

# A Practical Manual For Evaluating Teaching In Higher Education

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The administrative staff at the Centre for Staff Development at the University of Wollongong<sup>9</sup> worked many long hours developing the technical side of the system at that institution. In the process, they discovered weaknesses in commercial survey systems and suggested improvements which are now being incorporated internationally. They developed procedures for administering questionnaires and reporting the results and managed the system with a high degree of integrity and security. This aspect of the evaluation of teaching is usually underestimated but, in our view, is of great importance.

We are grateful to AISHE, the All Ireland Society for Higher Education<sup>10</sup>, under whose imprint this work is now published to a wider audience. More generally, we appreciate the support of many friends and colleagues in completing this project. In particular, Maria Bolton prepared the original manuscript; David and Barry McMullin turned this into the "single source master" and processed it in diverse ways to produce both

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<sup>4</sup><http://www.ndp.ie/>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.heai.ie/>

<sup>6</sup><http://www.uow.edu.au/>

<sup>7</sup><http://www.murdoch.edu.au/>

<sup>8</sup><http://www.tcd.ie/>

<sup>9</sup><http://www.uow.edu.au/cedir/>

<sup>10</sup><http://www.aishe.org/>

the printed and online editions of the manual; and David Jennings kindly contributed the cover design.

We must also thank the many thousands of students who patiently, honestly and efficiently completed many questionnaires over many years. Sometimes they complained with justification that the improvements they suggested were not put into effect quickly enough and that they were not informed in specific terms of the results of surveys, but overall, they supported the system to an extent rarely acknowledged in the literature.

Finally, we must thank those who have laboured before us in this field. In particular, we thank those authors cited in this manual.

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## Preface

In 1995, Cashin noted that, 'There are now more than 1,500 references dealing with research on student evaluations of teaching.'<sup>12</sup> More generally, the literature on evaluation of teaching is much larger still and probably beyond the ability of any one person to master. So why would we want to add to it?

Firstly, because the literature is so vast, academics and others with a practical interest in evaluation of teaching find it difficult to know where to begin. Second, the literature is fragmented, with areas relating to evaluation of teaching at the institutional level, at the discipline level across nations, at the Department level and at the level of the individual teacher. Third, much of the literature is extremely detailed and of interest primarily to other researchers.

We believe that most academic staff, given the opportunity, will actively seek feedback on their teaching as an essential part of the process of reflection which underpins all professional practice. In this respect evaluation of teaching is directly analogous with the well-established systems for evaluation of research.

We further believe that, in the current climate, it is important that academic staff and administrative staff concerned with quality assurance and quality improvement have access to a manual which deals with the most important issues and provides a guide to good practice. Time is precious in academic life and we offer this manual as a substitute for reinventing the evaluation wheel.

Readers who wish to probe further should consult the excellent bibliographies contained in the works cited in this manual.

Each chapter of the manual is more or less self-contained and may be read in isolation from the others according to need. Chapter chapter1, however, contains a discussion of basic principles applicable to all other chapters.

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<sup>12</sup>Cashin, W. *Student ratings of teaching: The research revisited*. IDEA, Paper 32, 1995. [http://www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea\\_Paper\\_32.pdf](http://www.idea.ksu.edu/papers/Idea_Paper_32.pdf)



Note that the manual is available in both hardcopy and online<sup>13</sup> editions. The online edition includes both PDF (optimal for printing) and HTML versions (optimal for onscreen reading—particularly facilitating the following of hypertext links both within the manual itself and to external resources). Several of the appendices contain example forms and checklists: the online versions of these may actually be filled in electronically. (Unfortunately, current limitations of HTML browsers and PDF viewers mean that these filled-in versions cannot be easily saved for later reference; however, they can, at least, be subsequently printed.)

As formally detailed elsewhere, this work is released under the Creative Commons<sup>14</sup> Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 licence. This is deliberately intended to facilitate the widest possible distribution of the manual. In the print and online PDF versions, each chapter and appendix has its own miniature “imprint banner”, to facilitate “unbundling” of the work according to the needs of different usage contexts. The online HTML version is essentially unbundled already: referenced by hypertext links, and automatically indexed by web search engines. Thus, please feel free to use the manual, whether in whole or in part, as a resource that can be freely distributed, linked to, copied and shared with your colleagues—and yes, perhaps even with your students!

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

For many academics, the phrase ‘evaluation of teaching’ conjures up the notion of student surveys which ask impertinent questions about the quality of lectures. This notion may be reinforced by institutional practices or rumours about such practices but embodies serious misconceptions about best practice in evaluation and of the nature of teaching itself.

The concept of a ‘research-led university’ is relatively new and its implications are still being unravelled but one such implication should surely be that the university’s policies and practices should, wherever possible, be based on sound research rather than on myth and rumour.

Research into evaluation of teaching has produced an extraordinary number of publications from which a consensus has emerged on the main issues. This manual attempts to set out a number of the key elements of that consensus.

In this Introduction, we discuss the implications for evaluation of different conceptions of teaching, the purposes of evaluation and general methodological issues which will be treated further in subsequent chapters.

## 1.1 What is Teaching in Higher Education?

In recent years, there has been a re-examination of the nature of teaching in Higher Education. ? provides a readable account of the main issues which have emerged. In particular, he notes two polar conceptions or definitions of teaching:

1. Teaching is about transmitting knowledge from academic staff to students.
2. Teaching is making learning possible.

The first conception has been criticised as inadequate on a number of grounds but the only one which concerns us here relates to evaluation. The objection is that the definition focuses too narrowly on the role of the individual teacher in the classroom, the implication being that evaluation of teaching consists only in making judgments about the effectiveness of individual teachers in their role as instructor. Such judgments are a necessary part of comprehensive evaluation of teaching but are not sufficient.

Nevertheless, the fact that much of the evaluation literature refers to judgments about individual teachers in just one of their roles is testament to the ongoing hold the conception has in universities.

But consider the matter from the students' perspective. The quality and quantity of their learning depends on rather more than the teacher's input in the classroom. Access to a good library, access to computers which work, pleasant and appropriate working spaces and effective student support services are all obvious influences. Less obvious to the students perhaps, but no less significant, are Faculty and Department policies relating to curriculum design and assessment practices. Still less obvious may be institutional attitudes towards teaching which may be reflected in promotion policies and the level of financial and other support for teaching and learning.

When contemplating a comprehensive evaluation of teaching, it may therefore, be more productive to consider the whole environment in which learning takes place rather than simply the one aspect of the contribution of the individual teacher (Figure figure1.1).

Such consideration suggests a broadening of the definition of teaching to include all elements of the learning environment. For evaluation purposes however, even this definition may not suffice. Students may learn in even the poorest of environments.

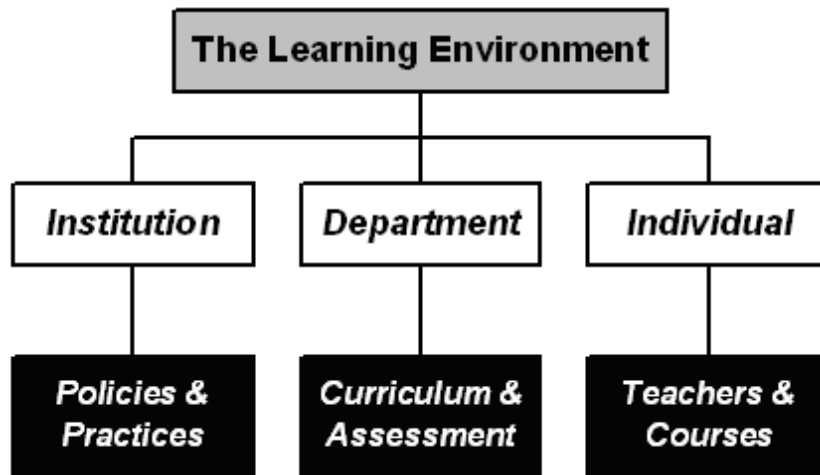


Figure 1.1: The Learning Environment

We propose, therefore, that for the purposes of this manual, teaching should be defined as follows:

*Teaching is the creation and sustaining of an environment which promotes effective learning.*

An implication of such a definition is that any comprehensive evaluation of teaching should address at least the following elements:

- Institutional policies and practices
- Resource allocation
- Physical resources
- Student support services
- Professional course accreditation policies and practices
- Faculty and Departmental policies and practices
- Degree and diploma
- Individual teachers and teams of teachers
- Individual courses



## 1.2 Why Evaluate Teaching?

The first answer to this question must be, 'Why not?' All other areas of academic life are continually evaluated both formally and informally—in particular research, where elaborate systems have been established to provide a means for awarding grants and for approving works for publication.

More specifically, there are many reasons why teaching should be evaluated:

**Improvement of teaching and learning:** The ultimate purpose of all evaluation of teaching ought to be the improvement of teaching and hence of learning. The results of evaluation provide a foundation for individual teachers, academic and support departments and the institution itself on which to base plans for enhanced outcomes. All other purposes derive from this one.

**Curriculum development:** Curricula need to be evaluated on a regular basis because of changes to the composition of the student body, demands from government, professional bodies and employers and the constant need to revise course content to take account of advances in knowledge.

**Professional development of academic and support staff:** What am I doing well? How do I know? What do I need to do to improve my performance? The answers to these questions provides the basis for any systematic programme of personal professional development

**Quality assurance (accountability):** Society, through the medium of government and its agencies has an undeniable right to be assured that university programmes are of the highest quality. Universities themselves have a legal and professional duty to ensure the quality of teaching. Evaluation is an essential component of quality assurance

**Personnel decision making (recruitment and promotion):** Universities maintain that they recruit high quality staff and retain them through policies and procedures which encourage professional growth. The recruiting and the promotions processes, therefore, should involve evaluation of performance in relation to potential and achievement respectively.

**Administrative decision making:** Administrative decisions relating to teaching programmes (including funding and priority setting)

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Formative Evaluation</b>	<b>Summative Evaluation</b>
<b>Primary Purpose</b>	Provides feedback, suggests improvements	Determines effectiveness, leads to judgments which are a basis for administrative and/or personnel decisions
<b>Timing</b>	During programme	Retrospective
<b>Evaluators</b>	Internal to programme	External to programme
<b>Focus</b>	Processes	Outcomes
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Results restricted to initiator of the evaluation	Need to know basis
<b>Processes</b>	Formal or informal	Formal

Table 1.1: Differences between Formative and Summative Evaluation

should, in the first instance, be made on educational grounds. This is impossible unless the decisions are made on a sound basis provided by evaluation.

## 1.3 Types of Evaluation

At this point, it is useful to introduce the distinction between *formative* and *summative* evaluation. There have been many (not always compatible) definitions of these two terms but perhaps the most helpful approach has been to define the distinction itself. Harvey's definition makes the point: 'When the cook tastes the soup, it is *formative* evaluation; when the dinner guest tastes the soup, it is *summative* evaluation.' (? , p. 7)

More formally, Table table1.1 draws out some of the differences.

### 1.3.1 Primary Purpose

The major distinction between formative and summative evaluation is one of primary purpose although the distinction is not entirely clear-cut. Thus, the results of a summative evaluation may themselves provide feedback which could lead to improvements in future programmes. On the other

hand, the results of formative evaluations should normally never be used for summative purposes. One reason is that many formative evaluations seek to discover reasons why innovations did not work as well as expected. It is not incumbent on an institution, department or an individual to advertise problems. Other reasons will emerge in the chapters to follow.

### **1.3.2 Timing**

Normally, formative evaluations are conducted during a programme. For example, lecturers may wish to evaluate the effectiveness of an innovation with a view to amending it if it is not working well. Classically, summative evaluations are conducted at, or towards the end of a programme and look backwards. Again, however, the distinction is not clear-cut. A summative evaluation of an institution's or a department's effect on the learning environment cannot be undertaken when all its programmes have ceased. The work of the institution and the department continues during and after the evaluation.

### **1.3.3 Evaluators**

In principle, those (institutions, departments or individuals) who initiate a formative evaluation are themselves the evaluators because the primary purpose of the evaluation is to provide them with feedback on which improvements can be based. On the other hand, evaluations which lead to administrative or personnel decision making are usually commissioned by people external to the department or individual being evaluated. Yet again, the distinction is not entirely unambiguous, particularly in the instance of institutional evaluations where the institutions themselves may be the initiators.

### **1.3.4 Focus**

When the cook tastes the soup, he/she is in the process of developing the final product. The outcome of the process is the completed dish which the guests evaluate summatively—does it taste nice? Again, the distinction should not be carried too far. The guests may well argue that the preparation process is not completed until each of them has the opportunity to add salt and pepper to taste!

### **1.3.5 Confidentiality**

Few people enjoy their work being evaluated and much opposition to the evaluation of teaching is based on fears of its consequences. Some of those fears may be assuaged by negotiating and establishing confidentiality ground rules before any evaluation takes place.

In general such ground rules should ensure that the only people with access to the results of formative evaluations are those person(s) or bodies wishing to receive feedback. On the other hand, the results of summative evaluations will usually need to be seen by administrative bodies such as Promotions Committees, Departmental Review Panels and so on. In general, detailed results of teaching evaluations should be seen by as few people as possible. On the other hand, contributors to any evaluation have the right to know results in broad terms. This issue, particularly where it relates to students is discussed further in Chapter chapter6.

### **1.3.6 Processes**

Formative evaluations may be quite informal to the extent that feedback may be obtained in a variety of ways in a variety of forms beginning with chats with students or colleagues over a drink. Most academic staff, however, will wish for something more valid and reliable which brings with it greater formality. For summative evaluations, because of the potential implications for individuals, Departments and institutions and because of the requirement for natural justice, a high degree of formality is needed.

## **1.4 General Methodological Matters**

Detailed discussion of evaluation methodologies will be found in the following chapters. There are, however, certain general points which can be made which apply to all evaluations.

### **1.4.1 Be Sure of Your Purpose(s)**

Why are you undertaking the evaluation? What is it you want to find out and why? Is it to be formative or summative. While summative evaluations can be used formatively, the reverse is not true. Are you intending to evaluate people or processes, teachers or courses, individuals or departments or institutions? Evaluations can have more than one purpose, but,

if so, extra care needs to be taken to make those purposes explicit to all stakeholders.

### **1.4.2 Identify the Stakeholders**

Each evaluation has a unique set of stakeholders who should be identified at an early stage. The list may include any or all of students, parents, employers, unions, academic staff, non-academic staff, the university, government agencies, professional bodies and department review panels. Where possible, stakeholders should be involved in the design and implementation of the evaluation. They should always be informed of the evaluation and its purposes. Where appropriate (as in settling confidentiality rules), the evaluation should be negotiated with unions (including student unions) and staff associations.

### **1.4.3 Identify the Evaluators**

Ultimately someone or a group of persons must take responsibility for the set of judgments which is the defining characteristic of all evaluations. In the case of a lecturer seeking feedback on a course, that lecturer is the evaluator. At the other end of the spectrum, the evaluator might be the Higher Education Authority. It may seem a simple matter of commonsense to suggest that evaluators be formally identified, but failure to do so can lead to confusion and opposition to the evaluation itself.

Do not, however, confuse evaluators with sources of evidence. A common confusion is to call student surveys of teaching 'student evaluations'. Not so. The student opinions are one source of evidence used by the evaluator(s) in reaching a judgement.

### **1.4.4 Identify Useful and Appropriate Sources of Evidence**

Useful sources of evidence in any evaluation are those who can answer the questions that the evaluation asks. Setting appropriate questions is perhaps the most fundamental part of any evaluation and is related to its purposes. Thus, in evaluating an engineering curriculum, an appropriate question might be, 'How relevant is the curriculum to the workplace?' In this instance, useful sources of evidence would include graduates, careers officers, professional bodies and employers but would exclude undergraduate students who almost certainly have no experience of the workplace.

### **1.4.5 Determine Appropriate Methods**

Appropriate methods will be related to the purpose(s) of the evaluation and usually to the budget available. They may be qualitative or quantitative or both.

### **1.4.6 Estimate Costs**

Informal chats with students in a bar may only cost a few rounds of drinks and some time. Anything more sophisticated, however may involve both direct and indirect costs which should be budgeted for. Student questionnaires, for example, require considerable time to design, significant costs to produce and scan and, particularly if the evaluation is to be summative, the cost of its administration must be taken into account.

### **1.4.7 What is the Likely Impact of the Evaluation?**

It is both immoral and impolitic to commence an evaluation without thinking through possible consequences. On the one hand, an evaluation may raise expectations which are impossible to meet. Thus, an institutional-wide morale survey may reveal problems which the institution may not be in a position to address. On the other hand, an evaluation may draw attention to the shortcomings of individuals or groups. Unless there are support mechanisms in place to assist those individuals or groups, the whole exercise is likely to be counterproductive. Of what use is it, for example for a teacher to discover that 90% of students give him/her low ratings on some aspect of lecturing if there is no one to assist in identifying the problems and assisting him or her to find solutions?

## **1.5 Summary**

- A useful definition of teaching is 'the creation and sustaining of an environment which promotes effective learning'.
- Teaching should be evaluated on a regular basis.
- Evaluation of teaching may be formative or summative.
- All evaluations must be planned carefully.

A preliminary checklist for evaluating teaching is provided in Appendix section B.

## 1.6 Further Reading

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## Chapter 2

# Evaluating Teaching at the Institutional Level

### 2.1 Overview

There can be little doubt in general that institutional priorities, policies and practices can and do shape the environment within which students learn if only because Departments and individual academics operate within an institutional framework. Such frameworks may be light or heavy, depending on a number of variables such as the institutional culture and the level of governmental pressure. There are a number of broad indicators of institutional attitudes to teaching.

Thus, for example, statements about teaching in institutional strategic plans, newsletters, press releases and submissions to government all indicate the level of support institutions give to teaching and learning. The quality of teaching spaces and support services as well as policies and practices relating to appointment and promotion of academic staff send clear messages to staff and students about the value placed on education in practice.

Given that few members of the academic staff have undertaken training for their increasingly complex roles as teachers, the existence or otherwise of comprehensive professional development programmes and of regular feedback from peers and students about performance are also strong indicators of the institutional value ascribed to teaching and learning.



## 2.2 Good Practice

To date, in comparison with their British and Australian counterparts, successive Irish governments have adopted a relatively benign approach to the evaluation of teaching quality at third level. Nevertheless, it does not follow that institutions should neglect systematic and regular formative evaluation of their teaching and learning policies, practices, support services and built environment in order to improve learning outcomes and to demonstrate accountability. Already, one newspaper has produced a league table of Irish universities based on very limited data. Unless universities can provide more comprehensive and valid evidence for such comparisons then much of the excellent work produced across the sector may be misinterpreted or remain largely unknown.

Systematic formative evaluation at the institutional level can be implemented in a number of ways all of which should be embedded in institutional strategic planning. The temptation to draw models from commerce and industry should, however, be resisted. Fundamentally, universities do not exist to create profits or maximise return on assets (?). One approach worth considering is benchmarking. An Australian project involving the participation of 33 of the 36 publicly funded universities in that country, produced a benchmarking manual which (with some adaptation) could be used in this country (?).

Basically, benchmarking can provide universities with 'reference points for good practice and for ways of improving their functioning' (? , p. 2). The manual does not use the term 'best practice' on the pragmatic grounds that there will always be problems identifying such practice, and that all practices can be improved over time. The benchmarks used, therefore, are based on a broad consensus among Australian universities of what current good practices actually are.

There is a heavy emphasis on outcomes but due weight is also given to indicators which measure the drivers of future performance and to those which measure the rate of change of performance. Further, the manual recognises that that which is most important or valuable cannot always be measured quantitatively.

The manual lists benchmarks for all the major aspects of a university's operations with an entire set being devoted to teaching and learning.

The HERDSA<sup>1</sup> *Checklist on Valuing Teaching* (reproduced in Appendix section C) adopts a similar approach but is rather less comprehensive. We recommend the list as a good way of engaging staff in the process

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.herdsa.org.au/>

of reflection on institutional supports for teaching and learning.

## 2.3 Further Reading

Birnbaum, R. (2000). *Management Fads in Higher Education: Where they come from, what they do, why they fail*. San Francisco, USA: Jossey Bass.

EUA. (2003). Quality review of universities in ireland: Guidelines for institutions preparing the self-evaluation and review visits.

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McKinnon, K. R., Walker, S. H., and Davis, D. (2000). *Benchmarking: A manual for Australian Universities*. Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs).

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/m4n4e>

## Chapter 3

# Evaluating Teaching at the Faculty and/or Department Level

### 3.1 Overview

The Irish Universities Act, 1997<sup>1</sup> requires each university to 'establish procedures for quality assurance aimed at improving the quality of education and related services provided by the university' (Sec 35.1).

While not precluding evaluation of teaching at the institutional level or that of individual academic staff, the Act does require regular evaluation of Departmental (and where relevant Faculty) activities. Further, such evaluation will include 'assessment' by stakeholders including students. Generally, however, this section of the Act is remarkably non-prescriptive.

All universities have met the minimum requirements of the Act by the implementation of regular departmental reviews. These reviews evaluate research and administration as well as teaching. Generally, the procedures listed below are followed:

- The department prepares a self-assessment.
- A review team consisting wholly or largely of external scholars visits the department and prepares a report including recommendations.
- The report is checked for factual accuracy and amended if necessary.
- The report is submitted to the academic council and governing body.
- The university, faculty and department implement such recommendations which have been agreed to by the governing body.

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/ZZA24Y1997.html>

- A follow up report is submitted a year or more later.

The review process is both formative and summative—formative in that the department receives feedback on its operations which should lead to improvements and summative in the sense that judgements are made about performance which may lead to administrative decisions.

In principle, departmental reviews as described meet a number of the objections to other forms of audit such as those in place in the United Kingdom. Responsibility for the process lies with the universities rather than some kind of government inspectorate. Detailed procedures reflect institutional culture and strategic aims and the emphasis is on quality improvement.

So is teaching in the higher education sector satisfactory and is it improving? Are our quality assurance and improvement programmes working? Certainly not as of February 2003, according to the then Minister for Education and Science:

On the issue of quality, I must admit that I have a concern that insufficient attention is being paid to the quality of teaching at third level. It seems to me that there are too many instances where lecturers are standing up in front of a class without ever having shown an aptitude for teaching. It's an issue that requires attention and, much more than that, it requires action.

—Extract from Minister's speech at the official opening of a new fitness suite at the Institute of Technology, Athlone on 10th February, 2003.<sup>2</sup>

This statement does not constitute *prima facie* evidence of poor teaching or poor quality assurance systems but the fact that the Minister perceived poor quality is highly significant. Thus we find that the terms of reference for the subsequent OECD Review of Higher Education in Ireland included an examination *inter alia*, of 'How institutions in the higher education sector might best respond to the needs of their students through the use of appropriate systems of quality assurance to support the highest quality of teaching and learning...?' (?) It would seem that there is some danger that new systems may be established which lack the advantages of the current one and which share some of the disadvantages of those in the UK such as inflexibility and excessive detail.

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<sup>2</sup><http://tinyurl.com/nyoko>

Universities may, however, be able to forestall inappropriate intervention by government by broadening their current focus/practices to include:

- Evaluation of institutional policies and practices (see Chapter chapter2).
- Systematic evaluation of the teaching of individual academic staff (see Chapters chapter4 and chapter5).
- Evaluation of teaching at the department level based on the extensive research literature into what constitutes good teaching in higher education (see below).

## 3.2 Good Practice

All universities provide departments undergoing review with a guide to self-assessment. These guides vary considerably, which is not a problem in itself. At one end of the spectrum, some universities require departments to provide massive amounts of information. At the other end, one or two guides largely fail to address certain quality issues for which the department has prime responsibility (for example, the choice of assessment methods used).

Few guides demonstrate a simple and coherent framework, although University College Dublin's Guidelines for Self-assessment, Review, Follow-up<sup>3</sup> comes close. There, the process:

... comes down to answering four questions:

- what are we trying to do?
- how are we trying to do it?
- how do we know it works?
- how do we change in order to improve?

The discussion below will follow this structure, which, however, is not intended to be prescriptive. The points made under each heading, however, remain valid whatever the structure of the self-assessment document.

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<sup>3</sup><http://www.ucd.ie/quality/reports/qaqiguideelines.doc.doc>

### 3.2.1 What Are We Trying To Do?

There is considerable research evidence to suggest that one of the key features of good teaching is providing clear goals and intellectual challenge (?). Thus, a primary feature of all departmental self-assessment documents relating to teaching should include statements of desired learning objectives or outcomes *both at the programme (degree) and course (module or unit) levels*.

If departments are not clear about what it is their graduates should know and what skills they should have, then there can be no rational basis for choice of content, teaching, learning methods and assessment. If learning outcomes are not specified for each course, students may have difficulty in determining what is important to learn

Further, under such circumstances, external reviewers may be left with little choice but to use their own programmes as a benchmark for evaluation on the assumption that the programmes under review and their own share similar goals. Where such assumptions are incorrect, comments by external reviewers regarding teaching methods, content and assessment will lack validity.

In other words, 'what we are trying to do' in teaching is to support our students in the achievement of certain learning outcomes. Valid evaluation of a department's teaching requires that those outcomes be made specific.

Programme outcomes can probably be best expressed as a series of attributes to be achieved by all graduates of the programme while course outcomes should consist of a set of statements beginning with the words, 'By the end of this course, students should be able to...'. Outcomes at both programme and course levels should include knowledge of discipline content, subject-specific skills, generic skills (e.g. communicate effectively) and appropriate attitudes and values.

### 3.2.2 How Are We Trying To Do It?

We assist students to achieve the outcomes we have specified by selecting:

- Appropriate content sequenced in ways which makes sense to students.
- Suitable teaching and learning methods
- Assessment methods which both motivate the students to learn and

measure the extent to which they have achieved the learning outcomes

Thus, content should be chosen on the basis of the extent to which it assists students to achieve certain outcomes rather than because it reflects the interests of individual academic staff. There is a continuing danger with the latter approach that, reflecting an effort to remain up to date, syllabi become overcrowded as new material is added and little removed. Overcrowded syllabi are one of the major reasons why many students adopt a 'surface' approach to learning and seek to memorise material rather than understand it (? , p. 81).

Again, much thought needs to be given to teaching and learning methods. Many academics will maintain that fundamental learning outcomes at both the programme and course levels include the acquisition of skills such as problem solving, critical thinking and evaluation. At the same time, they will adopt the lecture as the primary teaching method despite the results of over five decades of research (? , Chapter 1) which indicates that such skills are not necessarily acquired either efficiently or effectively through this medium. Acquisition of skills is best supported by active modes of learning.

Finally, there should be a very close match between assessment and learning outcomes. It is sad but true that most students will only put effort into learning those parts of a course which are to be assessed. A typical mismatch occurs when course learning outcomes stress acquisition of higher level cognitive skills and the assessment consists of tasks which require no more than recall of factual information.

In summary, a departmental self-assessment document should make the case for choice of learning outcomes, content, methods and assessment. They should not simply be listed—leaving it to the review panel to guess the collective intentions.

### **3.2.3 How Do We Know It Works?**

One of the major complaints about the departmental review process is that it can be extremely time consuming in that once every five years or so, a massive amount of data must be collected for the self-assessment document at the expense of the routine tasks of the department. If this is, in fact, happening, then the complaint is justified but it should not be happening. Quality assurance and improvement should be an ongoing activity and regular monitoring of a department's teaching should be undertaken using a number of performance indicators. If this is done, then annual

updating and preparation for a departmental review should not involve much extra work. At the very least, there should be no nasty surprises.

Selecting which performance indicators to use is a matter of some delicacy. One temptation is to use only quantitative indicators but most would agree that not every aspect of good teaching can be actually measured. Again, an excessive number of indicators can impede monitoring while too few makes analysis difficult. The following list is intended to be a guide and university requirements should be flexible in order to allow for differences between departments.

- Input indicators:
  - Student entrance scores.
  - Effective full-time student numbers.
  - Student : staff ratios—per programme and course.
  - Student : staff ratios—Faculty and university
  - Number of students from equity target groups (e.g. mature, affected by disability).
  - Undergraduate : postgraduate ratio.
  - Effective full-time staff numbers.
  - Number of Teaching Assistants/Demonstrators per course.
  - Staff contact hours.
  - Student contact hours per course.
  - Teaching/learning environment (classrooms, technical and administrative support etc.).
  - Departmental non-pay teaching budget.
  
- Process indicators:
  - Departmental policies and procedures relating to teaching.
  - Student feedback—courses.<sup>4</sup>
  - Student feedback—teachers.<sup>subsection1</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The Department will need to show that student feedback for formative purposes has been sought between reviews (see Chapter chapter4). In the year of the review, however, summative data should be collected (see Chapter chapter5) and included in the self-assessment document.



- Staff (academic, administrative and technical) participation in professional development activities
- Outcome indicators:
  - Student results.
  - Student attrition by year.
  - Completion rates.
  - Graduate destinations.
  - Graduate surveys.
  - Employer surveys (if relevant).
  - External examiner reports.

In relation to the departmental review, the department needs to demonstrate that it *is* monitoring the quality of its performance and should include the indicators in its self-assessment document, particularly noting any trends.

### 3.2.4 How Do We Change in Order to Improve?

Recording a set of performance indicators may (or may not) satisfy the requirements for quality assurance but departments also need to demonstrate how they use this information to improve the quality of their teaching. One problem is that teaching is often seen as a very private activity and academic staff can be reluctant to admit that improvement is needed. In addition, many of the difficulties faced by individual staff can only be tackled at the departmental level.

For example, an academic may find it very difficult to involve his/her students in active learning strategies. The reason, however, may not be due to his/her poor teaching but to the fact that everyone else in the department is content with lecturing as the primary teaching method and the students are getting mixed messages. This kind of problem can only be resolved by discussion and a coherent approach at the departmental level.

There are several mechanisms through which departments can improve teaching at the collective level.

- Departmental meetings which examine annual performance indicators with a view to improving performance.

- Departmental retreats which use the performance indicators as the basis for a SWOT analysis which in turn leads to curriculum reform and the development of a rolling teaching and learning strategy.
- Making better use of external examiners and the university's academic development unit.

In relation to departmental reviews, however, the problem of individual poor performance is not a major issue because what is being evaluated is the collective teaching of the department. What is essential is that the self-assessment document demonstrates the quality improvement measures taken.

### 3.3 Conclusion

Current departmental reviews do meet the minimum requirements of the Universities Act but could be improved along the lines suggested above. One matter remains to be considered—how are review recommendations to be implemented? The issue is one of resources. In particular, external reviewers from the UK frequently note the high quality of the work produced in departments despite the relatively low resource base. They then proceed to recommend that the appointment of more academic, administrative and technical staff as a means to further quality improvement. Unfortunately, in the contracting Irish economy, such recommendations are rarely acted on which can be extremely demoralising.

On the other hand, significant improvements to teaching can be achieved with few additional financial or staffing resources, particularly in the areas of curriculum reform, teaching methods and assessment.

It must be recognised, however, that such improvements do come at a price—the price of time.

Finally, Appendix D provides a checklist for evaluating Teaching at the Departmental Level.

### 3.4 Further Reading

Bligh, D. (1998). *What's the Use of Lectures?* Exeter, UK: Intellect, fifth edition.

DES. (2003). *OECD Review Of Higher Education In Ireland: Terms Of Reference*. Dublin, Ireland: Department of Education and Science.

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## Chapter 4

# Evaluation of Teachers and Courses for Feedback and Quality Improvement: Formative Evaluation

### 4.1 Overview

Strictly speaking, formative evaluation is only concerned with feedback to the teacher about their performance or about the courses designed and taught by them. It is the teacher who considers information received from various sources—usually the opinions of peers and students. In short, the teacher is both the subject of the evaluation and the evaluator.

Evaluations of performance or of courses which are conducted at the request of third parties such as heads of department or the results of which are seen by third parties such as departmental reviewers and promotion committees should follow the rules set out for summative evaluation (as described in Chapter chapter5) even if the primary purpose is improvement. The reason for this restriction is that one of the main purposes of formative evaluation is to uncover/highlight areas for improvement rather than to give the balanced picture required by third parties responsible for administrative and personnel decision-making. Thus the results of summative evaluations may be used for feedback and quality improvement but the results of formative evaluations must not be used for administrative or personnel decision-making.

In one sense, there are no rules for formative evaluations apart from those relating to good ethical and methodological practice. The teacher

wants certain information to help improve teaching and will employ appropriate methods to obtain that information. Choice of method and choice of information source will be largely dictated by the questions asked. For example, if a teacher wishes to find out whether a course reading-list is up to date, the most appropriate method may be to request a literature search from the Subject Librarian. More broadly, the teacher may wish to get feedback on their performance as a lecturer. Obviously, students will be a prime source of information but peer observation of lectures may also be useful. Videotaping a lecture and watching it later will certainly be salutary. Where resources are limited the use of check-lists of good teaching such as those produced by ? and ? can be very efficient and effective tools for personal reflection and development.

Timing of data collection and analysis for formative purposes also depends on the questions asked. The teacher may have tried an innovation early in the course but is unsure of its effectiveness. In this instance, early evaluation is essential in case remedial activity needs to be undertaken. Generally however, early evaluation of standard teaching methods such as lectures, tutorials or practical sessions should be avoided as students need time to reach an informed opinion.

The following section provides suggestions for good practice in some common forms of formative evaluation.

## **4.2 Good Practice**

### **4.2.1 Peer Feedback**

Most often peer feedback is seen as classroom observation but peers can provide feedback on other teaching roles particularly in areas such as course design where students are rarely in a position to provide informed opinion. The use of peer feedback can be a powerful mechanism for developing a departmental ethos which values and promotes dialogue about teaching through which colleagues provide mutual support and learn from each others' successes and failures. See Table table4.1.

### **4.2.2 Feedback is More Effective When...**

It is advisable for teacher and peer to agree a set of ground rules before proceeding, one of which should be that all information considered by the peer is confidential to and remains the property of the teacher. In addition, the peer needs to know what information the teacher is seeking. The

<b>Teaching Role</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Appropriate Peer</b>
<b>Course design</b>	Appropriateness of learning outcomes, content choice and currency, teaching and assessment methods, match between all of the above.	Departmental colleague, Discipline colleague*, Educational development professional, E-learning professional.
<b>Course administration</b>	Course Handbook comprehensiveness and currency, awareness of and adherence to University policies and regulations governing teaching—e.g., assessment, equal opportunity, health and safety, course organisation.	Departmental colleague—both academic and administrative.
<b>Learning activities</b>	Structure of sessions, provision of useful examples, degree of active learning encouraged, clarity of presentation, use of AV/IT resources and other learning materials.	Departmental colleague, educational/staff development professional, E-learning development professional.
<b>Assessment</b>	Appropriateness of tasks/questions set, appropriate level of difficulty, appropriate and consistent marking standards, clarity and appropriateness of grading criteria.	Departmental or Discipline colleague.

\*Where the teacher is the only departmental expert in a particular area of scholarship it may be necessary to seek peer feedback from a colleague in another institution.

Table 4.1: Examples of Appropriate Peer Feedback

following list, though not generalisable to all teaching situations is offered as a guide to giving and receiving effective feedback (?):

- Information is gathered from a number of sources.
- The sources are credible, knowledgeable and well intentioned.
- It is based on accurate data.
- It contains concrete information.
- It focuses on behaviour.
- It is descriptive rather than evaluative.
- It is given as soon as possible after performance.
- It considers the recipient's experience.
- It acknowledges that the recipient may not have control over all aspects of their teaching.
- It is sensitive to the recipient's self esteem.
- It begins with positive feedback.
- It allows for response and interaction.
- It relates to goals that are defined by the recipient.

### **4.2.3 Peer Observation of Teaching**

Having an observer in the classroom can significantly change the dynamics of the environment to the point where valid feedback becomes difficult. What can be done to minimise the so-called 'observer effect'?

- The teacher and observer should agree on procedures.
- The observer should be introduced to the students and the reason for his/her presence explained.
- The observer (and video camera if used) should be located in a discreet as possible location but one from which both the teacher and most students can be observed.

- The observer should not interact with either the teacher or the students by way of interruption or intervention.
- It is good practice (resources permitting) for the observer to be present in a number of classes.

It is always necessary for a peer to be informed about the information the teacher is seeking. In the context of class observations, this is best done by providing the peer with a checklist to be completed during the class. A number of examples of such lists can be found in the literature (e.g., ?) and one is provided in Appendix E. The items in the lists may be changed at will according to the needs of the teacher but care should be taken that the lists are neither too long (difficult for the observer) nor too short (inadequate for feedback). The checklist may focus on certain strategies (getting discussion going in a tutorial) or on certain sections of the class—e.g., the opening phase.

Alternatively, the observer can be asked simply to provide a chronological record of the class for later discussion.

As with all feedback, that from classroom observation should provide information rather than value judgments. Thus, ‘you scratched your nose 15 times during the lecture’ is better than ‘you shouldn’t scratch your nose so often’. Remember that, in formative evaluation, it is the teacher, not the observer who is the evaluator.

One useful tool is the video camera. Giving feedback is much more effective when the observer can point out behaviours as seen from the camera’s (i.e., the students’) perspectives.

Whatever the method used, both teachers and observers should be careful not to confuse effectiveness with style. There is no one ‘best’ personal style where teaching is concerned—one teacher may wander about, another may remain stationary behind the lectern. One teacher may be gruff while another may keep the class laughing. All may be equally effective in assisting their students to learn.

#### **4.2.4 Student Feedback**

Any comprehensive formative evaluation of teaching should include feedback from students. Their contribution is legitimate and essential but needs to be considered in conjunction with other sources for a valid evaluation to be made. Perhaps to labour the point, ‘student evaluations’ of teaching are no such thing. Students opinions provide one, but only one,



perspective and others are needed. Student opinions are legitimate because they are the learners who are the sole purpose of teaching. They are essential because for certain areas of teaching, they can be the only and/or best source of information.

In general, students can provide useful information on the following matters:

- Communication of course expectations (learning objectives).
- Communication of course requirements (e.g., assessment).
- Their perception of the quality of classroom teaching.
- Adequacy of assessment feedback.
- Accessibility of learning resources and support.

The best known method of obtaining student opinion is the questionnaire but others have been well tested. The two most common are focus groups and classroom assessment (an American term which will be somewhat misleading for Irish readers).

### **Questionnaires**

Like all methods used in evaluation, questionnaires have their advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, they can be both valid and reliable and provide useful and objective evidence for evaluation. They are—or should be—anonymous so that students can express their opinions freely. On the other hand, the set of questions is restrictive and the format (except for open-ended questions) limits the nature of the student response. Of course, formative evaluation, by definition, seeks answers to certain questions defined by the needs of the teacher but there is always the possibility that students have useful things to say on a matter but are unable to do so because they haven't been asked the 'right' question. The references in Appendix appendixA provide many examples of useful questions. The validity and reliability of questionnaires depends largely on their design, a matter which will also be discussed further in Appendix appendixA but a few points may be usefully listed here:

- It is a good idea to pilot questionnaires with peers and a small group of students. This is the best way to uncover ambiguous or irrelevant questions and to discover the need for others.

- Questionnaires should include both closed and open questions.
- Questionnaire fatigue can occur if students are asked to complete them too often about the same course, where they do not receive feedback about their responses and particularly where they see no improvement in areas they think need improving (see Chapter chapter5).
- Questionnaires used for formative evaluation should be tailored to the individual course being evaluated and, by definition, to the needs of the individual teacher. Thus, a single teacher may wish to solicit student opinions about a particular innovation in one course but may seek perceptions about personal lecturing performance in another. It is fairly obvious that two different questionnaires will have to be designed. Nevertheless, there have been instances where university wide questionnaires have been designed, allegedly for formative purposes only. Such questionnaires will not be particularly useful, given the range of teaching methods used in an institution and the variety of information teachers need to have before they can make useful judgments.

### **Focus groups**

Focus groups may take a number of forms but essentially they are established to enable structured discussions about courses and teaching. They overcome some of the disadvantages of questionnaires by permitting students to comment on matters which are of major interest to them and, in addition, students are able to explain the reasons for their opinions in a way impossible with questionnaires. In addition, focus groups may be used to explore issues which have been uncovered using other means.

On the other hand, focus groups are not anonymous and some students may feel inhibited in expressing their opinions freely and they will consist of only a small proportion of the class and hence may be unrepresentative. Finally, teachers may be inexperienced in leading structured discussions and may find it difficult to elicit useful responses from the students.

Maximising the advantages of focus groups and minimising the disadvantages requires some care. The following points may be useful:

- Make sure each student in the group understands its purpose.
- Set a few ground rules such as:

- Everyone should contribute.
  - No one should dominate the discussion.
  - We shall keep to an agenda.
- If you are inexperienced in leading structured discussions or fear that students may not be frank in front of you, ask a colleague to facilitate the group.
  - Open the discussion by asking an open-ended question such as, ‘What are the strengths and weaknesses of the course?’ or ‘What areas of the course need improvement?’
  - Set an agenda involving no more than five or six broad questions.
  - Choose a neutral and comfortable location (not your office).
  - Restrict the group size to about ten students chosen at random. But...
  - Where the class size is large, you may consider a larger focus group divided into sub-groups:
    - First ask each student to individually consider the set of questions.
    - Then ask each sub-group to discuss the questions and try to arrive at a consensus.
    - Each group in turn reports to a plenary session. To avoid tedium, get each sub-group to report one item and rotate around the groups until no new points are raised. Each new point raised is noted on a flip chart.

### **Classroom assessment**

Through close observation of students in the process of learning, the collection of frequent feedback on students’ learning, and the design of modest classroom experiments, classroom teachers can learn much about how students learn, and, more specifically, how students respond to particular teaching approaches. Classroom Assessment helps individual college teachers obtain feedback on what, how much, and how well

their students are learning. Faculty can then use this information to refocus their teaching to help students make their learning more efficient and more effective.

—?

This approach to formative evaluation is relatively common in the United States and very rare in this country. But it makes a lot of sense. We have defined teaching as *the creation and sustaining of an environment which promotes effective learning*. Therefore, if we wish to know whether our teaching is effective, then let us discover whether the learning has been effective. In an assessment system dominated by the final examination, realisation that learning in some areas has not been effective is rather too late for remedial action with that particular cohort of students. And examinations cannot cover the whole syllabus. The remedy is to continually assess learning during the course taking immediate remedial action where necessary. ? list a number of advantages to such continuous assessment:

- It is learner-centred.
- It is teacher-directed: it is the teacher who decides what to assess, how to assess and how to respond to the assessment.
- It benefits both students and teacher.
- It is formative rather than summative—classroom assessment are seldom graded and almost always anonymous.
- It is context specific—i.e., it is tailored to specific situations.
- It is ongoing.
- It is rooted in good teaching practice.

One point of clarification. ‘Continuous assessment’ in the Irish context usually means that students’ grades depend, not only on the results of a final examination but also on those of a number of projects of various kinds. Readers (and students) may well baulk at the prospect of radically increasing the number of the latter to be completed and to be marked.

?, however, mean something very different. Their book contains an extraordinary number of classroom assessment techniques and case studies spread over a range of disciplines and it is impossible in this manual to attempt to summarize them. They do recommend that teachers should start by using the simplest techniques possible. The following examples will illustrate their point.

- The classroom quiz:
  - Set 10 (or fewer) simple questions based on previous lecture material.
  - Write out the questions on an acetate.
  - The students answer the questions in the first 5 minutes of the lecture.
  - The students exchange papers and mark them.
  - By show of hands, the teacher discovers which questions caused the most problems and hence the material which may need revision or clarification.
  - the students also discover their weak areas of knowledge.
- The minute paper:
  - At the very end of a lecture, ask the students to write down:
    1. the three most important things they learned in the lecture; and
    2. any area which needed clarification.
  - Collect and analyse the responses.
  - React appropriately during the next lecture.

Note that the amount of time involved in preparation and collection of information is minimal, although analysis may take longer. ? provide many more sophisticated examples of the technique together with pros, cons and caveats.

### 4.3 Summary

Issue	Formative Evaluation
Primary Purpose	Provides feedback. Suggests improvements.
Timing	During course.
Evaluators	Internal to course.
Focus	Processes.
Confidentiality	Restricted to teacher.
Processes	Formal or informal.

## 4.4 Further Reading

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URL: <http://tinyurl.com/nz1pc>
- UWA. (undated). *Peer Feedback on Teaching*. University of Western Australia.  
URL: <http://tinyurl.com/rg4z2>

## Chapter 5

# Evaluation of Teachers and Courses for Judgment and Quality Assurance: Summative Evaluation

### 5.1 Overview

Although this chapter deals primarily with the summative evaluation of individual teachers and individual courses, the issues raised apply also to the summative evaluation of teaching at the departmental level.

One key difference between formative and summative evaluation is that the latter may lead to significant administrative and/or personnel decisions made by third parties. Formative evaluation may indeed lead to decisions about how a course may be improved but summative decisions are of another order and may lead, for example, to:

- An academic appointment.
- Confirmation of an academic appointment after a probationary period.
- Promotion.
- Approval—or otherwise—of a degree programme by a professional body.
- Continuing status—or deletion—of a course or programme.
- Shift in resources towards—or away from—a course or programme.

These are weighty matters which directly affect the lives of staff and indirectly the lives of other stakeholders in the education process. *In conducting the evaluations on which such decisions are based, it is crucial that justice be done and be seen to be done.*

While formative evaluations can be reasonably relaxed affairs (the teacher is simply seeking a range of opinions for their personal use), the planning and administration of summative evaluations must be much more rigorous. Thus, although summative evaluations may be used for formative purposes (i.e., they can provide feedback for improvement), formative evaluations should never be used summatively. Failure by senior academics and administrators to take account of this distinction can lead to quite warranted opposition to the very idea of summative evaluation.

The section below lists and explicates principles of good practice. The principles apply whether the evaluation is of a teacher or of a course.

## **5.2 Good Practice**

### **5.2.1 The Evaluation Should be Comprehensive**

Formative evaluations can be quite limited if the teacher only wants feedback about one or two aspects of their teaching/course. But summative evaluations should study all relevant teaching roles and/or dimensions of a course in order that comprehensive judgments can be made. Table table5.1 lists the minimum number of dimensions which should be considered.

It will be noted that the two lists are almost identical. It is, however, important to distinguish between evaluations of teachers and evaluations of courses (although it is possible to combine the two, with a great deal of care being needed when more than one teacher is involved in the course).

### **5.2.2 The Evaluation Must be Multi-faceted**

Summative evaluation should use multiple sources of evidence to ensure conclusions are valid. Different stakeholders have different perspectives, as many as possible of which should be taken into account.



<b>Summative Evaluation of Teachers: Roles</b>	<b>Summative Evaluation of Courses: Dimensions</b>
<b>Course design:</b> learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods*	<b>Course design:</b> learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning methods, assessment methods
<b>Course management:</b> course information, administration†	<b>Course management:</b> course information, administration
<b>Student nurture:</b> availability, helpfulness	<b>Student nurture:</b> availability, helpfulness
<b>Classroom activities:</b> lectures, tutorials, laboratories etc.	<b>Resources:</b> textbooks, reading lists, teaching materials, equipment, library, classrooms
<b>Assessment:</b> quality and quantity of feedback	<b>Classroom activities:</b> lectures, tutorials, laboratories etc.‡
<b>Extracurricular activities:</b> nature and extent, professional development, scholarship in teaching etc.	<b>Assessment:</b> quality and quantity of feedback

\*If the teacher is *not* responsible for course design, evaluation instruments must not probe these areas in relation to that teacher.

†Similarly, if the teacher is *not* responsible for course management, evaluation instruments must not probe these areas in relation to that teacher.

‡If more than one teacher is associated with the course, the evaluation instruments *must* distinguish between them.

Table 5.1: The minimum number of dimensions which should be considered in summative evaluation

### **5.2.3 The Evaluation Must Only Use Appropriate Sources of Evidence**

All stakeholders may have a perspective on all aspects of teaching, but not all perspectives are valid for summative evaluation. Thus, for example, students should not be asked for their opinions about the appropriateness or otherwise of course content—their knowledge and experience will be insufficient for them to take an informed view. They are however best placed to provide valid opinions on the helpfulness of assignment feedback.

Table table5.2 matches teaching roles/course dimensions, sources of evidence and types of evidence. The following sections comment in more detail on some of these sources and types of evidence.

#### **5.2.3.1 Teacher**

At some stage during the evaluation process, the teacher being evaluated must be given the opportunity to comment on each teaching role and/or course dimension. His/her opinions are a necessary but not sufficient source of evidence for the evaluators.

#### **5.2.3.2 Profile—Self Report**

We have used the term ‘profile’ rather than the better known ‘teaching portfolio’ because the latter has two commonly used meanings which are frequently confused. The first type of portfolio is a long term reflective and scholarly document intended primarily as a means of self-development. ? provide excellent advice about how to construct such a portfolio and present a number of illustrative case studies. This type of portfolio, however, is not normally used for summative purposes and should not be used as the primary evidence for, say, promotion, if only for the practical reason that most are too long to be read by busy evaluators. They have, however, been used successfully as evidence for teaching awards where the number of candidates is small.

The second type of teaching portfolio (sometimes called a teaching profile) is a much shorter document specifically designed for use in summative evaluations in that there is an emphasis on evidence which demonstrates quality teaching. Such a portfolio might include:

1. An outline of teaching responsibilities and activities over a defined period.

<b>Roles/Dimensions</b>	<b>Appropriate Sources of Evidence</b>	<b>Types of Evidence</b>
<b>Course Design</b>	Teacher (see §subsubsection5.2.3.1)	Profile, Self-report (see §subsubsection5.2.3.2)
	Discipline Peers	Report (see §subsubsection5.2.3.3)
	Academic Developers	Report
<b>Course Management</b>	Teacher	Profile, Self-report
	Peers	Report
	Head of Department	Report
	Students	Questionnaire (see §subsubsection5.2.3.4)
<b>Student Nurture</b>	Teacher	Profile, Self-report
	Students	Questionnaire
	Graduates	Questionnaire
<b>Classroom Activities (see §subsubsection5.2.3.5)</b>	Teacher	Profile, Self-report
	Students	Questionnaire
	Graduates	Questionnaire
<b>Resources</b>	Teacher	Profile, Self-report
	Discipline Peers	Report
<b>Assessment (feedback etc.)</b>	Teacher	Profile, Self-report
	Students	Questionnaire
	Graduates	Questionnaire
<b>Extracurricular Activities</b>	Teacher	Profile, Self-report
	Discipline Peers	Report

Table 5.2: Teaching Roles, Sources and Types of Evidence

2. A statement of teaching philosophy and approaches and goals.
3. Sample course materials and where relevant examples of innovations in teaching.
4. Samples of students' work (projects, essays, laboratory reports etc.).
5. Relevant statistics such as pass rates, staff-student ratios.
6. Evidence of scholarship in teaching.
7. Rewards/recognition/honours received

An alternative to the portfolio frequently employed by evaluators in the promotions process is the use of a detailed application form which requires the candidate to provide the information listed above. We have named this process 'self report'. An example is provided in Appendix F.

#### 5.2.3.3 Report

There are frequent complaints that the traditional referee reports are 'useless' in that they do not provide the information needed by the evaluator. The response to this problem is quite simple—use structured report forms which ask the questions the evaluators want answers to. An example is provided in Appendix G.

It is, however, *essential* that teachers provide the peer reviewers with all the materials they will need to complete the report.

#### 5.2.3.4 Questionnaires

To obtain the degree of validity and breadth of opinion required for summative evaluation, questionnaires rather than focus groups or other methods should be used to obtain information from students and graduates. It may, in practice, be impossible to obtain representative information from graduates because of an inadequate alumni data base.

Particularly useful example question banks may be found in ? and in the Queens' University of Canada Inventory of Possible Items to be Selected by Course Instructors for Surveys of Student Assessment of Teaching.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.queensu.ca/registrar/usat/invent.html>

#### **5.2.3.5 Classroom Activities**

While peer observation of classroom activities can provide the teacher with useful feedback, such observation should not be used for summative purposes. There are a number of reasons for this prohibition:

- The visit alters the nature of the teaching and learning environment so that the observer is not seeing a representative example of the class.
- The number of visits is too small to be an accurate sample from which to generalise.
- The untrained observer normally has a preference for a particular teaching style. Teaching effectiveness is unrelated to style (?).
- In addition, the peer observer is not a student. A lecture may be factually correct with advanced content, well presented and admired by the observer for its scholarly approach—yet be totally incomprehensible to most of the students for whom the lecture is intended.

#### **5.2.4 Staff and Students Should Share in the Design of Summative Systems and Instruments**

A summative evaluation system can be threatening to the extent that major stakeholders withhold full cooperation. This effect may be reduced if they are given a hand in the design of the system and the instruments used. There is a further benefit, namely that the system is less likely to be flawed if those who are to use it have been involved in its planning.

#### **5.2.5 Where Possible, Standard Instruments Should be Used**

This principle is of particular relevance where people are being compared against each other or rated against a set of criteria e.g., evaluation for academic promotion. The student questionnaire is an example in point. It is feasible to use a standard set of questions relating to lecturing across the university but it is however necessary to make allowances for faculty-specific teaching methods relating to, for example, clinical teaching, laboratory teaching and fieldwork.

## 5.2.6 Great Care Needs to be Taken in the Management of Summative Evaluation

In the interests of validity and reliability, the administration of questionnaires and peer reports and the compilation of data from such instruments should be managed by a neutral third party such as a Quality Office. Particular care should be taken that:

- Stocks of blank questionnaires are kept under secure conditions
- Only the required number of blank questionnaires is issued to a class.
- The purpose of the peer report/questionnaires is explained carefully to the peers/students.
- Questionnaires are administered at the beginning of the class without prior notice to students and in the absence of the teacher.
- Evaluation data are made available only on a 'need to know' basis.
- Administrative procedures are consistent across the institution.

## 5.3 Summary

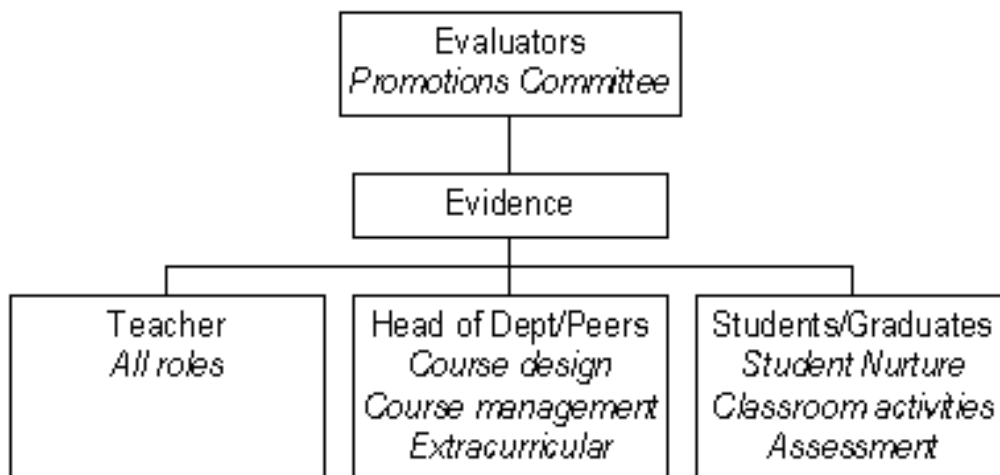


Figure 5.1: Evaluating Teaching for Promotion

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Summative Evaluation</b>
<b>Primary purpose</b>	Judgments of performance leading to administrative and/or personnel decisions
<b>Timing</b>	Retrospective
<b>Evaluators</b>	External to programme
<b>Confidentiality</b>	Need to know basis
<b>Process</b>	Formal

## 5.4 Further Reading

Gibbs, G. (1992). *Creating A Teaching Profile*. Bristol, UK: Technical and Educational Services.

Lyons, N., Hyland, A., and Ryan, N. (2003). *Advancing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Through a Reflective Portfolio Process: the University College Cork Experience*. Cork, Ireland: University College Cork.  
URL: <http://tinyurl.com/lsgow>

Scriven, M. (1981). Summative teacher evaluation. In J. Millman (Ed.), *Handbook of Teacher Evaluation*. London and Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

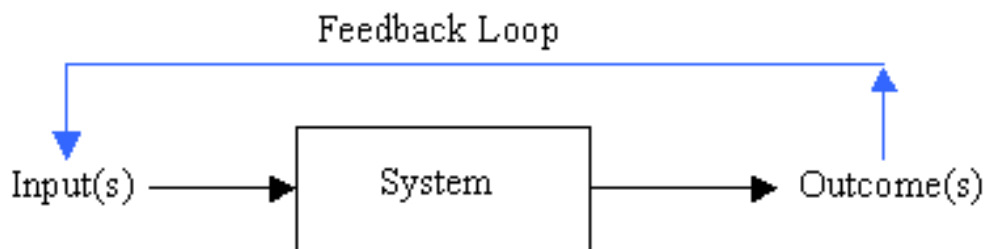
Webb, G. (1994). *Making the Most of Appraisal: Career and Professional Development Planning for Lecturers*. London, UK: Kogan Page.

## Chapter 6

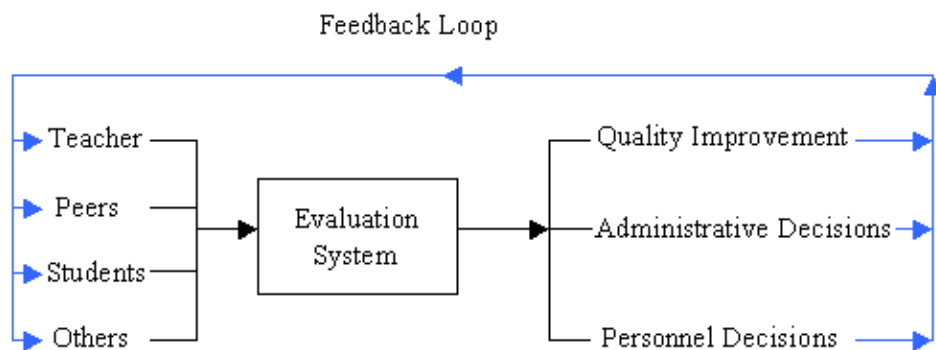
# After the Evaluation: Feedback Loops

### 6.1 Overview

When information about the result of a transformation or an action is sent back to the input(s) to the system, the process is called a 'feedback loop':



The diagram looks like this in relation to formative and summative evaluation systems.





The metaphor should not be overstrained—in classical systems theory, positive feedback causes instability in the system!

The major point is that the results of evaluations of teaching should be made available to those people and groups who have been a source of evidence, if only for reasons of common courtesy. For example, there is usually no formal mechanism for notifying Departmental Reviewers or peer referees of the outcomes of their reports which are difficult to write and are time-consuming. The principle applies whether the evaluation has been formative or summative or whether it has been conducted at the departmental or individual level.

But there are reasons beyond courtesy for ensuring the evaluation feedback loop is closed.

### **6.1.1 Students**

Fears are frequently expressed that students may be over-exposed to the evaluation process and may refuse to cooperate if they are asked to complete too many questionnaires in a short period of time. This fear may be valid in the period prior to a departmental review when all courses are being evaluated and if the students get no feedback about what happened to the survey results.

The authors administered one of Australia's largest teaching survey systems for a number of years. In 1991, there was a coordinated attack on the system by a department about to be evaluated and one of the arguments used was that students were 'over-surveyed'. We decided to ask all students being surveyed that year what they thought. We asked them three very simple questions and gave them an opportunity to add their own comments:

- Do you take the questionnaires seriously?
- Is the number of surveys about right?
- Should the system continue?

To our considerable (and pleased) surprise, more than 95% of the students answered the first two questions in the affirmative and more than 92% of the third in the affirmative. The reasons for the slightly less favourable response to the last question were that students were not told the results of the survey and that they could see little improvement in teacher performance.

The major reason why students were not told of the results was that it took us too long at that time to process the questionnaires (which had been administered at the end of the academic year). On the other hand, it was perhaps rather optimistic of the students to expect instant improvement.

Thus, to avoid 'survey burnout' and to ensure continuing student support, it is necessary to tell the students firstly what the results were, at least in broad terms, and second, what action will be taken in response to those results.

We do not recommend the practice of 'naming and shaming' (that is, posting the questionnaire results on the departmental notice board, a common practice in American universities), if only because perverse academics with low scores have been known to actually take pride in them and/or see them as proof of student incompetence or malevolence.

At the individual teacher or course level, probably the best practice is for the teacher to discuss the broad thrust of the results with the class or sub-groups thereof and to set out possible actions for improvement. It should be remembered that not all student expectations can be met due to resource limitations, departmental or profession set curricula and so on. When students understand the reasons why not all improvement can be instantaneous, they remain cooperative. On the other hand, where they have made legitimate criticisms and improvements can be made in the following year, then such improvements should be put into effect.

Such discussions also have the benefit that the dialogue can continue, with students amplifying the reasons for their ratings and comments. This benefit is less likely where emails or web sites are used to convey the information to them. In general, however, we do not believe that detailed results of questionnaires should be given to students in writing because of the danger that they may be misused.

The situation becomes somewhat more complex when the evaluation is conducted at the departmental level. Even assuming that teachers have discussed the results of individual course questionnaires with their students, the processes of a departmental review can be drawn out over a considerable period culminating in resolutions being passed by the institution's academic council. While departments and academic councils do normally have student representatives, they are notoriously lax in reporting to their constituents. Part of the answer lies in training and support for student representatives at that level, but there also needs to be in place an efficient and effective system of class representatives as an essential communications link. Departmental cooperation with the Students Union is essential.

### 6.1.2 Teachers

Where teachers conduct a purely formative evaluation, a feedback loop is irrelevant because the whole process, by definition, consists of feedback from one or more sources. Universities should, however, provide a service whereby staff can seek advice about the interpretation of feedback (particularly questionnaires) and about implementation of improvements. Such a service, whether provided by a Quality Office or by an academic development unit must be completely confidential.

Feedback loops for teachers do become important with summative evaluations of teaching or courses conducted by third parties. It is most unwise to institute summative evaluations until adequate support mechanisms are in place. There is an argument that teacher support should be based firmly in the Department, either through a mentor system or by the head of department. Such support is highly desirable but it does not replace the role of an impartial and confidential central academic development service.

One of the reasons is that an experienced academic developer can probe behind the data in a way that is difficult for departmental colleagues. For example, students might criticise an aspect of an individual's teaching which is a symptom of a problem at departmental level. To take a very simple instance, a lecturer may be perceived as talking too fast where the real problem is that the course syllabus, determined by the department, is overcrowded. The remedy is not to get the lecturer to slow down but to persuade the department to examine its curriculum.

Again, sensitive discussions with an academic developer can lead to ongoing professional development for the teacher concerned in a neutral and confidential environment which is difficult, if not impossible to achieve in the departmental setting.

Heads of department are often tempted to send staff with a 'poor' teaching evaluation to the academic development unit, an action which causes embarrassment to both parties. A rather more productive atmosphere is created where the unit has established its reputation for effectiveness and all its clients are volunteers

## 6.2 Further Reading

Stachow, G. and Reed, G. (2000). *Teaching Quality Systems in Business and Management Studies: the Student Interface*. Loughborough University Business School.

## Chapter 7

### Concluding Remarks

There are number of good reasons for evaluating teaching ranging from the desire to improve it to demonstration of quality. The type of evaluation used will depend on the purpose of that valuation and it is therefore important that evaluators be sure of their purpose and choose the evaluation methodology and sources of evidence accordingly.

If teaching is simply regarded as transmission of knowledge, evaluation methods will focus on the individual academic, but, if teaching is seen as creating and sustaining an effective environment for learning, then it becomes the responsibility of the institution itself, of faculties, departments and schools as well as individual teachers and should be evaluated accordingly. At the institution level, for example, promotions policies which do not take good teaching into account send clear messages to academic staff with flow-on effects on student learning. At the faculty/school/department levels, curriculum decisions and assessment policies directly affect the quality of student learning and should be evaluated. Influencing these matters is often beyond the power of the individual teacher.

At the departmental/school level, key questions for the unit are:

1. What are we trying to do?
2. How are we trying to do it?
3. How do we know it works?
4. How do we change in order to improve?

The questions are simple to pose but in practice difficult to answer, unless the unit continually thinks through its teaching activities.

When it comes to evaluating individual teachers or courses, the distinction between formative and summative evaluations becomes vital. While, the results of summative evaluations may be used formatively, formative evaluations should never be used for administrative or personnel decision making.

Information should be obtained from a number of sources; students, peers, colleagues, graduates and possibly employers with appropriate information gathering methodology according to the type of source. In general, the administration of summative evaluations should be much more strict than for formative evaluations, although no harm is done if the higher standards of administration are applied to the latter.

Having conducted evaluations of teaching, institutions should ensure that there is support for both units and individuals to analyse the results and to make improvements. The cost of this support should not be underestimated. Without it, however, evaluation of teaching becomes a sham.

In summary, evaluation of teaching is useful if there is a clear purpose, appropriate methodology and support for improvement initiatives.

## Appendix A

# Student Surveys: Some Technical Matters

### A.1 Introduction

This Appendix is not intended to be a complete analysis of technical problems associated with conducting student surveys. It deals only with issues we have encountered and which we think are important.

### A.2 Validity and Reliability

Sooner or later, the conversation at the committee meeting or in the faculty lounge turns to student ratings of instructors. It's a sure bet that within six seconds, someone will announce that ratings are meaningless - students don't know enough to evaluate the quality of their instruction ... What is interesting is that these assertions are invariably offered without a scrap of evidence by individuals with well-deserved reputations for analytical thinking. If someone offered such unsupported arguments in a research seminar, most of us would dismiss both the arguments and the arguer out of hand. In discussions of teaching, however, we routinely suspend the rules of logical inference without a second thought.

— (?)

Feldman goes on to analyse a number of myths which seem to be almost universal. The points below use the terminology we have adopted in this manual rather than Feldman's.

- Students lack the wisdom and experience to have valid and reliable opinions about the effectiveness of their current teachers.
- Students who give low ratings to teachers will, as graduates, appreciate those teachers.
- Student surveys of teaching are just popularity contests.
- Easy teachers get the highest ratings.
- Multiple choice student surveys have no value.
- Teachers who get high ratings aren't really doing a better job of teaching.
- Student evaluations don't improve teaching.

Believers in the myths should simply read the comprehensive reviews of the approximately 2000 research projects about the evaluation of teaching written by ?, ? and ?.

Marsh concludes his most thorough review with these words:

Research described in this article demonstrates that student ratings are clearly multidimensional, quite reliable, reasonably valid, relatively uncontaminated by many variables often seen as sources of potential bias, and are seen to be useful by students, faculty, and administrators. However, the same findings also demonstrate that student ratings may have some halo effect, have at least some reliability, have only modest agreement with some criteria of effective teaching, are probably affected by some potential sources of bias, and are viewed with some scepticism by faculty as a basis for personnel decisions. *It should be noted that this level of uncertainty probably exists in every area of applied psychology and for all personnel evaluation systems.* Nevertheless, the reported results clearly demonstrate that a considerable amount of useful information can be obtained from student ratings; useful for feedback to faculty, useful for personnel decisions, useful to students in the selection of courses, and useful for the study of teaching. *Probably, students' evaluations of teaching effectiveness are the most thoroughly studied of all forms of personnel evaluation, and one of the best in terms of being supported by empirical research.*

—(?) [our emphases]

<b>Optical Mark Reader</b>	<b>Computer Scanner</b>	<b>Direct Input (e.g., web)</b>
High speed scanning: about 2000 sheets per hour.	Slow scanning: about 15 sheets per minute.	Immediate: questionnaires completed on-line.
Inflexible: requires special pre-printed sheets.	Flexible: client can design questionnaires easily.	Flexible.
Equipment expensive.	Standard office equipment.	Standard office equipment.
Questionnaires completed in class: high response rates, good security.	Questionnaires completed in class: high response rates, good security.	May have poor response rates and security problems. All students may not have ready access to the web.

Table A.1: Different Methods of Processing Survey Data

### **A.3 Data Processing**

There is no simple answer to the question of which is the best method of processing the data obtained from student surveys. Choice will depend on the size of the project and the resources available. Table tableA.1 provides a comparison between the three main options.

Thus, a teacher wishing to conduct a formative evaluation with a small class may be happy with slow scanning rates, especially as he/she can easily design the questionnaire without professional help. On the other hand, where large classes are involved, Optical Mark Readers may have to be used because of the numbers involved. Currently, web-based questionnaires are only suitable for classes which meet in a computer laboratory which enables them to be completed under supervision.

### **A.4 Question Anchors**

Most readers will be familiar with the following question format where 'Strongly Agree' is rated 5 and 'Strongly Disagree' is rated zero:



The lecturer speaks clearly:

**Strongly Agree**      **Strongly Disagree**

There are two problems with this format:

- Strictly speaking we want to know the degree to which the lecturer speaks clearly, rather than how strongly the students feel about the matter.
- How do we interpret a mid-point rating? Does the student have no feelings about the matter? Is the student not in a position to judge? What numerical value should we give to such a rating? A rating of 3 would be inappropriate.

A rather better format is:

The lecturer speaks clearly:

**All of the time**      **None of the Time**

or:

The lecturer speaks:

**Very clearly**      **Very unclearly**

Note that here, the anchors will change with each question which is something that provides the OMR software developers with a problem. It is, however, generally possible to adapt their standard software to accommodate this better practice.

## A.5 Further Reading

Cashin, W. (1995). *Student Ratings of Teaching: The Research Revisited*. Paper 32. The IDEA Center (Individual Development & Educational Assessment).

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/119gw>

Feldman, R. (1992). What do they know, anyway? *Chemical Engineering Education*, 26(3):pp. 134–135.

URL: <http://tinyurl.com/mb2p7>

Marsh, H. W. (1987). Students' evaluation of university teaching: Research findings, methodological issues, and directions for future research. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 11:pp. 253–388.

Murray, H. G. (1980). *Evaluating University Teaching: A Review of Research*. Toronto, Canada: Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Association.

## Appendix B

# So you want to evaluate some teaching? A preliminary checklist.

1. How do *you* define teaching at Third-level?

2. What are your purpose(s)?

- Formative
- Summative

3. What level(s) are you evaluating?

- Institution
- Faculty
- School/Department
- Degree Programme
- Course
- Module
- Individual Lecturer/Teaching Assistant

4. Who are your stakeholders?

- Government Agencies
- Professional Association
- Review Panel
- Promotions Committee
- Students
- Department
- Head of Department
- Programme/course co-ordinator
- Unions
- Employers
- Institutional Support Services
- Individual Lecturer/Teaching Assistant
- Other(specify):

5. Confidentiality rules. Which of the stakeholders should have access to the detailed results of the evaluation?

- Government Agencies
- Professional Association
- Review Panel
- Promotions Committee
- Students
- Department
- Head of Department
- Programme/course co-ordinator
- Employers
- Institutional Support Services

- Unions
- Individual Lecturer/Teaching Assistant
- Other(specify):

## Appendix C

# Checklist: Valuing Teaching<sup>1</sup>



**Higher Education Research and Development  
Society of Australasia Inc.<sup>2</sup>**

The Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA) is a professional association for those involved in research and development on post-secondary education and for those staff of tertiary institutions who are committed to the improvement of the quality of teaching and learning. HERDSA has been at the forefront of initiatives to promote professional development for academic staff and to improve evaluation activities

Currently major changes are underway in higher education. In the process of institutional reorganisation there is a danger that the basic mission of higher education institutions gets lost. The major role of higher education is to promote learning and learning is mediated by academic staff, one of whose roles is that of teaching. Whatever else institutions might value, they must value teaching.

Excellence in teaching is not incompatible with excellence in research. It is particularly important at a time when funds for research are becoming more keenly sought, that research is not emphasised at the expense of teaching.

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<sup>1</sup>All material in this appendix is © Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Inc.

<sup>2</sup><http://www.herdsa.org.au/>

The Society is aware that many institutions are seeking to improve the quality of teaching and student learning and are seeking specific advice on ways of improving teaching, recognising good teaching, and of assessing teaching. HERDSA has assembled the attached checklist, based on what is regarded as good practice in higher education.

The aim of the checklist is to draw attention to issues which the Society considers central to the promotion of good teaching and to prompt institutions to reflect on their own practices in this area. The list is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive, but to indicate those matters on which institutions might focus if they wish to give greater emphasis to their teaching function.

Institutions and departments are encouraged to use this checklist as a means of evaluating the priority they give to the teaching role of staff. Academic boards or education committees might wish to use the list as a starting point for an appraisal of the teaching role in their institution.

*HERDSA welcome comments and debates on the issues raised by the checklist. Correspondence should be addressed to:*

HERDSA Office, PO Box 27, Milperra, NSW, AUSTRALIA 2214

**Phone:** +61-2-9771-3911

**Fax:** +61-2-9771-4299

**Email:** office@herdsa.org.au

## Statements on the Value of Teaching

1. Do the aims or the mission statements of the institution include explicit items about the importance of teaching?
2. Have the Vice-Chancellor or Director/Principal and other senior officers, such as the chair of the promotions committee, made statements which have drawn attention to the importance of teaching in the university? Have they acknowledged the need to increase the value attached to teaching in the institution?
3. In responding to those aspects of Government and public documents which address teaching and learning issues, has the institution produced detailed and considered submissions which indicate strong commitment to the improvement of teaching and learning?
4. Do special achievements in the area of teaching appear frequently in such places as institutional newsletters and press releases?
5. Is at least as much space given to teaching activities as research activities in institutional publications such as annual reports and newsletters?
6. Does a senior committee of the institution have primary and explicit responsibility to oversee the educational policies and practices of the institution including the fostering of good teaching and assessment practices?
7. Do course approval and review procedures consider the selection of teaching, learning and assessment strategies as well as curriculum content and course descriptions? Is it common practice for course proposals to be referred back to departments to enable greater attention to be given to these factors?
8. Are student views actively sought using such procedures as course reviews and in the development of new programs?
9. Are high attrition rates subject to scrutiny and improvement?
10. Has the institution sponsored an innovative teaching week, forum on excellence in teaching, or other strategy to raise awareness of quality in teaching in recent years?



## **Appointments, tenure and promotion**

11. Have criteria for appointment, tenure and promotion been established or reviewed to ensure that teaching factors are explicitly included at each level? Are teaching accomplishments considered as a separate category in arriving at such decisions?
12. Have appointment, tenure and promotions decisions been monitored to determine the weight given to teaching in recent decisions (e.g. through schemes involving separate rankings of achievements in, say, teaching and research, through recording numbers of successful candidates for promotion whose principal achievements are in teaching, or through analysis of questions asked of candidates and discussions of promotion committees)?
13. Has the involvement of people acknowledged to be excellent in teaching been actively sought in the development and review of appointment, tenure and promotion criteria, procedures and guidelines?
14. Do guidelines for appointment, tenure and promotion insist that applicants submit evidence about achievements in the teaching domain? Does such evidence focus on quality of performance in all aspects of promoting student learning (e.g., on other than the amount of lecturing)?
15. Are there standard procedures in place to enable staff to present evaluations of their teaching by students, peers and others?
16. Are referees with specific knowledge of applicants' teaching sought? Are referees required to specify their knowledge base for comments on applicants' teaching achievements? Are the views of such referees expected to be accorded the same status of that of referees commenting on other professional roles?
17. Are training programs provided for members of selection, tenure and promotions committees? Do they include sessions on how to recognise and assess teaching accomplishments as well as how to interpret data on teaching performance?
18. Are there clearly defined paths for advancement for staff whose main contribution to the institution is in the area of teaching? Are there

significant numbers of promotions of staff in this category?

19. Are staff who do not meet minimum specified criteria for teaching performance at each level unsuccessful in gaining tenure or being promoted?
20. Is it possible for a staff member whose principal achievements are in the area of teaching to be promoted to the higher levels?
21. Are the criteria and methods of assessing teaching sufficiently flexible to enable unconventional teachers to be recognised and not disadvantaged?

## **Professional development**

22. Are comprehensive programs to assist staff to develop in their teaching role readily available within the institution?
23. Do the duty statements of heads of departments include responsibility for the promotion of good teaching in the department and the professional development of staff? Are such factors given significant attention in appraisal schemes for department heads?
24. Do training programs for heads and deans include sessions on staff development and how to promote good teaching, and provide access to recent developments in teaching and learning research and practice?
25. Can Special/Outside Studies or Professional Experience Programs be undertaken by staff to allow them to focus primarily on teaching developments (as distinct from research and professional practice in their discipline area)?
26. Are advice and resources available to enable staff to evaluate their teaching for both improvement and the documentation of teaching for advancement?
27. Is it a simple matter for staff to administer student opinion questionnaires in their classes (i.e. a readily accessible system for the preparation of questionnaires and the analysis and presentation of reports is available)?

28. Are staff encouraged to attend seminars and conferences on teaching in tertiary education? Do they receive financial support for so doing?
29. Are specific staff designated at a department or faculty level to induct new staff to teaching and assist them to develop their skills in this area?
30. Are all new staff given a reduced load in their first year to help them develop their skills in this area?
31. Does the institution mount programs for staff new to teaching to assist them to develop their skills in this area?
32. Does the institution mount programs for developing the teaching skills of part-time teaching staff, including sessional lecturers and tutors?
33. Are specific times designated "free from other duties" by the institution to enable new staff to attend teaching development programs?

## **Support for teaching and its improvement**

34. Are small scale "teaching improvement grants" available at institution, faculty or department level for individuals to develop such things as new approaches to teaching and quality teaching materials?
35. Are there awards, prizes, incentives or forms of recognition (other than promotion) available from the institution, faculty, department, Alumni Association or Staff Association for excellence in teaching? Is such recognition available for both individuals and groups (for example, the teaching team which developed an innovation?)
36. Is provision made to enable experienced staff to be freed from other duties for course and teaching materials development?
37. Are there funds available within the institution to support research and development aimed at improving teaching practices and student

learning? Are individual members of staff who are not primarily educational researchers encouraged to submit proposals for the use of such funds?

38. Is there a mechanism for evaluating the adequacy and effectiveness of professional support services for teaching and learning (services such as study skills centres and audio-visual services?)
39. Is research on teaching and learning within a discipline given the same status as research in the discipline when, for example, calculating performance indicators and making decisions on staff advancement?
40. Does the institution have a designated unit or centre with responsibilities for academic professional development and research and development on teaching and learning?
41. Is the unit staffed by academic staff experienced in the area? Are the numbers of staff in the unit commensurate with the size of the institution? (cf. the CTEC Johnson Report recommended a minimum of three academic staff in such a unit).
42. Are there schemes for the secondment of staff to units for special projects on the improvement of teaching?
43. Is there any regular public reporting of innovation or excellence in teaching? Does the institution sponsor and provide editorial support for a staff newsletter which focuses on teaching and learning issues?

## **Institutional priorities and indicators**

44. Are resources allocated to teaching on the basis of need (e.g., is more attention given to parts of the curriculum in which students are most likely to fail, including first year)?
45. Does the institution sponsor applied research and evaluation on teaching and learning issues (such as: student attrition rates, progress of research students, teaching innovation, equal opportunity in education, etc.)?

46. Is the institution actively involved in developing performance indicators to indicate the quality of teaching?
47. Does the institution have a procedure for identifying significant needs in teaching and learning as these relate to longer term planning (for example, implications of admission of full-fee overseas students and those with non-accredited entry qualifications), together with mechanisms for giving attention to these (for example through major developmental projects)?

## Appendix D

# A Checklist for Evaluating Teaching at the Departmental Level

(Drawn from Roe, E. and McDonald, R., 1983, *Informed professional judgment: A guide to evaluation in post-secondary education*, St Lucia, London and New York: University of Queensland Press.)

### Learning Objectives

1. Are the programme and course objectives clear to staff and students?
2. Do the programme and course objectives clearly express learning outcomes in terms of knowledge requirements, skill requirements and attitudes?
3. Is the balance between the major programme and course objectives appropriate?
4. Do the programme and course objectives reflect an adequate academic standard?

## **Content**

5. Is the programme content appropriately structured in terms of the balance between major objectives of the programme?
6. Is the sequence of programme content appropriate?
7. Is there sufficient breadth and depth in the programme content?
8. Does the programme content permit achievement of the programme objectives?

## **Teaching and Learning Strategies and Assessment**

9. Having regard for the programme objectives are the various types of teaching and learning strategies used appropriately?
10. Are there adequate opportunities for students to engage in active learning?
11. Are the methods of assessment employed in the programme appropriate having regard for the programme objectives?
12. Does the weighting of assessment in different content areas reflect the balance between the major objectives of the programme?
13. Are the forms of assessment sufficiently valid and reliable in measuring student performance?

## **Resources**

14. Are the staffing levels and numbers appropriate having regard for the duration of the programme, the numbers of students and the balance over different content areas?
15. Is there adequate support staff to meet technical and administrative needs?

16. Are the staff needs for informal and formal education and development activities adequately catered for?
17. Do library and IT resources provide satisfactory support for these programmes?
18. Is the level of specialist equipment satisfactory?
19. Are staff and students well accommodated for learning and study?

## **Quality Improvement**

20. Does the department provide for adequate ongoing evaluation and redevelopment of the programme?



## Appendix E

# A Checklist for Observing a Class

### Notes

- This checklist may be used in, or adapted for, a variety of class types.
- Observers should not be asked to rate the quality of any indicator. Their role is to provide factual information.

## **Introducing the class**

- Clarity of aims and objectives for the class:
  
- Relationship of this class to previous work:
  
- Clarity of 'scene setting' and overview:

## Structure

- Logical development of material:
  
- Clarifying structure for students:
  
- Quality of handouts:







## Appendix F

# Sample Promotion Application Form (General and Teaching Sections Only)

### Section A: General Information (to be completed by the candidate)

#### Candidate Details

- Name:
- School/Department:
- Telephone extension:
- E-mail address:
- Date of appointment or last promotion:

## Earned Degrees

Earned degrees received in chronological order beginning with the most recent (specify date, subject, institution and grade of Honours):

<b>Date</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Institution</b>	<b>Honours Grade</b>

## Other Qualifications

Other qualifications received in chronological order beginning with the most recent (e.g. professional qualifications, honorary degrees):

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>



## **Awards and Distinctions**

Awards and distinctions in chronological order beginning with the most recent since your appointment:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>

## **Career Summary**

Career to date, including any previous appointments in the University (e.g., as Contract Lecturer), in chronological order beginning with the most recent:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>

## **Special Considerations**

List any special considerations which the Promotions Committee should take into account:

## **Areas of Performance**

Indicate each area in which you consider your performance to be strong (one area must be teaching or research):

- Teaching
- Research
- Service to the University
- Service to the discipline/community

## **Peer Reviewers**

List the names and full addresses (including telephone number and email address) of three Peer Reviewers who can comment on your performance in the areas listed. At least one Peer Reviewer (Teaching) and one Peer Reviewer (Research) must be listed. You must check that the Peer Reviewers are available and willing to provide reports before completing this application.

Short-listed candidates must provide the Secretary to the Committee with sufficient evidence (including a teaching profile) to enable the Peer Reviewers to complete their reports.

- Peer Reviewer(s) (Teaching):

- Peer Reviewer(s) (Research):

- Peer Reviewer (Service to the University):

- Peer Reviewer (Service to the discipline or the community):

## **Section B: Teaching (to be completed by the candidate)**

### **Courses Taught**

List courses taught since advancement beyond the Merit Bar (use indicated format). Indicate with "\*" those courses for which you are the only Lecturer or for which you are the Coordinator. Indicate with "\*\*" those courses you have designed yourself. Include both undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Number and type of class (enrolment)</b>	<b>Year(s)</b>

## Postgraduate Student Supervision

Indicate the number and level of postgraduate students supervised since appointment or last promotion.

## Postgraduate Awards Completed

- PhD:

<b>Student</b>	<b>Date of Award</b>	<b>Individual or joint supervision</b>

- Research Masters:

<b>Student</b>	<b>Date of Award</b>	<b>Individual or joint supervision</b>

- Taught Masters:

<b>Student</b>	<b>Date of Award</b>	<b>Individual or joint supervision</b>

### **Current Postgraduate Students**

<b>Student</b>	<b>Initial Reg- istration Date</b>	<b>Qualification</b>	<b>Anticipated Completion Date</b>	<b>Individual or joint supervision</b>

### **Other Teaching Responsibilities**

List any other teaching responsibilities (teaching consultancies etc.):

## **Approaches to Teaching**

Give an account of your philosophy of teaching and learning including reasons why you choose your methods of instruction and assessment. *Discuss any innovations you have introduced into your teaching and indicate areas where you have displayed leadership.*

## **Student Feedback**

Comment on any student feedback received and on how you used that feedback to improve your teaching (student feedback results may be included as an attachment to this form):

## **Professional Development**

List any professional development activities you have undertaken to help you improve your teaching:

## **Appendix G**

# **Sample Peer Reviewer Report Form (Teaching)**



## Introduction

University procedures relating to promotion define teaching as the creation and sustaining of an effective environment for learning. It may include any or all of the following:

- the introduction of the concepts, methods, and subject matter of the discipline or field of study in a manner which stimulates those taught and enables them to engage with the knowledge in a critical and independent manner appropriate to the level at which they have been taught;
- curriculum design, course management, instruction, assessment, and the creation of a social and academic environment that promotes learning;
- initiation into research by supervision of dissertations or other research projects at the appropriate level.

Please base this report on your knowledge of the candidate's teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Other Peer Reviewers will have been contacted about other aspects of the candidate's work. The candidate has supplied the University with the evidence you need to complete the Report (attached).

*Having due regard to the criteria for promotion to the position applied for, please rate the candidate under the headings listed below.*

Please leave any section blank where you are unable to respond.

## **Candidate Details**

- Name:
- Promotion Position Applied For:
- Date of Appointment/Promotion to Current Position:

## **Curriculum Design**

Please comment on the appropriateness and clarity of course learning outcomes (objectives) and the match between learning outcomes, content, teaching methods, learning resources and assessment.

## **Administration of Teaching**

Please comment on the quality of the candidates administrative duties relating to teaching including the quality of information provided to students.

## **Assessment of Student Learning**

Please comment on the quality of assessment tasks such as examinations, assignments, projects etc as relevant to this discipline.

## **Innovations**

Please comment on the quality of any teaching innovations introduced by the candidate.

## **Scholarship in Teaching**

Please comment on the overall quality of the subject matter taught as a reflection of the scholarship of the candidate.

## **Further Comments**

Please add any other comments which are relevant to the candidate's teaching.

## **Reviewer Details**

- Name:
- Signature:
- Date: