# The IDEA Faculty Information Form (FIF):  A Primer

1.  You MUST fill out at least the top part of the FIF.  Do before IDEA is handed out in class if you can.  If you do not fill out the form at all, your score will be seriously compromised, and this counts in your overall yearly evaluation.

If you can, please fill in the bottom part (Contextual Questions) of the form as IDEA use these data for research that relates to the form and student/instructor behaviors, etc.  Its helps IDEA analysts build a better form.

2.  The course learning objectives section is **CRITICAL** to your overall score.  IDEA suggests you limit your selections to 3-5 categories to be marked "essential" or "important.:"   Each ESSENTIAL category chosen counts **twice** on overall score computation while each selected IMPORTANT category counts once in the computation.  Objectives selected as MINOR or left blank do not count in your overall score.  If you choose more than 5, you score will likely suffer, and you might question your own teaching effectiveness—you cannot do it all! **You should never have all of the categories selected.**

You can array this any way you like—if you have 3 learning objectives that you consider ESSENTIAL, just use those and don't worry about the IMPORTANT category.  Or maybe you want to split it 2/2.  Whatever you want to do (within the 3-5 range) is fine, just be sure you are actually doing that in class.

Give serious consideration to the objectives you choose.  Do you truly focus on the categories you select?  Do you have measurements of student progress in those areas?  For many of us, objectives will be an individual choice, but in some departments, it may be reasonable to establish learning objectives for certain courses.

Another reason for careful consideration—students rate their progress in their learning, and if you said "developing creative capacities" was ESSENTIAL, and it wasn't, your score will reflect a deficit in your teaching.  As well, there are data available on the summary form that identify teaching methods that are linked to teaching objectives, and these indicate areas where you are doing well or need improvement.  So careful consideration can help improve your teaching!

3.  Discipline codes—there are few listed on the back of the FIF, but be sure to look over the expanded list:
<div align="center">www.theideacenter.org/DisciplineCodes</div>
Use of discipline codes allows you to compare your teaching effectiveness across your discipline (broadly).

Local Codes—use these only if you, the college, or your department have set up a special study.

4.  It is imperative that students understand your objectives.  Tell them what you are doing.  Read over the IDEA Student rating form and begin to use the relevant terminology in the form in your courses.  How will students know they have made progress on critical analysis or fundamental principles unless you tell them that is what has been happening?  IDEA views this as a major component in successful implementation of student ratings.  This is not "teaching to the form," it is pedagogy.

Furthermore, we need to engage students in the process.  We need to ask that students fill these forms out with consideration and professionalism.  No running down one number or another without reading it! Also go over the form in class before it is given.  Explain the different categories, provide examples of activities you did, give them some information so they can understand the form.  This is completely okay, and it helps create a positive culture around ratings.

**In sum, the FIF is an important component of the IDEA student rating form.  Fill it out with care!**