MAKING SENSE OF YOUR COURSE EVALUATIONS

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OVERVIEW

- Your impressions on how the course went
- Matching the qualitative data to the quantitative data
- Making sense of the data
- Using your feedback
- Characteristics of the instructor
- Characteristics of the course
- Resources
- Questions

YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF THE COURSE

- What
  - » Note your strengths and weaknesses
  - » Account for your strengths and weaknesses
- When
  - » Before you look at your course evaluations
  - » About two weeks after the final exam
- Why
  - » Check for awareness
  - » Allows you to make improvements to your teaching

MATCHING THE QUALITATIVE DATA TO THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

- Analyze:
  - » Look for patterns or trends
  - » Are particular comments always linked?
  - » Are certain aspects never mentioned?
- Relate ratings to written comments to identify specific nature of concerns or successes
- What value do the comments add to the quantitative data?

MAKING "SENSE" OF THE DATA

- Compare
  - » Compare your own impressions of the course with those of your students
  - » Note discrepancies
  - » What evidence did the students provide to support their comments (either favourable or critical)?
  - » Can your find reasons to explain your successes and areas for improvement?

MAKING "SENSE" OF THE DATA CONTINUED…

- What were the past ratings for this course?
  - » Compare your own ratings to past offerings of the course

  (See:https://cas.uwaterloo.ca/cas/login?service=http%3A%2F%2Fmathsoc.uwaterloo.ca%2FCourseEvals)
- What other information might explain the results? (Is this the first time you taught this course? Did you introduce a new teaching technique?)

USING YOUR FEEDBACK

- What would you do differently?
  - » Add
  - » Remove
  - » Change
- What aspect of your teaching would you like to develop further?
  - » How will you do this?
- How can you build on your strengths?

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INSTRUCTOR

ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE OF THE LECTURES

- Set out clear objectives
  - » Indicate a clear plan for the lecture
  - » Note key ideas to be covered in this lecture
- Distinguish between more and less important information
  - » Time (Spend more time on the ideas that are essential for student success in this course and post-requisite courses.)
  - » Repetition (Repeat important ideas in different ways.)
  - » Relate to assignments/tests (Indicate how these ideas can be used to solve problems on assignments and tests.)

ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE OF THE LECTURES CONTINUED…

- Make connections
  - » Connect ideas in a lecture with previous lectures and material covered in pre-requisite courses.
  - » Indicate how these ideas might be expanded on in post-requisite courses.
  - » Clearly indicate a change in topics and explain connections between topics.

LEVEL OF INSTRUCTOR'S EXPLANATIONS

- Take into account students' background knowledge
  - » Determine students' background knowledge.
  - » What material is covered in a pre-requisite course? At what level of difficulty?
  - » Anticipate common confusions or questions. (This is easier to do when you have taught the course more that once!)
- Talk to instructors who have taught this course before.
- Talk to instructors of the pre-requisite courses to learn about the ideas that students struggle with in these courses.

LEVEL OF INSTRUCTOR'S EXPLANATIONS CONTINUED…

- Explain concepts clearly
  - » Don’t assume intuitive understanding of critical connections between ideas: talk students through important reasoning.
  - » Explain important ideas in more than one way.

INSTRUCTOR'S TREATMENT OF STUDENT'S QUESTIONS

- Validation
  - » Acknowledge all questions. (That is a very good question. I am so glad you asked that question.)
  - » Listen carefully and allow the student time to finish their question.
  - » Repeat the question to ensure you have understood the question correctly and that all students have heard the question.
  - » If you still don’t understand the student’s question ask the class for help in trying to understand the question. (e.g., I am not quite clear what you are asking. Does anyone else have a similar question?)

INSTRUCTOR'S TREATMENT OF STUDENT'S QUESTIONS CONTINUED…

- Explanation
  - » Anticipate common concerns/questions and prepare thoughtful responses. (Ask previous instructors for questions they have been asked.)
  - » If it is not a question you have thought of before don't be afraid to take a minute to think about the question.
  - » Give more than one answer if possible.
  - » If you are unable to answer, make sure you answer the question in the next lecture.
  - » Ask the student if they have understood your answer. Offer to explain after class if question is delaying the lecture.

EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUCTOR'S OF VISUAL PRESENTATION

- Clear and organized
  - » Visible (size, neatness, consistency, no visual obstacles, etc.) (Walk to the back of the class so you can see what your students see.)
  - » Use titles (topic, def'n, theorem, example, remarks)
  - » Make the order of the presentation of ideas obvious.
  - » Provide adequate time to record.
  - » Provide time to grasp ideas (This is not always possible. Indicate when a new idea may take time to grasp but offer hope that this will happen as the students see applications of the ideas.)

EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUCTOR'S VISUAL PRESENTATION CONTINUED…

- Aligned with verbal explanation(s)
  - » Avoid introducing new ideas that are not directly related to the ideas you have presented in the visual information

EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTRUCTOR'S ORAL PRESENTATION

- Clear and organized
  - » Your verbal explanations should be as easy to follow as your well laid out visual material
  - » Say it out loud not just in your head
  - » Say it to the class not the blackboard or your lecture notes
- Aligned with visual/written material
  - » Talk your students through the information being visually displayed
- Pace
  - » Appropriate rate of delivery (Don’t be afraid to ask student feedback in class about the pace of the current lecture. Learn to read faces!)

WAS THE INSTRUCTOR AVAILABLE FOR HELP OUTSIDE CLASS?

- Advertise your office hours
  - » Note in course outline
  - » Post in LEARN
  - » Announce in office hours class especially just before assignment due dates and tests
- Encourage students to visit your office hours
  - » Avoid scheduling student meetings "by appointment only"
  - » Select times that are meaningful and accessible
  - » Consider asking for student reps in large classes
- Make explicit your email policies
  - » How quickly will you respond
  - » Define off-times

DID YOU FIND THE COURSE INTERESTING?

- Make explicit the value of the course for future courses/work
  - » Connect material learned and skills acquired in this course to future courses/work

  A training in mathematics prepares one to be precise with language, accurate in arguments and able to see structure in chaos.

- Show students how the course material relates to real life if possible
  - » Use meaningful examples
  - » Use material to interpret an everyday experience
- Convey your enthusiasm of the subject

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INSTRUCTOR AS A TEACHER

- Convey your enthusiasm for the material
- Lectures well-planned and well-delivered
  - » Aligning your lectures with your course outline and your LEARN material will go a long way
  - » Making connections within a course and between courses
- Adequate time allotted to cover material and allow for student interaction (How to do this in a core required course?)
  - » Questions

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INSTRUCTOR AS A TEACHER CONTINUED…

- “Know your stuff”
- Indicate to the students that you care about their learning
- Teaching to engage all the students in your class
  - » Appreciate that different students have different learning styles
  - » Backgrounds (cultural, knowledge, etc.)

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COURSE

COURSE DESIGN

- Lectures well-planned and well-delivered
  - » Aligning your lectures with your course outline and your LEARN material will go a long way
  - » Making connections within a course and between courses
- Adequate time allotted to cover material and allow for student interaction
  - » Questions
- How to deal with comments like “Goes too fast” and “Goes too slow” in the same class?
- Teaching to engage all the students in your class
  - » Different learning styles
  - » Backgrounds (cultural, knowledge, etc.)

USE A MIDTERM EVALUATION

1) Please write down one thing you would like the instructor or the class to **keep** doing.

2) Write down one thing you would like the instructor or the class to **stop** doing.

3) Write down one thing you would like the instructor or the class to **start** doing.

4) On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being low and 5 being high, how is the course going for you?

RESOURCES

Interpreting and Working with Your Course Evaluations. The Center for Teaching and Learning, Stanford University.

Student Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness: Considerations for Ontario Universities. Mary Kelly, Wilfrid Laurier University.

Student Course Evaluations: Research, Models and Trends. Summary of Student Course Evaluations: Research, Models and Trends. Pamela Gravestock and Emily Gregor-Greenleaf, Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, 2008.

Using Mid-Term Feedback. Centre for Teaching Excellence teaching tip sheet.

The Torment of Teaching Evaluations. The Chronicle of Higher Education. March 24, 2003.

HELP AVAILABLE FROM CTE

- Arrange for CTE to visit your class
  - » Request a teaching observation with or without a video record.
  - » Report can be tailored to your specific needs/request (what would you like us to focus on?)
- Teaching Tips on CTE website
  - » Listed as a quick link on homepage (right-hand side)
  - » Search using specific words of phrases or browse the tip categories
- Monica Vesely:
  - » EV1 326, ext.31721
  - » mvesely@uwaterloo.ca

QUESTIONS?