

Gathering Student Feedback (other than USE)

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In addition to the formal Unit of Study Evaluation (USE) Survey there are other strategies that teachers can use to gauge feedback on different aspects of their teaching and/or the Unit of Study. Some of these may involve informal procedures that you can do during the semester, rather than at the end, so as to enhance teaching in response to initial feedback about students' perception of the teaching-learning experience. More formal methods are also useful in providing feedback about either very general or specific aspects of the Unit and/or your teaching.

This is a brief survey of some of the student feedback strategies recommended by the Institute for Teaching and Learning (ITL). For more information about feedback for teachers or any aspect of the teaching-learning experience, we recommend that you contact the ITL or visit their website.

- 1. Quick Feedback Methods**
- 2. Group Interviews**
- 3. Getting Feedback Online / Online Student Feedback Service**
- 4. Peer Observation of Teaching**

1. Quick Feedback Methods

Gathering formal and informal feedback throughout the semester, rather than at the end, allows staff to monitor the effectiveness of their teaching, particularly if a unit of study is being taught for the first time or new components have been added. While it is certainly feasible and useful to ask students directly of their experience of a unit of study and/or the quality of teaching, there are other quick methods of evaluation that guarantee anonymity.

a) Three open questions

This is a short open-ended questionnaire designed to gauge students' responses to the teaching-learning experience and/or the unit of study. The three questions may be written on the board or put up on as an overhead. Any kind of question may be posed, depending on what you want to gather feedback on, but the point is to keep this kind of survey short. For eg., you might want to ask very general questions:

“What was the most useful thing you learned today?”

“How could I change my teaching to help students to learn more from this class?”

Or more specific questions:

“Which of the set readings was most helpful in preparing for today's class?”

“Did the tutorial exercises help clarify the set readings and the lecture?”

For very large classes, you might want to streamline the process, either by taking a random sample and asking every fifth student to respond to the short questionnaire or organize the class into groups of 5-10 and ask them to respond to the questions individually and then to reach a consensus as a group. Either technique will reduce the time spent reading through feedback responses.

b) Critical learning statement

This is a useful technique for gathering feedback on student learning and the effectiveness of teaching. Ask students to write down three critical points that they have most clearly learned from the class and three points they are still unclear about. A consideration of the responses and the identification of recurring patterns should provide staff with a sense of what teaching strategies have worked well and those that need revision and/or further development.

2. Group Interviews

Structured student group interviews and student focus groups are effective ways of obtaining detailed and formal feedback for Units of Study with small or large enrolments. In the first instance the staff member needs to devise a suitable interview schedule with an ITL member of staff. On the appointed day of the interview, the ITL staff member visits the class and conducts the interview while the staff member is absent. The interviewer then writes a report based on the responses and sends it to the staff member. If you wish to develop a Focus Group Interview or a Student Group Interview, please contact the ITL.

3. Getting Feedback Online / Online Student Feedback Service (Online SFS)

If your Unit of Study includes online components, you might consider gathering student feedback on their learning experience via online means. If you are using WebCT, there are two main ways of obtaining feedback:

a) private e-mail (in WebCT: 'Mail')

You may wish to invite your students to e-mail you at specific points throughout Unit with their questions or brief comments about what they find is working well and what they might be finding difficult. Your students will appreciate your availability and the feedback you provide, though it is not always feasible to respond in this way with very large groups.

b) a public discussion list (in WebCT, 'Discussion')

In WebCT, the "Discussion" tool is structured around discussion forums called "Topics". You could designate a "Topic" for evaluation and feedback and encourage students to post feedback on specific aspects of the teaching-learning process.

In addition to WebCT, you may wish to use the ITLs Online Student Feedback Service. This method is only recommended if staff can put time aside during a scheduled computer lab or online session. For more information please contact the ITL.

4. Peer Observation of Teaching

In addition to the data provided from student feedback, it is often beneficial to gather feedback from your academic colleagues. You may want to invite a colleague whose input you value and with whom you feel comfortable, to observe a session of your class. You could then engage in a reflective discussion with them about different aspects of your teaching. Collaborative teaching is another way in which academic staff members might want to reflect on their own teaching practice. Meet with your colleague before the class and agree on specific tasks for the session. Afterwards meet to review the class and share your observations and insights on each other's teaching.