

# Gathering Midterm Feedback from Students

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## A Quick Route to Making a Difference in your Teaching

The end of semester student perception of teaching (SPT) feedback is an essential resource for instructors to evaluate their course, and improve their own teaching pedagogy. However, students that complete the SPTs rarely have the opportunity to see how, or if, their feedback contributed to a better learning

environment. A more effective solution is to gather similar feedback from students in the middle of the semester so the instructor can make immediate adjustments that the students can benefit from.

### Resource Highlights

- **Communicate:** Students will be most receptive to midterm feedback if you discuss with them how the information will be used, reinforcing their active role in the learning process.
- **Timing:** At a point where you can still make changes, but students have at least experienced some type of examination.
- **Anonymity:** Students are more likely to give constructive, quality feedback if it is anonymous.

## Why is midterm feedback important?

- **Gives students a voice.** Students should feel like they have an active and valuable role in the learning process. Having limited autonomy or control can often lead to disengagement and negative classroom behaviours (i.e., lack of effort, skipping class, etc.).
- **Higher end of term SPT scores.** If students recognize that their instructor made adjustments based on their feedback it may lead to higher teaching ratings at the end of the semester (Cohen, 1980; Murray, 2007).
- **Improved teaching practices.** Feedback allows continual improvement and enhancement of your teaching. This is valuable for any instructor, and may be especially important for new instructors as they start their careers, or when experienced instructors are exploring new methods, or working with new cohorts (Diamond, 2004).

## What are important things to consider when implementing midterm feedback in your classroom?

- **Start early.** Make an announcement at the beginning of the semester that you will be asking for midterm feedback. It may also be beneficial to start the semester with one slide discussing feedback you have received in previous years. Having this conversation reinforces their value as students and your dedication as an instructor.

- **Get help.** If you have large classrooms, individually reading 300+ comments may be an exhaustive process, but by simply skimming the documents you will likely see similar trends. It may be helpful to disperse the feedback among your GAs or meet with a colleague, or Centre for Teaching and Learning to look for patterns in the feedback.
- **Communicate.** For midterm feedback to be truly successful, it is essential that you communicate with the students your plan of action (Lewis, 2001). Once you have gone through their comments take a few minutes in the next class to discuss the feedback, specifically what you will change this semester and how, what you can't change this semester, but you can change in the future, and things that are unfortunately out of your control (i.e. class times).
- **Anonymity.** You are more likely to get quality feedback if students remain anonymous, as opposed to making it a course requirement or giving extra credit. Students should not feel that providing feedback will in any way, negatively or positively, influence their grade in the course.
- **Set time aside.** Setting 5 to 10 minutes aside during class time for midterm feedback will likely produce a greater response rate than having them complete it on their own time. It also reinforces that you care enough about their feedback that you will sacrifice teaching time, not their personal time.

### How can you implement midterm feedback in your classroom?

Here are a few examples with accompanying resources of quick and easy methods to help you gather feedback from your students.

#### Stop-Start-Continue

**Step 1:** Students split a piece of paper into three sections for the respective questions, or complete an anonymous online survey:

- What would you like me to **stop** doing in this course because it's interfering with your learning?
- What would you like me to **start** doing in this course to help you learn more effectively?
- What would you like me to **continue** doing in this course because it's helping you learn?

**Step 2:** Organize responses into themes (i.e. areas of concern, interest, etc.)

**Step 3:** Discuss responses with them in the next class.

*[Adapted from Michael K. Potter, University of Windsor]*

#### Want to learn more?

Hoon, A., Oliver, E.J., Szpakowska, K., & Newton, P.M. (2014). Use of the 'Stop, Start, Continue' method is associated with the production of constructive qualitative feedback by students in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40(5), 755-767.

#### Sentence Completion Exercise

Give students a sentence completion worksheet, which may stimulate responses quicker. You can make the questions more specific to course content as opposed to just your teaching style.

- The textbook is \_\_\_\_\_.
- The guest speaker was \_\_\_\_\_.
- The assignment was \_\_\_\_\_.

*[Adapted from Jess Dixon, University of Windsor]*

### The Minute Paper

At the end of class get students to answer the following questions either on paper or online:

- a) What are the [two] most [significant] things you have learned during this session?
- b) What question(s) remain in your mind?
- c) Is there anything you did not understand?

Additional questions you can adapt:

- a) What do you like about the course so far?
- b) What don't you like about the course so far?
- c) What would you like to change about the course?

*[Adapted from Dora Cavallo-Medved, University of Windsor]*

#### Want to learn more?

- a) <http://provost.tufts.edu/celt/files/MinutePaper.pdf>
- b) <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/soliciting-and-utilizing-mid-semester-feedback/>

### Brightspace

You can use Brightspace to:

- a) Create an **online survey** instead of having students write on a piece of paper. There is an option to make the online survey anonymous.
- b) Use the **discussion board** as a platform for students to provide feedback and discuss with peers. Remember that most students prefer having anonymity when providing feedback. Utilizing the discussion board as an avenue for feedback might prevent anonymity.

### Likert Scale Questions

If you want to evaluate specific activities within the course as opposed to the course more generally, a Likert-type scale may be a more efficient process than open-ended questions.

1. Strongly Disagree      2. Disagree      3. Neither Agree nor Disagree      4. Agree      5. Strongly Agree

- a) The workload in this course is manageable.
- b) The reading this week contributed to my learning.
- c) The textbook has been a helpful resource for studying.

#### Want to learn more?

<https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/teaching-resources/course-design/classroom-assessment/feedback/examples>

### Student Consultants or Ombuds

Student consultants or ombuds are responsible for gathering midterm feedback:

- a) Meet with the student consultant to collaboratively develop questions of interest.
- b) On feedback day, instructors leave the lecture hall and student consultants ask the class to answer the feedback questions in silence.
- c) If time permits, student consultants may facilitate a conversation with the class regarding their answers.
- d) The student consultant gathers the written and verbal feedback and writes up an interpretation for the instructor.

#### Want to learn more?

Cook-Sather, A. (2009). From traditional accountability to shared responsibility: The benefits and challenges of student consultants gathering midcourse feedback in college classrooms. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34, 231-241.

### Peer Collaboration Network

In addition to gathering students' opinions, you can also ask a colleague to observe your teaching using the Peer Collaboration Network (PCN).

- a) Meet with a PCN observer (<http://www.uwindsor.ca/pcn/12/contact-observer>) to discuss the specific aspects of your teaching that you would like feedback on during a classroom observation.
- b) After the classroom observation, you will meet again with the observer to discuss and share ideas about the experience.

#### Want to learn more?

<http://www.uwindsor.ca/pcn/reference-list>

### CTL Teaching Observations

Rather than asking your colleagues to observe your teaching, you can utilize an educational consultant within the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

#### Want to learn more?

<https://www.uwindsor.ca/ctl/346/teaching-observations>

### Additional Links and Resources

#### Doctoral Dissertation

McGowan, W.R. (2009). *Faculty and student perceptions of the effects of mid-course evaluations on learning and teaching* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Brigham Young University, Utah.

#### Research Articles

Boysen, G.A (2016). Using student evaluations to improve teaching: Evidence-based recommendations. *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Psychology*, 2(4), 273-284.

Cohen, P. A. (1980). Effectiveness of student-rating feedback for improving college instruction: A meta-analysis of findings. *Research in Higher Education*, 13(4), 321-341.

Diamond, M.R. (2004). The usefulness of structured mid-term feedback as a catalyst for change in higher education classes. *The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 5(3), 217-231.

Lewis, K. (2001). Using midsemester student feedback and responding to it. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, 87, 33-44.

Murray, H. G. (2007). *Low-inference teaching behaviors and college teaching effectiveness: Recent developments and controversies*. In R. P. Perry & J. C. Smart (Eds.), *The scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education: An evidence-based perspective* (pp. 145-200). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Palazzo, S.J., Miller, C.W., Salvatierra, G. (2016). Continuous student feedback: Your voice counts. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 37.5, 297-298.

Veeck, A., O'Reilly, K., MacMillan, A., & Yu, H. (2015). The use of collaborative midterm student evaluations to provide actionable results. *Journal of Marketing Education*, 38(3), 157-169.