

SEEKING STUDENT FEEDBACK

Student feedback can be easy to dismiss. Often, we only hear from students whose perspectives represent one end of the spectrum or the questions we're asking don't produce responses that are helpful for improving our teaching. Below are three strategies you can use to get better feedback from students throughout the semester.



Check out [Encouraging Students to Give Feedback](#) in *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*.

PREP BEFORE PROBING

Prepare students to give helpful feedback. Assure students responses are anonymous (and ensure they are). Explain why feedback is important (e.g., you're committed to continuous improvement) and provide examples of how you've made changes in the past. Finally, provide them with comments that are and are not helpful. For example, "I didn't like the lectures" is not helpful, but "the lectures would have been more helpful if they elaborated instead of repeated the reading" is.

STOP, START, CONTINUE

*If you decide to collect feedback beyond course evaluations (a great idea!), one way to get broad-ranging responses while still providing guidance is to ask students what you should **stop** doing to better support their learning, what you should **start** doing to better support their learning, and what you should **continue** doing to support learning. This works best as a mid-semester checkpoint, but also at the end of the semester for revising the course for future students.*



To ensure anonymous responses, consider using a [free online tool](#).



Check out [Turning Midterm Evaluations into a Metacognitive Pause](#) (by our very own Gillian Parrish!).

SOLICIT SPECIFICS

If you're not getting helpful feedback on course evaluations, supplement with your own questionnaire that asks, specifically, about your instructional methods and materials. Identify for students the strategies you used and ask which were most helpful for learning and which could be improved. You might say, "We used group projects, peer discussions, individual reflections, mini-lectures, and guest speakers to learn course concepts. Which of these were most helpful to your learning and why? Were any of these ineffective at helping you to learn and why?"

USING STUDENT FEEDBACK

It can be hard to know what to do with student feedback when we receive it. If you're doing more up front to get quality feedback, that should make it easier to actually use the feedback to make changes. Beyond that, here are a few tips and resources for approaching the process of using student feedback to improve teaching.



Check out [Questions for Bringing Your Instructional Practices Into Focus](#)

REFLECT

Before reading student feedback, take time to reflect. What do you think is working well? What are some areas for improvement? How do you think students experience the class? This can prepare you to see student feedback as an additional input into a reflective improvement process you've already begun. It also allows you to compare your perspectives to your students, which can be informative.

ANALYZE & SUMMARIZE

Analyze student responses with the goal of identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Review student comments/ratings one by one and as a whole. Look for themes within a course and also across courses to identify strengths and opportunities in your teaching, generally. Compare student themes to your own reflections. Once you've captured themes, make a list of the key take-aways that could lead to actions (i.e., stop, start, continue).



Check out [How Faculty Recognized for Teaching Excellence Interpret and Respond to Student Ratings of Teaching](#)



Check out [Small Teaching](#) or [Teaching at Its Best](#)

PLAN FOR ACTION

Take-aways in hand, consider what changes might be worth making to improve student learning. Consider getting feedback on ideas for changes from peers, your dean, the Learning Academy, or students. Choose changes that have the potential to make the most impact. Consider what learning resources you might need to achieve these changes. Set improvement goals and draft a plan for reaching them. In your plan, include how you will assess the impact of the changes you make.