

USING SURVEYS IN THE CLASSROOM: ASSESSING WHAT MATTERS TO YOU

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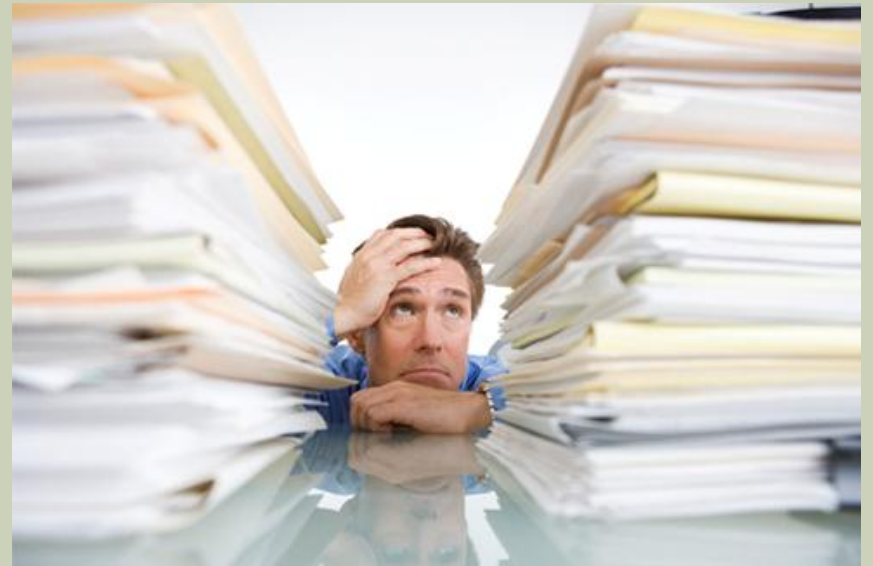
Faculty
Development
Workshop
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KNOWLEDGE TO LEAVE WITH TODAY

- What insights you might gain by adding an informal assessment in your course
- How to write clear, simple questions that get you the information you need
- How to get students invested in responding to your assessment in a timely and honest manner
- Why you should bring results back to share with the class

WHY BOTHER WITH ASSESSMENT?

- Assess progress on learning goals that are specific to your course or program
- Get early feedback to make changes and improve formal course evaluations
- Get insight into group projects and how people go about completing work
- Communicate concern and improve the class atmosphere



STEPS FOR A USEFUL CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT

1. Planning and developing the survey
2. Communicating objectives and setting expectations for students
3. Administering the survey
4. Interpreting the responses
5. Sharing the results

1. SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

- Seek alignment between:
 - Learning objectives on syllabus
 - Class activities
 - Informal survey assessment
 - Formal course evaluation
- Distinguish “must know” information from “would like to know” information
- Explore versus confirm your expectations?

1. SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

- What could we assess?
 - Attitudes, reactions, or values
 - *Perceived* learning or understanding
 - Behaviors (how students are doing work or using course content)
 - Results (what outcomes students attain based on course content)

- *Don't ask a question unless you are willing and able to act on the answer.*

1. SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

- Can your survey assessment help with your scholarship goals?
 - Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL)
 - Many publication outlets for good teaching research
- IRB approval required for data that you intend to publish or present – your own students are a protected population.

1. SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

- See handout for nuts & bolts of survey construction, but a few basic principles:
 - Don't collect data that you don't know how to handle
 - Avoid leading, pejorative language
 - Each item should speak to one concept or concern
 - For Likert scales (e.g., 1 = “strongly disagree” to 5 = “strongly agree”):
 - Between 5-7 response options is optimal
 - Balance out anchors so that the intervals between them are about as equal as possible
 - Each response should get its own verbal anchor

2. COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS

- To get useful data, students must accept that the survey is worthwhile and that honest responses are safe
- Things to clear up in class:
 - Why is this important? Why should a student put forth effort to respond?
 - When will you collect the data?
 - How will you use the data?
 - Will individual responses be identifiable?
- Make it clear that you understand they are busy and that you would not ask extra work of them lightly

3. ADMINISTRATION

- Best practices for getting a good response rate from students:
 - Clarify when the survey will be administered in advance
 - Administer the survey in class on your time, preferably on a day when you know that you will have strong turnout
 - Ask that people respond individually based on their own perceptions and experiences
 - Don't hover or rush the students while they respond to the survey



4. INTERPRETING DATA

- What you do here depends entirely on the types of questions you asked and measurements collected, and your level of comfort with data:
 - Read through open-ended comments
 - Look at averages and variability in quantitative data
- Look for trends, especially if responses are identified
 - Ex: majors vs. non-majors
- Don't dismiss individual concerns, but focus on consensus points

5. SHARING RESULTS

- Why should you bring results back to share with students?
 - Class results provide a normative standard for students that can help calm “lone malcontents”
 - Discussion creates opportunities for you to explain your choices for the course, which adds to students’ understanding of the big picture
 - This is a teachable moment – demonstrate accountability to your students
 - A discussion of class feedback can open up the atmosphere and set a new tone for the class moving forward
- Talk about both the good and the bad feedback!

5. SHARING RESULTS

- Don't overwhelm students with too much information
– what are the three biggest points that you want to bring back for discussion?
- Be mindful of anonymity, especially in very small classes
- Explain the reasoning behind unpopular elements that you must retain, or explain what you will do differently for elements that you are open to revising

EXAMPLES

- Group project feedback survey
- Preliminary evaluation (4 weeks in) for a new course
- Midterm evaluation in a small lab group with highly-mixed experience levels