

FAQ: Asynchronous Small Group Instructional Feedback (ASGIF) Sessions

1. What are ASGIFs?

ASGIFs are short focus groups with students in distance courses who are invited at the request of their instructor. An ASGIF consists of two online surveys in which students answer two open ended questions about their learning (see question #3) in the first survey, and then they respond to a second survey that contains the aggregated data from the first survey, and asks them to rank the importance or validity of the answer to each of the two questions according to their own learning experience in the class. It should take no more than 10 minutes for a student to respond to each survey. All feedback is anonymous.

2. May I request an ASGIF for my in-person course?

Currently, ASGIFs are only offered for distance courses. If you are teaching an in-person course, we encourage you to consider requesting the [in-person SGIF instead](#).

3. When should I schedule an ASGIF?

Typically, we receive requests for all SGIFs around the mid-semester point, though certainly, we can conduct them at other times, as well. When requesting an ASGIF, you'll want to select a week in which you can reasonably expect students will be able to respond to the first survey one day and then respond to the second survey when it becomes available two-three days later.

4. What questions are asked?

We ask students two open-ended questions: **1) What aspects of this class do you feel are particularly effective for helping you learn the course material?** And **2) What suggestions do you have for improving your learning experience in this class?** Instructors might request to include an additional question, but we have found that these two questions typically get at all the things an instructor could hope to hear about—and also at other things that more specific questions might not elicit. (There is also a space for “Additional Comments,” in case they want to record something that does not quite fall into one of those questions.)

5. How is the ASGIF structured?

A Reinert Center staff person sends the link to the first survey to the list of students in the class, provided by the instructor. The students typically have 36-48 hours to complete the survey and submit it. This allows students time to access the survey, and time for reflection. It also enables us to find out what students are thinking prior to seeing their peers' answers. Once the survey period closes, the Reinert Center staff member aggregates the answers to the first survey and creates a second survey that reflects those results. The Reinert Center staff member sends the link to the second survey to students, which they, in turn, are asked to complete within a second 36-48-hour period. The second survey is crucial, since it allows students to better understand how their perceptions of the course match up to – or diverge from – the views of their peers.

6. What does Reinert Center tell my students about the ASGIF?

The survey form and the email invitation both communicate **1)** we are sending the survey at the instructor's request, because they really want to know how the students are experiencing the course and how to make it a better learning experience; **2)** we seek their honest and *specific* suggestions (with details and examples where possible); **3)** all feedback is collected by the Reinert Center, and sent to the instructor with no names or identifying information included; and **4)** students can expect the instructor to discuss with them patterns identified and how they will respond to the feedback.

FAQ: ASGIFs (continued)

7. What should I tell my students about the ASGIF?

Please do make sure to ask them to watch their email inbox for the survey invitation. It is also important you tell them we are surveying them at *your* request, because you genuinely value their feedback on the course and want to improve their learning in whatever ways you can. You can also tell them their feedback will be anonymous and encourage them to be as thoughtful, critical, and specific as they can be in their comments. You might also point out to them that this sort of focus group offers you *formative feedback*, of the sort you are probably giving them to help them assess their own learning, and that they will have a chance to offer *summative feedback* at the end of term in end-of-the-semester student feedback forms and any other forms you have chosen.

8. What does the Reinert Center do with the feedback?

After the second ASGIF survey closes, we create a report that represents the information gathered in each survey, and group like comments together, so that you can easily see patterns. After the report is sent to the instructor, the Reinert Center deletes their copy of the report and as well as the raw survey data. The Reinert Center considers the ASGIF as a confidential service, and does not retain any of the accompanying confidential information.

9. How long will it take to get the results of the ASGIF from Reinert Center?

Our goal is to get the feedback to you within 48 hours of the second survey closing, so that you can discuss the feedback with students, make needed adjustments, etc., in a timely manner.

10. What will I get back from the Reinert Center?

You will receive a typed report divided into two main sections: 1) individual feedback (survey one) and full-class feedback (survey two). Each section of the report is arranged in order of most to least frequent responses, and will include a note about how much agreement there was among the students about each point. The second section will record individual student comments, also grouped in order of most to least frequent responses.

11. How should I interpret the feedback the Reinert Center gives me?

Try to focus on the most common responses and those about which there was broad agreement among students. This will help you to see quickly what is working well and what sorts of adjustments you might wish to make. Also, compare the group feedback with the individual feedback; usually, there is overlap between these two sections.

Occasionally, we see classes where students' individual feedback (i.e., the feedback they generated on their own, without influence from one another) differs markedly from the group responses. This may be a sign that in seeing the questions with their peers' responses, students identified different things as more noteworthy. In cases where there is a gap between the two sections, we encourage you to mention it to students, just so they will have context for which suggestions you act on and which ones you do not.

Finally, keep in mind that you cannot respond to every single suggestion students make. We encourage you to focus on the top two-four suggestions and areas of feedback as you consider how you might respond, and leave outlier and other comments for another time.

FAQ: ASGIFs (continued)

12. How should I respond to the feedback?

At a minimum, you should plan to address the feedback with students within a week of receiving the ASGIF report. For ASGIFs to be most effective (both for your teaching and for your relationship with students), it is crucial that students feel heard and perceive you as taking their suggestions seriously.

Start with patterns for what's working well, and focus on the top two-three comments. Summarize what you learned from the feedback, and assure students that you will continue doing those things they identified as working effectively for learning.

Then, summarize the two-three most frequent suggestions, and let students know whether or not you can act on those suggestions (and if not, why not). You need not take every student suggestion in order for the ASGIF to be successful. Most often, we find that students do recommend things the faculty member can easily act on; however, students sometimes suggest things that you would never do (because it conflicts with your philosophy of teaching or because the research on teaching and learning clearly suggests it is not an effective practice). In those cases, it can be very helpful for students to hear your rationale for not acting on the suggestion—and it is often the case that you can think of something else you could do instead, that would address the need being highlighted.

13. Will asking for this kind of feedback suggest to students that I am not confident about my teaching or damage my credibility with them?

On the contrary, students typically tell us how much they appreciate being asked about their experience, and they express deep gratitude that the instructor cares so deeply about their learning experiences. By all accounts, ASGIFs positively impact student-faculty relations, and emerging research indicates that they also positively impact faculty's end-of-semester evaluations. Note: there is one exception to this rule: ASGIFs can work against you, if do not follow up with students afterward to summarize the feedback and explain how you will respond to it.

14. Will the Reinert Center conduct an ASGIF with my students at the request of my chair / dean?

No. All ASGIFs must be requested by the instructor.

15. Does the Reinert Center give the results of the ASGIF to my chair / dean?

No. All materials collected belong to you alone; we will not share any of the information, including confirmation that you requested an ASGIF with any other person. Whether or not you wish to share the results of the ASGIF with others is entirely your decision.

16. How do I schedule an ASGIF?

If you are interested in requesting an ASGIF, please contact Mary Cook at mary.cook@slu.edu.