

Constructive conversations about teaching and course enhancement

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The steps below may be executed separately or as part of a process to focus on course quality and student experiences of learning. Step 1 is a structured analysis process for dealing with student evaluations and related data so that a balanced, efficient and cost-effective approach to enhancing teaching and course content can be achieved. Step 2 is a simple observation of teaching for one or both peers where documents are currently available online. Step 3 puts it all together for peers to collaborate on completing the Course Improvement Plan(s).

1. Analysis of student evaluation data to determine effective change strategy

Student evaluation data can be hard to look at and sometimes painfully personal but with suitable time to prepare then a colleague may provide or assist with the creation of an objective analysis of that feedback. The trick is to look at every line from every student and look for ideas, issues, and actions rather than personal remarks.

1. Analyse all available course and teaching quality data about the previous offering of the course in order to set goal statements for improvement or attainment. When looking at student feedback it is important to look at every sentence to ensure that a balanced view of issues and not just the most provocative are considered. Try to be objective.
 - a. Look for affective statements:
 - i. What do stakeholders (students, colleagues) like and dislike about their experiences of the course and or teaching?
 - ii. Separate them into positive and negative affective statements
 - iii. Count how many times each affective statement arises in feedback
 - b. Look for action (verb) statements:
 - i. What do stakeholders suggest may be done or changed to improve quality?
 - ii. Count how many times each action is suggested
 - c. Look for issue statements:
 - i. What events or issues arose that affect the stakeholders' experiences of the course or teaching?
 - ii. Count how many times the issue or event was raised as an issue
2. Sort the issues, affective statements, and action statements on frequency so that the most frequent issues are at the top of the list. Addressing the most popular issues and actions is most likely to reap the most benefit in terms of impact on perceived course and teaching quality.
 - a. Collaboratively design interventions or ways of addressing most popular items
 - b. Optionally, look for similar issues and solutions in literature (Google Scholar is your friend)

2. Informal observing for generating discussion of teaching (generating ideas)

Whether participants take on a mentor-mentee or peer-to-peer relationship here is benefit in taking turn at the roles of both observer and observee in peer observation of teaching. For the observer it is a chance to see how a colleague tackles the different aspects of the classroom or online activities and to generate questions and ideas that may assist both parties' teaching. For the observee it is a way of collecting ideas to enhance teaching and the students' learning experiences from an objective

colleague. This process is framed as for a peer-to-peer relationship between colleagues but process parts such as observation and/or debrief may be dropped for the mentor-mentee partnership as desired.

1. Set an observation date for peer 1 and for peer 2
2. Prior to each observation send a briefing document with learning aims, lesson objectives, particular feedback areas of interest, and any other contextualizing information to assist the observer.
3. Observe classes
 - a. Take notes about
 - i. What seems to work well
 - ii. What does not seem to work so well
 - iii. What questions come to mind while observing
 - iv. What ideas you have to enhance the lesson
4. Meet to debrief observation with peer as soon as possible after the observed lesson and use non-confronting and supportive language to develop a constructive dialogue
 - a. **Before giving any feedback** get the observee to reflect on their performance by asking:
 - i. What worked?
 - ii. What didn't work so well?
 - iii. What would you do differently next time?
 - b. Use responses from reflection to find areas of agreement to open the discussion and **use a "sandwich" approach** to framing the discussion. This is sometimes called the KKK approach or "Kiss, Kick, Kiss".
 - i. Affirm and confirm strengths
 - ii. Ask questions about the things that did not seem to work so well and discuss how negatives may be converted or minimised
 - iii. Finish with a positive aspect of the lesson that stood out
5. Give the observation notes or a copy to the observed peer for their records

3. Informal observing as prelude to collaboration on Course Improvement Plans

At the end of each semester a teacher has amassed data relating to their experience of teaching the course (reflective journal – yeah sure), students experiences of teaching (SET), students experiences of the course (SEC), and possibly peer evaluations of teaching obtained through observation of classes. Collegial peer assistance can be applied to evaluating data, observing teaching and creating ideas toward the formulation of a course improvement plan (CIP).

1. Undertake a collegial analysis of recent student evaluation data as per section 1
2. Undertake informal observations as per the process in section 2
3. Collaborate on the construction of a Course Improvement Plan (for one or more courses and for one or both peers) using peer observation and analysis of previous student data as inputs to fill out the document.
4. Get your colleague's signature on your CIP