

Gathering Student Feedback

[Research on the impact of student feedback on teaching](#) suggests that student feedback can be a strong motivator for improving the effectiveness of your course. This page outlines best practices for gathering formative feedback from students during the quarter.

Also, consider [this summary of Stanford's end-term feedback process](#) for best practices for gathering summative feedback from students after the quarter has ended.

Gathering feedback throughout the duration of the course

Most commonly, student feedback is conducted in the middle of the quarter (Weeks 4 through 6). However, you can encourage students to give ongoing feedback throughout the quarter, especially if you have the capacity to examine and respond to it. Feedback can also be gathered at the beginning of the quarter, as a way to understand your students' expectations going into the course. Here are a few ways you can gather feedback from students, organized by when you can deploy them.

Start-of-quarter feedback

Introductory conversations

During your first class, you can ask students about their experience with previous classes. This is useful as a way to learn about students' expectations and to set norms for the class.

Here are some specific questions you can consider asking:

- What was your favorite learning experience in a classroom, and what are some things that contributed to that?
- What was a class learning experience that you think could be improved upon, during the previous year or quarter?
- What was your best experience working in teams, learning remotely (or any special features of your class that you would like feedback on), and what are some things that contributed to that?

You can ask students to take turns answering or put students in groups of 2 or 3 to discuss the questions before sharing their thoughts with the larger group. If the latter, consider assigning a notetaker to make sure every idea is recorded, especially if you have limited time to listen to each group after the discussion.

Online surveys

The above questions could also be asked through an online survey (for example, on Google Forms or Canvas). To ensure students respond to the survey, consider setting aside class time for students to complete the survey.

For questions where you want to share answers with the rest of the class, [PollEverywhere](#) can be a good option.

For more robust question types, survey flows, and analytics reports consider using [Qualtrics](#).

Mid-quarter feedback

Small Group Feedback Sessions

During this session, a trained evaluator from the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) comes to your class for the last 20 minutes of a session. The session is conducted in your absence. Students are organized into small groups and each group discusses and comes to a consensus on the following questions:

- What is contributing to their learning in the class?
- What can be improved?
- What can you, as a student, do to improve the course?

[!\[\]\(4186b6ce3a1c83eabb297c1bfd00309c_img.jpg\) Back to Top](#)

The evaluator then resolves and clarifies contradictions among groups, and records the number of groups and the number of students who agree with each idea. They summarize the responses and present them to you in a private consultation.

This method is useful in getting candid responses from your students. During the consultation, the evaluator can also work with you on responding to the feedback.

Online surveys using CTL's templates

The Center for Teaching and Learning provides useful templates for mid-quarter online feedback surveys. You can deploy them through [Canvas](#) (which can be imported into your course under 'Quizzes') or [Google Forms](#). Consider setting aside some time during class so all students have an equal opportunity to complete the survey.

Some questions included in these templates are:

- What is going well in this class and contributes to your learning?
- What is going well with the group work, remote learning (or any special features of your class that you would like feedback on) in this course so far?
- What could use improvement? If not already obvious, what specific changes do you suggest?
- What can you, as a student, do to make this course even more successful?
- Thus far, how would you rate this course?

Continuous feedback

Exit tickets

Exit tickets are short written responses that students complete at the end of a course session. In in-person classrooms, students may write their responses on a small card and turn them in as they leave the classroom. In online environments, it may be a quick student poll, forum post, or comment in the chat box. Exit tickets are an opportunity to get feedback from students throughout the course. You can consider making the exit tickets part of the final grade to encourage students to fill them out.

Here are some specific questions you can consider asking:

- How does the current workload align with your expectations for the class?
- How useful is the lecture, discussion section, or homework this week?
- What are you currently confused about?
- What has been your favorite or least favorite moment in the class so far?

Responding to feedback

Responding to feedback shows that you care about the students' opinions, increases class buy-in for implemented changes, and helps students understand why certain policies are in place. ([This piece by Dr. Maryellen Weimer](#) describes more reasons to talk to students about their feedback.)

Here are some [recommendations for responding to online feedback](#) from the Student Affairs website.

Respond quickly to student feedback

Aim to respond to your students' feedback at the next class meeting.

Consider both positive and negative comments

It is easy to be swayed by negative feedback, so be sure to review the positive feedback as well. To address suggestions for improvement, you can group them into three categories:

- Those you can change this quarter, for example, the turnaround time on homework assignments
- Those that must wait until the next time the course is offered, for example, the textbook
- Those that you either cannot, or for pedagogical reasons, will not change, for example, the topic sequence.

Consider asking a colleague or a CTL teaching consultant to help you identify options for making changes.

Let students know what, if anything, will change as a result of their feedback

Aim to do this in the class after the feedback session, or after the survey deadline. Students appreciate knowing that their voice has been heard. Some things you can address include:

- Clarify any confusions or misunderstandings about your goals and their expectations. For example, students might want sections to be a review of the lecture, while you intend for sections to focus and deepen their knowledge of a particular topic.

- Briefly talk about which suggestions you will implement this term, which need to wait until the next time the course is offered, and which you will not act upon and why.
- Let students know what they can do to help improve their experience, by reiterating suggestions that they made during the feedback session. You can also make suggestions based on their feedback. For example, if they report that they are often confused, invite them to ask questions more often.

Research, scholarship of teaching & learning, and online resources consulted

- Jonas Flodén (2017). The impact of student feedback on teaching in higher education. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education , 42:7, 1054-1068, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2016.1224997>
- Teaching Evaluation & Student Feedback
- Benefits of Talking with Students about Mid-Course Evaluations