

Collecting Feedback During the Semester

Mid-semester feedback serves as “a formative evaluation tool that allows for changes while a course is in progress” (Hayward, 2002) and is used to improve performance.

Benefits

- Provides an instructor with information that can be used to make changes in teaching styles and strategies during the course.
- Student suggestions may lead to new assignment and activity ideas for the instructor.
- Can build student confidence because they receive the signal that their instructor is committed to the course and is open to making changes that can directly affect them.
- Can increase student engagement in a class they “help build.”

What to do with the information

- Make appropriate changes to the syllabus, future activities, and assignments.
- Results should be shared with students one or two class periods after the information was collected to highlight the value of student feedback.
- If some suggestions are not feasible, explain to the students why. Remember, honest communication is key to effective feedback.
- It is best to not solicit feedback during a class period where graded work is being returned. The scores students receive are fresh and may strongly impact comments on the evaluation form. Explain to the students it is their responsibility to help shape the course and their feedback will help the instructor to make improvements.

Feedback collection methods

- Anonymous evaluation forms
- One minute paper or feedback notecard
- Journal entries
- One-on-one meetings with students
- Review/editing of the course calendar individually or in small groups
- Class check-in activities

Mid-semester feedback prompts

- What are three things that the instructors should start doing, stop doing, and continue doing for the remainder of the semester to make this class a positive experience?
- What have been the most valuable and least valuable aspects of the course so far? How can the course be improved?
- What have been the most valuable things you have learned so far in Hullabaloo U
- What do you still hope to learn from this course that we have not yet covered?
- What have your instructors been doing well? How can they improve?
- If you could start this class over again, what three things would you have done differently and why?

Adapted from: Hayward, P.A. “Developing Ourselves through the Use of Mid-Semester Evaluation.”

Seeking Anonymous Formative Feedback on a Notecard

There are a variety of ways to solicit mid-semester feedback from your students. One technique uses index cards as a means of collecting anonymous feedback. This method provides a class temperature, while also offering an opportunity to build additional trust and openness within the class. This kind of open-ended evaluation will not serve as a definitive guide for reconstructing a syllabus, but it can provide you with an idea of where students are, how they view the course, and what their expectations are for the semester. It will also give you an idea as to what students might need clarification on, what activities they like or dislike, and what techniques are working or not working to make the class more engaging.

Instructions:

1. Provide each student with (2) 3 x 5 index cards. On the first card ask students to list two things, topics, or activities that they particularly like about the course. On the second card, ask students to list two things that they don't like about the course.

Remind students that all of this information is anonymous and ask students to not put their name on the cards. Ask students to be as specific as possible—the more they elaborate on WHY they like or dislike an activity, the more benefit it will be to you.

2. Collect the cards and briefly read the non-repetitive comments to the class. Focus just as much time on the complaints as to the positive statements. The important part of this activity is to show your class that you care about and are interested in their feedback. As you are reading out loud make sure to acknowledge the importance of each statement, either by nodding your head or making a short comment. Sometimes no comment will suffice. Just make sure to not dismiss the student comments as trivial or argue against them in any way.
3. The final step is to ask students for input for the remainder of the semester. What do they still need to know more about and how can this information be delivered most effectively? Have students write their suggestions on the last index card. Again, read some of the suggestions aloud to the class.
4. Most importantly: follow-up. Make sure you do something with this feedback, whether that is incorporating suggestions into the syllabus for the second half of the semester, or adjusting your teaching style appropriately.

Sample Mid-Semester Evaluation Forms

Instructor

The instructor is approachable.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

I would feel comfortable speaking to the instructor about a problem related to my schoolwork.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

I would feel comfortable speaking to the instructor about a problem related to my personal life.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

The instructor treats students with respect.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

The instructor motivates me to do my best work.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

The instructor is accessible during class and office hours.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

The instructor cares about whether or not you learn something.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

The instructor's expectations of student performance are:

- a. Too high b. Appropriate c. Too low

The feedback the instructor provides on student progress is:

- a. Very useful b. Somewhat useful c. Not useful

Peer/Graduate leader

The Peer Mentor is approachable.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

I would feel comfortable speaking to the Peer Mentor about a problem related to my schoolwork.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

I would feel comfortable speaking to the Peer Mentor about a problem related to my personal life.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

The Peer Mentor treats students with respect.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

The Peer Mentor motivates me to do my best work.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

Course Content

What are the most beneficial aspects of the course?

What are the least beneficial aspects of the course?

What idea/concept discussed so far has been most difficult and/or most interesting to learn for you? Why?

Student Contributions

In this course I am performing:

- a. Up to my potential b. Almost up to my potential c. Below my potential

Do you ask questions or make comments in this class?

Never Seldom Occasionally Frequently

What would encourage you to participate more?

Your classmates make responsible contributions to the class.

(1) strongly disagree (2) disagree (3) neutral (4) agree (5) strongly agree

General

What aspects of class are **working well**? What are the strengths of the class? What aspects of the class are having a positive impact on your learning?

What aspects of the class are **working poorly**? What are the weaknesses of the class?

What aspects of the class are having a negative impact on your learning?

What aspects of the class do you believe **should be changed**? How should these aspects be changed? (Please be as specific as possible).

Soliciting Feedback from Your Peer Mentor

Your Peer Mentor's feedback is an important aspect of the success of the course. In addition to the role they play in mentoring first-year students and co-teaching the course, these "veteran" students are a source of feedback about our teaching and the success of course in meeting first-year student's needs. They are enrolled in many other courses at Texas A&M and have seen examples of both good and not-so-good teaching. We strongly encourage instructors to seek feedback about course design, teaching strategies, and teaching performance from their peer/graduate leader regularly. Here are a few ways you might solicit this feedback and some general principles about this method:

- 1) It is critical to establish trust and open-communication in order to get thoughtful and honest feedback. You must demonstrate that you truly want to know how things went before a Peer Mentor will feel comfortable sharing this information. They are sometimes hesitant to tell it as it really is for fear of hurting our feelings.
- 2) After each class, spend a few minutes with your Peer Mentor debriefing how the course went. Are there recommendations for improvement the next time you teach this lesson? Are there general thoughts about the level of engagement in the discussion or ways to get better involvement from your students?
- 3) Ask your Peer Mentor to gather feedback from your students about ways to improve the course.
- 4) Just as you provide feedback to your Peer Mentor at the end of the semester, encourage your Peer Mentor to provide you feedback about your teaching or the course. You may create a list of questions to respond to or provide some rating-scale items.
- 5) Meet weekly to discuss the direction the course is going and update lesson plans and assignments as necessary to improve the course/respond to student needs.