# Gathering Mid-term Student Feedback

# Survey Implementation Plan

Mid-term student feedback surveys are an excellent way to get feedback on which aspects of your course are working well (or not as well) to support your students’ learning, as well as concrete suggestions for improvement. Gathering mid-term student feedback can also help support a positive classroom climate. Asking your students for their feedback may help them feel heard and respected. In addition, communicating with your students about common themes that emerged in the feedback and any changes you plan to make in response to their feedback demonstrates your commitment to supporting their learning and success. Lastly, gathering student feedback at mid-term – rather than waiting until the end of the semester – allows you to make adjustments while the course is still in progress.

This implementation plan is designed to help you think through the logistics of gathering and processing mid-term student feedback. There are spaces to consider course characteristics, clarifying your goals for gathering student feedback, logistics, preparing questions, and planning for processing the feedback. We also include a template survey and additional example survey items. The Implementation plan concludes with guidance for processing the feedback and sharing feedback highlights with your students.

## Course characteristics

What are the situational factors that impact your course? (e.g., is it on campus or online? Is it a lower division or graduate-level class? How many students? Are students used to doing individual or group work? What learning activities do students complete during class time vs. outside of class? Are they familiar with taking quizzes or surveys online for your course? Do students bring devices with them to class? Is the Wi-Fi stable in your classroom?)

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## Clarify goals for gathering mid-term student feedback

Why are you collecting mid-term student feedback? What do you hope to learn or accomplish? Are you looking for overall feedback, feedback on a specific teaching practice or learning component (e.g., assessments, activities, readings), and/or feedback on the learning environment (e.g., interactions with other students, student sense of belonging)? Are you navigating any specific challenges or opportunities?

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## Logistics

What are the implementation logistics? When will you gather feedback? Will you allot class time for this or make it an out-of-class assignment? How much time will be allowed? Will students get credit for completing the survey (e.g., points for participation/engagement, counts as a quiz)? Will feedback be anonymous (recommended)? How will you communicate instructions to students (e.g., Canvas, Presentation slide)? What platform will you use to gather feedback (e.g., Canvas Surveys, Qualtrics, Google Forms, paper forms)?

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## Prepare questions

Prepare the questions that you will ask students. See the template survey and additional questions below (pages 4-6). Which, if any, of these would address your goals? Write additional questions as needed, e.g., are there aspects of your teaching or the learning environment that are of particular interest to you that are not among the examples? Be selective: choose items that align with your course characteristics and goals, ensure questions are ones that students are equipped to address, and don’t ask too many questions (we recommend no more than 10 questions total and only a few of them as free-response items). Consider course characteristics as well, in particular your class size may impact whether you ask scaled or free-response items (e.g., it may not be feasible to read through > 100 student responses to free response items for a large course).

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## Develop a plan for processing the feedback

When will you block out time to review and process the feedback? How much time can you allot to this? When will you plan to share feedback insights and changes you plan to implement with your students? Will you review the feedback yourself or pair with a peer or TA? (see below for more information on processing feedback (p. 7-8) and sharing feedback with students (p.8)).

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## Template survey

This template survey includes four suggested free response items. The next page includes alternative free response and scaled response items as well as links to a larger bank of mostly scaled response items.

Thank you for providing your honest and constructive feedback on your learning experiences in [course # and name]! I am looking for suggestions for improving the course and value your feedback. Your feedback is anonymous; you will receive credit for completing the questionnaire, but I will not know which students contributed which feedback [include specifics about credit, or update if the feedback is not anonymous or if they aren’t getting credit]. ***Be sure to submit your responses by [x time on day, date] to receive credit*** [build the due date into Canvas so that it appears in students’ to-do list].

Think back over the whole semester to date, and carefully consider how much you have learned and your experiences in this course more broadly. Think about the kind of feedback that will be helpful. Keep in mind that responses that are not related to your learning can diminish the value of your feedback. Specific constructive responses that focus on teaching practices and your experiences in the course are more useful than general critiques or praise ([examples of constructive feedback](https://crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/resource_files/Course%20Evaluation%20Guidance%20One-Pager.pdf)).

1. What aspect of this class has been **most** effective in supporting your learning? Please be specific about why that aspect has been effective.
2. What aspect of this class has been the **least** effective in supporting your learning? Please be specific about why that aspect has not been effective. Your feedback will be most helpful if you focus on factors that can be changed - e.g., particular assignments, activities, or teaching approaches, rather than things the instructor has no control over like class time and location.
3. What are some concrete, practical things that could be changed about this course that would enhance your learning experience in this class?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share? Remember that specific constructive responses that focus on teaching practices and your experiences in the course are more useful than general critiques or praise.

When you are ready to submit your responses, click the “submit” button below.

**Survey end message:** Thank you for providing feedback on [course #], your response has been recorded.

## Question bank of additional / alternative questions

Multiple select:

1. Which of the following has been the most useful to your ability to understand the course material and/or complete assignments? Select up to 3 items from the list below.
   1. [instructor generated list of specific teaching & learning activities they would like feedback on]

Free response:

1. What have you, the student, done so far that has helped your learning experience in this class? Please be specific on why it has been helpful.
2. What could you, the student, do differently to better support your own learning in this class?
3. What could students (not just you) do to improve the learning environment in the course?
4. What advice would you give future students as to what they can do to support their learning and succeed in this course? (I will share your ideas with future students).
5. Do you have any comments or suggestions on how to improve the classroom climate? The classroom climate may include the extent to which the learning environment is inclusive, respectful, and supportive of all students, as well as your own sense of belonging in this class.
6. Do you feel comfortable sharing your opinions, questions, and ideas in this course? Why or why not?
7. What are three things you have learned in the class so far? What is one thing you have learned in class that you did not expect to learn?
8. What concepts or ideas in this course do you feel you do not fully understand?

A set of alternative questions (would replace those in the template):

1. What is going well in class for you?
2. What is not going well in class for you?
3. What should we continue?
4. What should we start?
5. What should we stop?

If you prefer scaled response items, be sure to make all items have the same scale. We recommend using a 5-point scale: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neither agree nor disagree (3), agree (4), strongly agree (5). (But you may wish to switch to a 4- or 6- point scale, if you want to force students to lean one way or the other rather than remaining neutral). The following examples are drawn from [Lafayette College’s question bank](https://citls.lafayette.edu/mid-course-feedback-survey-question-bank/).

Please rate your agreement with the following statement(s):

1. I understand what is expected of me in this course.
2. I feel included in the class.
3. I feel comfortable asking questions in class when I do not understand something.
4. The instructor created a welcoming and inclusive environment.
5. There are a variety of course assignments that highlight different skills and abilities.
6. The assessments/assignments reflected what was covered in the course.

For even more examples, Syracuse University has a [question bank of more than 200 student feedback items](https://effectiveness.syr.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Item-Banks_Version-08-2020.pdf), organized by topic (e.g., course outcomes, student outcomes, course organization, grading, technology).

# Processing & Sharing Mid-term Student Feedback

*Note these steps will be completed after you have gathered feedback from your students.*

Free-response feedback may be *actionable* (focuses on specific practices with suggestions for change or what not to change and why), *descriptive* (e.g., describes learning experience but not with enough specificity to make it actionable), or unrelated to teaching and learning.

## Review & sort feedback

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| Action to take | Example comments |
| Throw out the comments **unrelated to teaching and learning** that do not provide you with useful information. | "This is the only course that fit into my schedule." |
| Divide **positive comments** into two groups, those that describe a specific aspect of the course and why it is helpful (actionable) and those that don’t tell you anything specific (descriptive). | **Specific/actionable**: “Prep tasks have been super effective in helping me learn as they allow me to first review the material before class and then talk about it during class.”  **Non-specific/descriptive**: "Best class ever" |
| Divide the **negative comments** into two groups: those you can change (actionable) and those that you cannot change (the latter may be out of your control or descriptive but not actionable). | **Can Change/actionable**: Redistribute the points for different assignments because of the amount of work that students perceived was required for each assignment.  **Cannot Change**: “This course was meh.” “Let students out of class early.” “Don’t meet on Fridays.” “Choose a room with windows.” |

Table adapted from Center for Teaching Excellence, Duquesne University

## Examine actionable feedback

Look for patterns in the actionable feedback (positive and negative). Scaled response items can also be considered here (see below for more considerations related to scaled response items). Consider using a highlighter or bold font to identify themes (e.g., phrases, teaching practices, assignments, experiences, etc., that are common). Try not to fixate on single negative comments and instead focus on feedback supported by many students. If you find tension between what you are doing (or think you are doing) and students’ perceptions about what you’re doing, it may mean that there are opportunities to be more explicit and transparent. There may also be comments that students intend to be negative but that you can savor as letting you know you’re doing your job, e.g. “we have to read a lot to do well in this course”.

## Considerations for scaled response items

Most common platforms for implementing mid-term student feedback (Canvas quizzes, Qualtrics, Google Forms) will generate visualizations for you. You can also download data if you prefer to create custom visualizations. As you review data from scaled survey items, consider the following.

* Response rates: if your response rates are low, interpret findings with caution as the students who completed the survey may not be representative of all the students who completed the course.
* Response distribution: Avoid just reviewing / reporting the average response for a given question as it may not be the most accurate representation of the data. Consider the distribution of responses, e.g., do most responses fall at one end of the scale or the other (skewed)? Or most responses cluster around two points on the scale (bimodal)? You may instead want to report the mode (most common rating) and provide detail to accurately characterize the distribution, e.g.: “For the question ‘I understand what is expected of me in this course.’, most students agreed, giving it a 4 or 5, with a mode of 5, with far fewer ratings of 3 or below.”
* Do not average responses across questions. Examine findings for each item separately.

## Reflect

You might consider the following prompts:

* What is going well?
* What are the opportunities for change?
* Is there anything you might be able to change this semester?
* Is there anything that you could change for future iterations of the course?
* Is there anything students could be doing differently?
* Is there anything you cannot (or will not) change? Why?

## Share Mid-term Student Feedback Highlights with Students

It is good practice to close the loop with your students so that they know you are listening to them and value their input. Consider expressing gratitude to them for the time and thought they put into their feedback, and share:

* What did you learn? (summarize by major theme)
* What can you / will you change? (if not this semester, for future classes)
* What are things that you cannot or will not change, and why?