

Soliciting Student Feedback

There are many reasons to solicit feedback from students and several strategies for engaging student feedback effectively (separate from obligatory end-of-semester departmental evaluations). Student feedback is a critical part of investigating and improving our curriculum, assignment design, instruction and pedagogy. Additionally, soliciting student feedback can help instructors **build classroom community**—as a way of getting to know students and communicating investment in their learning—and support the **metacognitive** skill of reflecting on and analyzing their own academic development. It can also provide a crucial channel of communication to ensure **inclusive pedagogy**.

Some strategies for soliciting student feedback:

Ongoing feedback:

- In advance of difficult class sessions, bring index cards to class and prompt students to conclude the session by writing anonymously anything they need you to know about their experience of that day's class.
- In conjunction with assignments, ask students to write reflectively on their experience of the course and assignment (e.g., *What did you learn in completing this assignment? What might have helped you achieve greater success with this assignment? How will this assignment help you with future assignments?*).

Mid-semester feedback:

- Provide some time in class for a focus-group style discussion, or for some private writing in response to a form you've created (questionnaires, Likert scale ratings, or qualitative questions). This offers an opportunity for instructors to “take the temperature” of the class while there is still time in the semester to make changes.
- Be sure to summarize student responses and share out trends or contributions that you plan to act on. Be careful not to explicitly solicit feedback on an aspect of the course that you will not be able to alter for the remainder of the semester.

End-of-semester feedback:

- Supplement departmental feedback forms with your own end-of-semester questionnaire or in-class review of the course. You may incorporate opportunities for students to reflect on their own learning, readings, assignments, or pedagogical techniques.
- Allow yourself some time to process and reflect on the comments. Let go of aggressive or unhelpful comments, and prepare an action plan for addressing concerns in the future.

References

Northeastern University, Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning Through Research. “Early/Midterm Student Feedback.” Digital.

Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. “Gathering Feedback from Students.” Digital.

See also

Building Classroom Community

Inclusive Pedagogy

Metacognition