INFORMAL UNIT EVALUATION
Learning and Teaching
Quick Guide

MACQUARIE University
SYDNEY · AUSTRALIA

LEARNING AND TEACHING
STAFF DEVELOPMENT

In addition to the centrally administered TEDS instruments there are multiple methods that can be used to gather evaluation data from students about learning and teaching in a unit.

EVALUATING TEACHING

Timely gathering of evaluation data from students will assist teachers to enact changes during the session rather than waiting until the end when it will be too late to help the current cohort. It is easily to forget those 'ah-hah' moments you have when teaching or marking regarding improvements. Plan within the teaching team to seek timely information and enact on evaluation data:

1. Give students opportunities to provide feedback on the unit whist it is in progress. Encourage students to talk with teaching staff when problems are encountered. A question or comment received from a student, or observed pattern of behaviour from students should be a trigger to consider if additional information or changes are need to unit materials or procedures.
2. Make notes of issues that can be addressed and, if applicable, communicate these to the unit convenor.
3. Enact a plan to implement change in a timely manner – that is as soon as practicable. Note that forum posts will be wiped away when the unit is rolled over for the next session and emails are easily misplaced. As such it is best to update unit site material, instructions or to create a dedicated FAQ 'page' will that remain.
4. Communicate to students in writing outlining the changes that have been made, especially if this applies to assessment tasks. This could be via a group email, a forum post that includes a link to the updated information or as part of the unit guide in the case of changes made for the next offering.

EXPLICIT EVALUATION METHODS

The one or more of the following methods can be utilised by teachers in classrooms or online:

- **Quick polls**: in class pool questions using hands up or online audience response tools such as poll in Zoom or a 'choice' activity in iLearn.
- **Minute paper**: An in class activity where students write in a focused manner over a short period of time. Focused questions could be "What has worked well so far?" and "What needs improving?" These can be done on paper in class and handed up as students leave or done online using tools such as Padlet, or iLearn quiz or assignment activity using a text response box.
- **Lesson tool**: Add an open text question at the end of the Lesson tool in iLearn. This is good way to gather contextual information when students are doing self-paced activities. The Lesson tool can be used to create interactive self-paced online lectures, readings or formative tasks. See iLearn quick guides for how.
- **Short surveys**: teachers can offer in class pen-on-paper surveys or use the Questionnaire tool in iLearn.
- **Early Experience TEDS survey** can be ordered to gather mid session evaluation data from students (see link below).

- **Peer observation:** The open classroom scheme provides an opportunity to seek feedback on teaching from peers or to pick up ideas by observing other's teaching (see link below for further guidance).

Note: if using iLearn tools to gather evaluation data, be sure to set the activity to zero marks or place it in a gradebook category set up for non-graded items (see link below for how to do this).

IMPLICIT EVALUATION METHODS

Gathering evaluation data from activity that is already occurring in a unit is an efficient method of making improvements. Look out for opportunities such as:

- **Email**: Unsolicited feedback from students via email – both good and bad. Create an 'evaluation' folder in your email and move these emails to that folder.
- **Forums**: student questions in iLearn forums can provide triggers to improve unit materials.
- **Zoom chat**: Where students ask questions or make comments related to the unit design. Save the chat log before closing the session.
- **Hallway discussions**: Students often talk to each other or to teaching staff in informal contexts. The content of these discussions can provide indicators of difficulties or pain points. Make a quick reminder note.
- **During marking**: Despite best-laid plans, markers may notice patterns of mis-understanding or incorrectly submitted tasks. This is a good opportunity to enact a plan for change in time for the next task or session.

FORMAL EVALUATION SURVEYS

The centrally administered TEDS instruments for end of session surveys include a unit focused LEU survey or teacher focused LET survey. An Early Experience Survey (EES) intended for use mid session is also available. The LET and ESS need to be ordered a fortnight prior to its use (see the link below for further information).

Explore this topic further ...

iLearn Quick guide: Lesson https://goto.mq/qg-ilearn-lesson
iLearn Quick guide: Questionnaire https://goto.mq/qg-ilearn-qaire
MQ student survey Policy https://goto.mq/student-survey-policy
Non-graded iLearn activities https://goto.mq/non-graded-ilearn
Peer observation guidance https://goto.mq/peers-obs-2022
TEDS surveys https://goto.mq/evaluationmethods
Using Minute papers https://goto.mq/useminutepapers

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