

Feedback on Teaching

What is Feedback on Teaching?

The collecting and reviewing of numbers, ratings, comments, letters and testimonials that act as qualitative and quantitative evidence of good practice, indicators of areas for continuing improvement, support for innovative teaching practices, and insight from others' perspectives on your teaching.

Why is Feedback Important?

1) Strengthening Teaching Practice

Feedback allows you to check if you are meeting your goals for your teaching, such as "Is the material that I present organized logically for students new to this field?" "Do my students like hearing their classmate's experiences?".

2) Myth-Busting (or Confirming)

You have ideas about what your students are liking or doing, but how do you know? By seeing your teaching from another perspective, you can discover whether your assumptions hold true, such as "Are the students taking notes when I am writing on the board?" "Do I appear confident when students are asking questions?" "Is the skit I do every year still funny?"

3) Documenting Success

You think you teach well, but how do you know? Feedback can provide evidence of teaching competence as part of your teaching dossier during job seeking, renewal, promotion and tenure, or of teaching excellence for internal and external teaching awards.

4) Fostering Innovation

Your new idea is inspirational, but how do you know it works? After trying out a new assignment, technique, tool or other innovation, you can ask for feedback to determine what worked and what needs further tinkering.

5) Publication of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

You have a great teaching strategy or tool, how would others' know it works? Feedback may be analyzed and included as results or evidence of impact in a SoTL research conference presentation or journal article. Note that if you intend to publish this feedback at a conference or in a journal article ethics clearance would be required; ethics clearance is not required for reporting feedback in the class, your teaching dossier or teaching reports.

Strategies

Who?

Anyone who has witnessed or experienced the impact of your teaching including, students (current or past), co-instructors, colleagues, mentors, CTL educational developer, undergraduate or graduate chairs,

How?

- Surveys (paper, Moodle, index cards, online survey companies)
- Quick show of hands or clicker poll
- Focus groups with full-class discussions lead by a colleague or CTL educational developer
- Advisory groups of students or student representatives for large classes
- Departmental evaluation form or University Survey of Student Assessment of Teaching (USAT) form
- Observations from CTL educational developer or colleague
- Letters from peers or mentors
- Teaching Interviews that are guided conversations with a colleague about your courses

When?

- **Mid-term:** Feedback can occur mid-semester to see how a course is going so far; you do not need to wait until end of term to identify areas to improve and strengths. If you do as mid-semester, summarize the feedback to identify one or two manageable changes that you can bring back to the class to talk about and then implement.
- **End-of-term:** In the final class student feedback is often gathered including through departmental evaluations and the University Survey of Student Assessment of Teaching (USAT) form.
- **Ongoing:** Quick feedback from students or a co-teacher could be gathered as part of each class, or ever few classes throughout the course. Observations and peer or mentor feedback might also occur more than once in a course to look at different parts or to see if a change based on initial feedback has addressed your concerns.
- **Targeted:** If you want feedback on a specific activity or assignment, then focused questions can be asked during or afterwards.

What?

To receive detailed focus feedback, clearly define the object (e.g., you as the lecturer, the materials, the readings) and the quality (e.g., logical presentation of material, students' activities during lecture, appearance of confidence) you want feedback on.

Reviewing

When reviewing feedback you have received:

- Have a colleague, mentor or CTL educational developer also look over the feedback to provide a second perspective to identify the general trends (not just that one hurtful or glorious comment), and to dialogue about areas of strength and potential improvement.
- Retain the feedback for use as later evidence, even as a baseline reading.
- Document your reaction and ideas as useful indicators of your goals, beliefs, and direction for your teaching.
- Share with students your conclusions including strengths and areas that you will plan to improve on.
- Recognize that every instructor from time to time receive negative comments from students regarding our teaching. No matter how good you are, you can't please everyone! When evaluations are not what instructors expect, there can be feelings of shame, anger or disillusionment. Supports include discussing feedback, seeking additional feedback to clarify (or double-check) concerns, and seeing the overall trends and mixture of responses.

Resources

Templates

Teaching assistant feedback form - for teaching assistants to collect feedback from students

The One-Minute Paper- a quick source of feedback where instructors set aside the last minute of their classes for students to respond to several questions relating to what they learned in class.

Mid-semester Questionnaires - Ask students to complete a short questionnaire mid-way through the course that can include open-ended questions, rating scales and other indicators.

Teaching Interview - a guided conversation between two teachers about courses they teach. Each instructor selects a course to focus on and then they interview one another about the course each has chosen. The interviewer may jot down the interviewee's responses to each question.

Websites

"How am I doing?" Early feedback from instructors to students and from students to instructors-
Office of Educational Development, UC Berkeley

Interpreting Written Feedback from Students (Video; 5:12) - Faculty Center for Innovative Teaching, Central Michigan University

Example questionnaires for teaching assistant feedback - College of Engineering, University of Wisconsin-Madison