The student course evaluations are just one of many types of evaluation that can be done in a classroom. Depending on the question that you want answered, they might be the right evaluation technique or they might not provide the information you seek. When considering evaluation techniques to use, it is very important to know your goal.

**Reasons for doing evaluation:**

- you are a brand new teacher and you feel like you don’t know what you are doing;
- you are a seasoned teacher and you feel like you are in a rut;
- you have radically changed your approach to a class and don’t know if it is working;
- you have a promotion coming up and you need evidence that you are an excellent teacher

**Who can do an evaluation?**

Evaluation can be done by your peers, staff and faculty associated with the Centre for Teaching and Learning, your students or yourself.

You can ask a colleague or staff and faculty associated with the Centre for Teaching and Learning to:

- watch one or more classes;
- read over all course outlines and handouts;
- talk to your students.

A written critique from your colleague is useful as it can be submitted in annual reports, applications, and serves as a reminder of what about your teaching you want to keep and what you want to change.

There are many ways of involving students in the evaluation of your teaching. The most common form is a survey that is multiple choice with spaces for comments. These can be administered both on paper and electronically. WebCT has an anonymous survey facility.

Other techniques for evaluation by students include:

- in-class dialogue on teaching;
• exam averages - they are related to your teaching but high averages don’t necessarily mean great teaching;
• casual conversations with students in the hallway;
• daily critiques. Have each student write one sentence on the main topic of the lecture at the end of the lecture. Do the students agree with you on what the main topic of the lecture was?
• student logs recording work done and work habits;
• have students write tables of contents for their notes;
• have students write minute papers. Take five minutes at the end of class for the students to summarize the class content. Check out the website at Southern Illinois University for their description of the one minute paper: http://www.siue.edu/~deder/assess/cats/minpap4.html.

You can evaluate your own teaching. You do not have to go to others to evaluate your own teaching. Simply stop and think about how you teach and why you teach. You may be surprised by what you learn. Another form of self-evaluation is to have your lecture video or audio taped. Watching yourself will show you your habits.

What to evaluate?

Colleagues/CTL staff and associated faculty can help you evaluate:
• lecture pacing and organization
• lecture/seminar delivery style
• correspondence between your desired student outcomes and your assessment techniques
• course outlines, handouts, powerpoint slides

Evaluations can take place throughout the term and are used to get feedback from students but be careful about the questions you ask your students. Consider what is it that motivates your evaluation? Questions you can pose to your students can include:

• Why are you in this class?
• What did you find hard?
• What did you find easy?
• Are you bored in class?
• Why do you participate in class discussions?
• Why do you not participate in class discussions?
• How much time do you spend on each component of this course?
• Are you using the resources available?
• What is your background?
What type of questions do you want to ask your students? The answer to this should be motivated by why you are doing the evaluation. When you start the process you can ask yourself questions to help you focus the evaluation:

- What is the physical environment you are teaching in? Does it matter that you are in Canfor Theatre?
- How many students do you have?
- Is this a required class?
- Are the students all using computers?
- Is this a lecture, a computer lab, a wet lab or a course in the woods?

The answer to these questions may drastically change the type of evaluation you want to do. Three hundred comments at the end of every class are probably unmanageable but 10 might be useful.

**When to do an evaluation?**

Evaluation can be done throughout the semester. Student surveys can be done at the beginning, middle and end of a course. Peer reviews or videotaping can be done anytime. Self evaluation can happen all the time!

For example:

- You can use the one minute essay after any lecture or seminar to see if the students had picked up the key points in the lecture.
- You can ask a series of background related questions at the beginning of the term to get a sense of your audience.
- And of course you can have a summative evaluation at the end of the course.
- A program could also do a survey of graduating students to get feedback on the program as a whole.

If you do extra evaluation, be prepared to act on the feedback you get. Students notice if you ask how you are doing and then don’t change your behavior.

**Course Evaluation Plan**

Create a worksheet answering the questions below to help you decide on the form of your next evaluation. When you have completed the worksheet, ask yourself if the comments you wrote are consistent. For example, having your Chair visit your class, as your choice of evaluation technique, might not be the best way to find out how much time your students are spending on each assignment.

**Course Evaluation Plan**

Course Name: ____________________
Course Year: ____________________
State your goals for evaluating this course. For example:
- You want to see if students understood key concepts
- You want to increase class attendance
- You want to see whether active learning techniques have increased class engagement
- You want better summative evaluations

What evaluation technique do you want to try? (e.g. Peer review, videotaping, students, write journals, one minute essay, mid-semester evaluations on the web.)

State the questions that you want answered and who you want to answer them. You might ask a colleague “how do I improve my teaching” but asking the same question of a student will give you limited insights. Be specific with the students. Ask, for example: Do I use the blackboard well? How many hours did you study for the midterm? Did I deliver the lecture in an organized manner?

Overall, using different kinds of evaluation techniques throughout the semester can give you immediate and useful feedback. It shows the students that teaching excellence matters to you.

Resources

- If you search for *Evaluating Teaching Performance* on the web you will find many informative sites including:
  - [http://www.tlc.eku.edu/tips/evaluating_teaching/](http://www.tlc.eku.edu/tips/evaluating_teaching/)
  - [http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm](http://honolulu.hawaii.edu/intranet/committees/FacDevCom/guidebk/teachtip/teachtip.htm)
  - [http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cte/getfeedback/](http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cte/getfeedback/)