

How Can I Use Frequent Student Feedback to Improve My Courses?

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Sample Survey After the First Major Test or Paper

To be completed anonymously

1. Having seen your first paper/test grade, are you pleased with your progress in this class?
2. How many hours a week do you spend studying/preparing for this class?
3. How do you spend your study time for this class? (studying alone, with friends, at the library, please explain)
4. Which activities/presentations have helped you to understand the course material the best? The least?
5. What suggestions do you have for lecture/presentation/activities that would help you to learn this material?
6. If you were to complete the end-of-course evaluation today, what would you write about the course?
7. Why did you choose this course at this time in your college program?

Discussion Questions About Getting Feedback Early

1. How valid is this feedback? Will the students who expect a low grade simply give me negative comments?
2. How do I respond to the students' feedback surveys? Should I summarize what they have said and let them know what I can do to meet their needs?
3. I know that some students will tell me that they want lots of hints about upcoming tests, and for me to tell them exactly what they need to get from the readings. I feel that I shouldn't "spoon feed" information to college students. How do I respond to their feedback if this is the case?
4. What do I do if some students reply that my course is too hard and others respond that it is too easy? Do I plan for middle of the road?
5. I received some really good feedback when I did this exercise with a large general education class. Can I use this feedback in my end-of-year review as an example of success (or to help my case for tenure)?
6. If I simply can't make a change suggested by student feedback, should I tell the students that, and why?

Resources for Further Reading

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010).

How learning works: 7 research-based principles for smart teaching. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Barkley, E. F. (2010). *Student engagement techniques: A handbook for college faculty.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

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Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Gabriel, K. F. (2008). *Teaching unprepared students.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Lang, J. M. (2008). *On course: A week-by-week guide to your first semester of college teaching.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

Nilson, L. B. (2010). *Teaching at its best: A research-based resource for college instructors* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.