

GATHERING MORE MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK ON STUDENT OPINION OF TEACHING SURVEYS

We often talk about improving response rates for teaching surveys but it's equally as important to improve the quality of feedback from students. Two of the most common reasons students are hesitant to provide written comments are lack of motivation, not understanding how or if their feedback is used, and lack of knowledge, not having the skill or practice to complete the task. (Svinicki, 2001) Instructors should provide students with examples of what good feedback is and opportunities throughout the term to practice giving feedback. "(S)tudent feedback can be more constructive and helpful if students are taught how to write constructive evaluative comments..." (Carbone, 2015) An atmosphere where feedback is continual and constructive is beneficial to both instructors and students.

Talk to students about the value of feedback and what your expectations are.

- Give examples of how previous feedback was used
- Provide students with samples of effective feedback. Ask them to be specific in their comments and provide examples. The University of Michigan provides a [nice handout for students](#).
- Provide students with guidelines for giving effective feedback. (Svinicki, 2001)
 - Feedback should be specific, provide examples
 - Feedback should be limited to teaching practices, not personal traits
 - Describe the effect the behavior has ("The instructor speaks so fast, I have a hard time taking notes.")
 - Provide alternative suggestions ("It would be helpful if the instructor posted the main points of the lecture before class.")
 - Ultimately, feedback should be formative and constructive in nature
- Let students know that, although the reports you receive are anonymized, you probably won't give any merit to written comments that are unprofessional or abusive.
- Explain what kind of feedback you're looking for especially if you've tried something new or are already thinking about making changes. A good way to accomplish this is to [add custom questions](#) to the standard OMET survey.

One opportunity for students to "practice" giving effective feedback is to administer a midterm survey. The Office of Measurement and Evaluation of Teaching now offers a [Midterm Course Survey option](#). Instructors will receive timely feedback that can identify what's working in the class and what might need to be adjusted. Students have a chance to see the results of their feedback and become more adept at completing meaningful evaluations. (Lewis, 2001) "(I)t is important for teachers who request students to participate in providing anonymous feedback to emphasize that this feedback is a valuable tool used to assist them in improving current and future teaching and learning experiences." (Caulfield, 2007)

References

Carbone, N. (2015, January 15). Teaching Students How to Write Teaching Evaluations. Retrieved from http://praxis.technorhetic.net/tiki-index.php?page=PraxisWiki:_:How to Write Teaching Evaluations

Caulfield, J. (2007). What Motivates Students to Provide Feedback to Teachers About Teaching and Learning? An Expectancy Theory Perspective. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 1(1). doi: 10.20429/ijstl.2007.010107

Lewis, K. G. (2001), Using Midsemester Student Feedback and Responding to It. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2001: 33–44. doi:10.1002/tl.26

Svinicki, M. D. (2001), Encouraging Your Students to Give Feedback. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 2001: 17–24. doi:10.1002/tl.24

Resources

<https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/gradhacker/teaching-students-evaluate-us-better>

<https://teaching.pitt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Midterm-course-evaluations-Feb2018.pdf>

http://www.crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/resource_files/Course%20Evaluation%20Guidance.pdf