

Getting Feedback from Students: Activities

“Class Types”: Small < 50, Large > 50, Discussion Section = 20-25

Technique	Class Type	Class Activity
Exit Slip	Small, Discussion	Distribute a piece of paper with a question at the top. Have students spend 5 minutes responding at the end of class and place their slips in an envelope as they exit the classroom. Give a summary of the feedback and your response at the next class meeting.
Muddiest Point	Small, Discussion	Distribute a blank notecard and ask students to respond to a question, typically about the learning material from the class. “Muddiest Point” refers to the class material that the student may still find unclear.
Think---Pair---Share	Small, Large, Discussion	Pose the question and have students take a moment to reflect and write down their thoughts. Then have them discuss in pairs or small groups. Use notecards or a student response system to capture main points from groups, or simply open up the conversation and ask for verbal responses.
Clicker Question (helpful for larger classes)	Small, Large	Use during class to gauge whether or not students are ready to move on to the next topic. Use at the end of class to gather general feedback.
Individual Reflection (good for challenging moments)	Small, Large, Discussion	When something in class becomes challenging and you are not sure how to resolve it, pause the class. Have students take five minutes to reflect on the issue and make their own notes. You can then resume the discussion, or collect the feedback and plan to revisit the conversation next class after you have had time to consider the issue, consult with a colleague, and are better prepared to address the issue.
Set Up a Feedback Climate on the First Day	Small, Large, Discussion	In addition to office hours, offer students a mechanism to provide you feedback anonymously at any time during the semester. Start the conversation with “I hope you would come and speak with me directly if you have feedback so we can discuss it openly. However, if you really prefer to keep it anonymous, I still want to hear it...” Discuss with students the importance of giving and receiving feedback effectively and model an openness towards continuous improvement.

Technique	Class Type	Class Activity
Weekly Wrap-Up	Small, large, discussion	Design a short wrap-up activity in CCLE (questionnaire tool or feedback tool) that asks students to reflect on their learning for the week. Using weekly learning objectives as a guide, help students assess their own progress, and ask for feedback on opportunities to strengthen the unit's course materials. This strategy also highlights your thoughtfulness around alignment of the learning objectives, activities, and assignments. For large classes, consider using mostly multiple choice questions if you are concerned about time needed to review.
Pre-Class Check for Understanding Questions	Small, large, discussion	Gauge student preparedness (and enforce accountability) by starting each class with a short 1-5 question exercise to assess their understanding of the material. Consider providing questions in advance so students have the opportunity to thoroughly prepare for discussion. Use clickers for large classes.
Reflection on Activity or Assignment	Small, large, discussion	Ask students for direct feedback about the effectiveness of a specific activity or assignment. This type of question could be a stand-alone, or added to a weekly wrap-up survey.
Offer a Choice of Formats for Activities or Assignments	Small, Discussion	Not sure which format to use (e.g. research paper or multimedia project?). Allow students an opportunity to choose. This will provide you with some data on the pros/cons of different formats, which may help you make a more informed decision about a format for future courses.
Structured Mid-Quarter Survey	Small, large, discussion	In addition to end of quarter feedback, ask for feedback at mid-quarter. CEILS has examples of mid-quarter evaluations and can help you import into CCLE and customize one for your course with minimal effort. Email media@ceils.ucla.edu for more information.
Single Feedback Questions Sprinkled Throughout Course	Small, large, discussion	Add a few simple one question surveys throughout the course (in CCLE use the "feedback" or "questionnaire" tools). The question could be as simple as "Please share any feedback on how the course is going so far." Another example could be "On a scale from 1-10, how challenged are you feeling in this course?" The idea is that it should only take students a few seconds to respond but will help you gauge the tone of the class from the students perspective.
Colleague Facilitated Focus Group	Small, large, discussion	Have a colleague come to one of your classes for the last 15 minutes to facilitate a focus group with your students (you will leave the room). Let students know in advance so they can reflect and prepare more specific and helpful feedback. The focus group could be an informal or a formally structured activity. Colleague provides you with a summary of the student comments (with no individual names of students attached).

Getting Feedback from Students: Questions to Ask

Beginning of the Quarter (Pre-course survey, first day, first week)

What do you wish your college instructors knew about you?

What is something that you know you need to work on as a college student? How might you develop that skill in this course?

What are some specific strategies that other instructors have used that have helped you be successful in past courses?

What is something that has *not* worked well for you in past courses?

Why did you sign up for this course? What are you hoping to learn by the end of the semester?

After our first day of class, do you have any concerns about your ability to succeed in this course?

During the Quarter

What are three things you learned today?

What do you like most about this course? What would you like more of in this course?

What do you like least about this course? What would you like less of?

Is there anything about the structure of the course or organization of the course material that could be adapted to help your learning? (e.g. having assignments due by midnight rather than 5pm)

How are things going? Please be constructive and specific so that I can identify what parts are going well and also some ways I might improve the course during our remaining time together.

Feedback on a Specific Activity

Today we did a new activity [*working in groups*]. What did you like about this activity? If we do a similar activity in the future should I consider any modifications?

What went wrong? OR This is getting intense!

(Using Notecards/Exit Slip) Many students did poorly on this [*assignment, exam*] and I would like to better understand what happened. What about the assignment was most challenging? Is there anything that seemed unfair? What kind of guidance would have helped you be better prepared? Please provide some specific feedback so that I can reflect on what steps to take to help students be more successful in this course in the remaining weeks.

(During a discussion) Time out! This discussion is getting heated and I want to be sure we all have a chance to process our own thoughts and ideas. I want everyone to take out a piece of paper and reflect individually on your thoughts on this topic for the next five minutes, jotting down your notes. Then we will (*discuss in pairs, small groups, pick it up next class*) OR I will collect the notes, review, and plan an activity for next class to help us talk about this in a more structured way.

Using Polling

Are we ready to move on?

- A. I'm totally lost
- B. one more example would help
- C. yes, we can move on
- D. this is too easy, go faster/skip ahead

What did you think about the reading for today?

- A. I did not do the reading.
- B. I read, but I did not understand it.
- C. I understand the main concepts but have some questions.
- D. I have thought deeply about this material and I'm ready to discuss!

How should I teach the class today?

- A. Do the activities as a whole class
- B. Do the activities in small groups
- C. Let students work individually on the activity

Colleague Facilitated Focus Group Questions

The following are general questions to help start a focus group. Instructors may want to add course-specific questions that include topics like specific high-stakes assignments, prerequisite knowledge needed for the course, clarity on major course learning outcomes achievement, or other discipline specific questions.

What do you like most about this course? What do you like least about this course?

What are the instructor's strengths? What is the instructor doing well?

What can the instructor do differently to help you learn more in this course?

Do you come prepared for class (e.g. do the readings)? Why or why not?

Are the assignments clear?

Does the instructor make good use of the live class time together? Are the class lectures and activities well organized?

Do you understand the purpose of the assigned materials in the course? Do you feel you are assessed fairly for your work?

Do you feel you receive enough feedback on your work and progress in the course?

Is this course what you expected it to be? Why or why not? Would you recommend this course (or this instructor) to another student?

Do you feel you could give this feedback directly to the instructor? Why or why not?

What other feedback should I share with the instructor?

Note: A CEILS staff member or instructional consultant may be available to facilitate a focus group at the end of one of your classes or following the end of the quarter. Please contact media@ceils.ucla.edu if you would like more information.

General Tips and Strategies for Getting Student Feedback

- Include an open-doors/ open-ears policy about feedback in your course syllabus, letting students know that you want to hear feedback from them during the quarter and that they should not wait until the term ends.
- Discuss feedback on the first day of class – both in terms of how you want to help them to become better students and also that you want to continuously become a better instructor. Set the climate for a feedback friendly classroom.
- Always follow-up when feedback is provided and offer some kind of response. Students appreciate when their feedback is recognized. If students feel their feedback was ignored this could have a negative impact on student motivation and engagement.
- Consider feedback as a whole and do not get too upset by outliers. Even the very best instructors will get critical (and sometimes hurtful) feedback from a few students now and then.
- You do not have to respond to feedback in the moment. If you feel stuck or unsure of how to move forward, tell students you have heard their concerns and you need to take time to reflect and consider how to best incorporate their feedback.
- For challenging feedback, discuss with a colleague or with the appropriate UCLA department for more serious grievances.
- Keep in mind that it may take a lot of courage for a student to come to you with feedback. Even if you disagree, thank them for sharing and try to respond with this context in mind.
- Interactions with TAs are a very large part of the student experience. Encourage TAs to solicit feedback using appropriate methods from this guide. Observe TAs if possible, ask TAs for feedback on your teaching, and share feedback with your TAs on their own development throughout the quarter.
- These strategies for getting student feedback are examples of inclusive teaching pedagogies for diverse classrooms. You can include these strategies, feedback received, and resulting course improvements in your dossier.