

Early Term Course Feedback

Goals and Benefits

Early term course feedback can:

- Promote student engagement
- Encourage active listening/learning
- Address student questions and points of confusion
- Be easily used in small and large classes
- Provide students with experience writing short, clear, concise answers/responses to questions about the learning environment
- Enable faculty to make meaningful changes quickly and efficiently

Step One: Identify Questions

Many scholars of teaching and learning have found that generally the most constructive student feedback comes from the five following questions:

- What is the best feature of this course?
- What do you want continued in this course?
- What, if anything, would you change about this course?
- How should the instructor go about making these changes?
- What is the best feature of the instructor's presentation skills?
- What, if anything, should the instructor improve? How should the instructor go about making these changes?

Step Two: Collect Information

1. Time it for the end of the 3rd/beginning of the 4th week
2. Distribute at beginning of the class so students have ample time to complete
3. Tell the students how you will use the results: that the information will be used to improve the course, and remind them that specific, constructive feedback is most useful
4. Leave the room while students complete – ask students to place their evaluations on unused table or desk and designate a student to notify you when the class is finished
5. Request anonymous student responses

Step Three: Analyze Information & Strategize Changes

1. Review the results of your survey, paying particular attention to patterns of responses
2. Analyze or categorize student responses: are they about classroom environment/management; assignments; learning styles; student-to-student relations; etc?
3. Prioritize what you can change/what you need to hold off changing until the next time you teach the course
4. Identify 2-3 specific, discrete changes that you can make almost immediately and focus on those (consider achievability and biggest bang for buck)

Step Four: Present Findings to Students

1. Explain what you intend to change and why

2. Remind students that they have different preferences – some changes won't suit all of them individually, but may still improve overall learning environment

Step Five: Implement Changes

1. Identify assignments, units, or specific class sessions in which you can implement the proposed changes
2. Consider making explicit to students precisely when you are incorporating these changes and remind them (in a positive way) why you are doing so
3. Check in later with your students (more informally) to ask whether the changes you've carried out have helped their learning

Step Six: End of Term Follow-Up

1. Follow-up with similar questions on the end-of-term evaluation which will assess how well you carried out these changes

For further reading:

"Mid-Term Teaching Evaluations," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

<http://chronicle.com/blogs/profhacker/mid-term-teaching-evaluations/22725>

"Course evaluations: The more, the merrier," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

<http://chronicle.com/blognetwork/castingournines/2010/10/16/course-evaluations-the-more-the-merrier/>