Chapter 17

Strategies to Collect and Use Online Student Feedback: Improving Teaching through Formative Evaluation

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Learning Objectives

1. Write a rational for collecting Web-based student feedback. Include potential benefits for instructors.
2. Devise a likely schedule for collecting formative feedback online.
3. Describe the role of Web-based tools in collecting and disseminating student feedback.
4. Distinguish between the following data collection methods:
   a. Student feedback on teaching
   b. Interviews
c. Poll
d. Suggestion box

5. Compare student understanding of the course content to the feedback data collected from the following methods:
   a. One-minute paper
   b. Muddiest point
   c. Index cards
   d. Learning development audit

6. Devise a means to adapt each of the following traditional methods of collecting student feedback into a Web-based formative evaluation:
   a. Screening audio or video tape classes
   b. Reviewing lecture notes
   c. Student advisory groups

Abstract

This chapter explores innovative albeit informal methods of collecting data student feedback during online teaching and online learning.

Why Formative Evaluation?

Formative evaluation is a common technique in student assessment and can be a valuable technique for instructors to obtain feedback on their teaching. However, many institutions (mine included) do not require formative evaluation, relying instead on summative evaluation. This evaluation translates at Queen’s into an end-of-year course evaluation (questionnaire) which typically provides minimal feedback to the instructor and is by and large of no benefit to the students who actually completed the evaluation.

In contrast, using formative evaluation methods provides the instructor with information on how to improve their teaching practices, provide information to others (students, department head, promotion and tenure committee, future employer, etc.) and help to ensure that they have done a good job (Fink, 1995). Feedback from students in particular provides an instructor with rich data about how they are teaching and how students understand course material. In addition, collecting feedback from students encourages the student to be critical/reflective thinkers and helps them to develop a sense of ownership of their learning.

Formative evaluation plays an integral role in the instructional design process as it provides the instructor with continual feedback on the teaching process. Instructional
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