Evaluating Your Teaching and Courses

“[E]valuation is an inherent part of good teaching” (Fink, 1999).

Evaluating your teaching is crucial to further developing your learning and teaching skills, and also to recognising good teaching practice - that is, teaching that supports and encourages student learning. As a teacher you usually have a sense of how a class has gone, but evaluation allows you to more effectively gauge the success or otherwise of specific activities, and of your teaching in general. The feedback that you gather through both formal and informal evaluation of your teaching can also form an important part of your teaching portfolio.

There are many different means by which you can evaluate your teaching. Formal evaluation at UNSW is done through the Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement (CATEI) process. CATEI questionnaires are completed by students at the end of courses. Each course within a School will be evaluated every 2nd year, and each permanent member of the teaching staff will have their teaching evaluated on an annual basis.

If you are a sessional teacher, the CATEI course evaluations that your School conducts will provide you with an opportunity for feedback on your teaching. However, you are also entitled to request a CATEI teaching evaluation for yourself, and your School has a responsibility to provide you with assistance in this. Contact the CATEI coordinator in your School for further information.

School CATEI coordinators:
www.ltunsw.edu.au/content/sessional_staff/sch_contact.cfm?ss=0

You can also access more detailed information by downloading the booklet: The CATEI Process Information for staff and students:
www.unsw.edu.au/learning/pve/CATEI.pdf

or by visiting the Learning and Teaching Unit website:
www.ltunsw.edu.au/content/course_prog_support/catei.cfm?ss=0
You can also evaluate your teaching in informal ways. This could involve collecting evidence yourself, collecting evidence from your students, or collecting evidence from peers, colleagues and mentors. Evaluation can be conducted throughout your course to allow you to act on student feedback (Morss and Murray, 2005).

Collecting evidence yourself

- Teaching diary: you can keep a record of what you do, your rationales and reflections, student responses, and what student responses reveal.

- Videotaping a practice session, followed by discussion with peers: you can set up a video recorder in class to give yourself feedback, but remember also to explain and ask permission of students since they may appear on video.

- Audiotaping: audiotaping is useful if there is something in your voice or speech that you want to work on.

- Informal notes: making notes directly onto your lecture notes to yourself.

- Self-observations: make notes.

- Personal pro forma; could be electronic.

- Keeping a file, getting organised, looking at others’ files.

- A self-evaluation checklist to keep you focused (e.g. Did I ask questions which stimulated lively discussion? Did I manage the time well? Did students all participate in discussion and tasks? Were there any difficulties? What would I change if I was to do this again?)

- Learning log: note learning goals and achievements.
## Collecting evidence from your students

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<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>The one-minute paper</td>
<td>Students write brief, anonymous answers to 1 or 2 questions right at the end of the class (e.g. what is one thing you learned? What is the one thing you are confused about? What was the clearest moment in this class? Which moment was the least clear?). Analysing their responses allows you to gather useful feedback on how the students are learning, as well as to identify areas where they are having difficulties.</td>
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<td>Post-it notes</td>
<td>Give each student three Post-it notes. On one they could write ‘learned’, on another ‘need to know more about’ and on the third ‘don’t understand’ (you can vary these prompts to suit your needs). Ask your students to write a response to the prompt on each Post-it, and to stick the Post-its on the door or wall as they leave the room. You collect and sort them and quickly learn something about what they are thinking about both the learning and the teaching.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Short letter</td>
<td>Ask students to write a note or short letter to a friend about what they are learning in your class, or about what they like or don’t like about your classes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overhead quizzes</td>
<td>Put a few questions on an overhead transparency or onto a PowerPoint slide. Number them so that students can simply write down the numbers on a slip of paper, put their answers next to them, and pass them to the end of the row for collection. This can either be used for quick feedback on learning, to see if students are understanding what you hoped they would, or for feedback on teaching, by establishing what students like and don’t like about your teaching.</td>
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Collecting evidence from peers, colleagues and mentors

- Asking peers and experienced colleagues to give you feedback by:
  - observing your teaching and focusing on key areas that you would like feedback on
  - looking at your students’ work
  - reviewing your teaching materials
- Ask if you can review others’ materials.

Adapted from: Morss and Murray (2005)

More information:
Reflecting on Your Teaching
www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/teaching_support/reflecting.cfm?ss=0

Peer Observation of Teaching
www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/teaching_support/peer_observation.cfm?ss=0

Gaining and Responding to Feedback on Teaching
www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/teaching_support/feedback.cfm?ss=0

Course and Teaching Evaluation and Improvement Process (CATEI)
www.ltu.unsw.edu.au/content/course_prog_support/catei_process.cfm?ss=0

References
- Wilson, S., Scoufis, M. and Weiss (Eds.) (2002). Exciting and Engaging Students’ in Their First Year at UNSW, University of New South Wales.