyed. In addition, if the academic staff member on the survey is the sole teacher, they have the option to withhold their results from students. This is to protect their privacy.

How and when can I view SFS results from previous semesters?

You can view past Student Feedback Surveys at any time after two weeks from your semester grades being finalised. You can only view results for subjects that you were enrolled in. Access these results through the 'My survey history' tab on the SFS site.

Can you explain features more clearly (e.g. incentives, anonymity, survey deadline, etc.)?

Currently we try to provide as much information as possible, on the SFS and PQU website, UTS Notices, posters, emails and computer wallpapers. However, if you have questions or suggestions on any aspect of the SFS, please send us an email (PQU@uts.edu.au) and we can consider it for the future semesters.

Why doesn't the SFS have questions on UTS facilities or other physical teaching space suitability?

The SFS is primarily focussed on assessing the performance of the subject and its teaching. There are other surveys administered throughout the year that seek data on other aspects of the university experience. For example, the Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS) measures student satisfaction with university services and facilities, including administration, retail outlets, computing accessibility, etc. It is run in second semester every year but in order to avoid survey fatigue amongst students, not everyone is asked to complete it; instead a representative sample of the student population is chosen.

Why doesn't the SFS offer an analogous survey for a whole course, faculty, school?

At the end of your degree, once you graduate, you will be asked to complete the Graduate Outcome Survey (GOS). This national survey is designed to collect information about the experience of each student during their entire course, as well as the type of work or further study being undertaken after completion.