

Resource Guide

Collecting Formative Feedback on Teaching from Students

Improving our teaching is an on-going process that changes over time and is responsive to the learners in our courses. Collecting and acting on indirect feedback from students by assessing their learning in our courses as well as collecting and acting on direct feedback about instructional methods used, are valuable ways of gathering formative feedback. Unlike end-of term student ratings of teaching that are summative and provide feedback for use in future semesters, formative feedback is information we can use for our own continued learning and improvement to the benefit of our current students.

Below are several possible ways an instructor could collect formative feedback about teaching effectiveness from students.

Quick-Response Papers

The quick-response paper is an umbrella category for assignments that go by several names: one-minute papers, muddiest point responses, clearest point responses, quick-recall papers, projection papers, and the like. The assignments are usually in-class assignments, placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a class meeting, or even after a major assessment or at mid-term, depending on the objective of the assignment. The assignment is set to take a very limited amount of time, usually one-two minutes.

The purpose of these assignments is to get an in-the-moment understanding of student learning in order to respond in a timely manner to points of confusion, needs for additional context, areas of interest, skills achieved, etc. Quick-response papers provide indirect, qualitative data about teaching effectiveness via information on student learning.

Pause Procedures

Pause procedures are methods that require the current method of instruction being employed to be briefly interrupted so that students can reflect individually and/or in groups on what they just learned. Some examples of activities that occur during the pause in instruction are: students are asked to explain in their own words a concept they just learned to their neighbor, they might be asked to solve a problem or respond to a case or other text, or they could simply write down the key points they just learned. Once they complete the brief activity, students are asked to pose questions to the instructor about what is unclear and to ask for additional instruction where needed. Often, instructors choose to employ an electronic response system such as clickers or polling software to aid in gathering student questions.

Much like the quick-response assignments, the purpose of pause procedures is to gauge student learning whilst instruction is occurring and to respond immediately to their learning

needs. Pause procedures also provide in-direct, qualitative data about teaching effectiveness via information on student learning.

Mid-term Surveys

Mid-term surveys are a more formalized way of understanding how students are experiencing instruction direct mechanism for assessing teaching effectiveness, in which the students are asked specific questions about the course.

Using these surveys is an opportunity for instructors to ask targeted questions about teaching methods at a time in the term when students have experienced enough of the course to make informed comments while also leaving ample time for the instructor to implement changes as a response to what current students need.

Many instructors create their own mid-term surveys and distribute them either in class or via a survey tool of their choice, such as Qualtrics. Questions that instructors might ask are: Which methods used in class (fill in the specifics for your class: lectures, discussions, cases, problem sets) are most effective in helping you learn? Are the methods of communicating expectations about deadlines, topics, assignments, etc. effective for your learning? Does the pace of the class meet your needs for learning?

Other instructors opt to invite the Reinert Center to their classes to conduct a confidential, non-evaluative Small Group Instructional Feedback session (SGIF). In those sessions, a Reinert Center staff person asks students two questions, "What aspects of this class do you feel are particularly effective for helping you learn the course material?, and What suggestions do you have for improving your learning experience in this class?" The data collected is compiled for the instructor and presented in a way that maintains students' confidentiality. For more information about the SGIF service or to request one during the mid-term, visit the Reinert Center's website (<http://slu.edu/ctl>).

Mid-term surveys are examples of assessment that can contain qualitative, quantitative (or both) data.

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center at ctl@slu.edu.