

Oct 27, 2021

Kaffeeklatsch Notes

Participants: 30

Subject: Changing up Class Evaluations

Hosted by: CTLT - Anne Sommerfeld

Date: Wednesday, October 27, 2021

Time: 10:30 am– 11:20 am

- General confusion of students on what the evaluations were for – the course or the Instructor
- Laborious process for administrative staff
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Past process at UNBC

- Students given 20 minutes in last 2 weeks of class to fill in a bubble sheet, comment sheet- sent back to admin assistant (AA)
- Scantron forms collated by AA, comments collated and sometimes typed if class size small
- Results released in next semester in paper copy- faculty member then can scan them in or have file drawers full



2 years since we have run course evals formally

We have had some informal course eval processes (facilitated by the CTLT using MS Forms and BB Surveys where Instructors did their own evaluations). Guides on those processes are found at: <https://pressbooks.bccampus.ca/unbc/chapter/conducting-surveys-and-evaluations/>

This is a draft, so alterations and questions can be taken into consideration and added; this will not yet be set in stone

Working group for Class Eval

- Sarah Dewell
- Meghan Costello
- Luke Harris
- Roy Rea
 - Terms of reference being created
- Focus groups with grad students and undergrad students
- Plan to have draft survey in place for Nov 22nd -Dec 6th

There is a lot of confusion and areas that are lacking in our current system. The literature brings up many points that we would like to consider and attempt to include.

Issues from literature review- several!

- What was the focus of these evals? Teaching, learning?
- Equity, diversity, discrimination
- Indigenous voice ??
- Do students have enough knowledge to evaluate teaching?
- ??’s Based on lecture type class interaction
- TA’s not noticed or not clear
- Labs sometimes separate, sometimes not
- On line learning- not clear
- Class only, not program or university supports
- Reducing people to numbers

Definitions

- Student eval of teaching SET
- Student eval of learning SEL
- Teaching evals
- Course feedback
- Evergreen questions

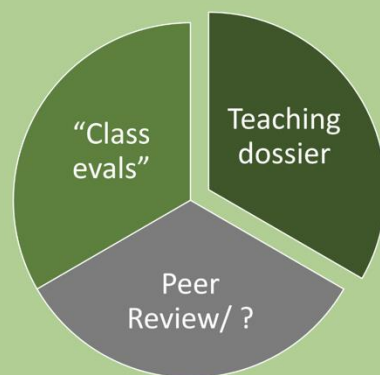
Evergreen questions: questions that are constantly updated and refreshed—working questions

New Process

- Switch to digital
- create up to date questions, have them reviewed regularly
- Suggest a mid semester survey as well as final

Two points of feedback is something that the Working Group is keen on doing

Suggested approach of proof of teaching ability in PAR



PAR: (Every two years) Professional Activity Report www2.unbc.ca/human-resources/performance-feedback
(Article 21A in the Collective Agreement)

Questions:

Q: How do these fit into the Faculty Association agreement? The current Faculty agreement does not currently reference any evaluations. Is this new evaluation process being developed with the Faculty Association? Is it required? There is a concern that Faculty members may think they are required to use evaluations – will the communication be done to ensure they are clear that they are optional?

A: In the collective agreement it does note the distinction between a Faculty member initiated evaluations and ones that the employer might create. The working group is trying to provide Faculty members with a suite of options for evals and they can choose to engage with these options & get feedback for themselves which may be useful for the tenure and promotion

process, teaching dossiers/award applications. Providing a service to Faculty members so they don't have to hunt for tools or types of questions.

Those self-serve survey options are outlined at pressbooks.bccampus.ca/unbc/chapter/conducting-surveys-and-evaluations

Importance of peer teaching evaluations is clear in the collective agreement – this can also be used in PAR's and tenure & promotion applications.

Q: Are there any training or skills development support available for new sessional instructors? I feel like I have a steep learning curve to prepare my course content for the winter semester.

A: The ISW (Instructional Skills Workshop) it is a very valuable experience www2.unbc.ca/centre-for-teaching-and-learning/services

Q: What is the point of these evaluations? Is there help for sessionals to be a better teacher?

A: This question identifies the philosophical issues regarding if we should be doing instructor teaching or student learning evaluations. We are trying to consolidate these ideas with tools and improve both as a whole. Also, these changes will attempt to identify how to make learning objectives more accessible for all.

- Shift from evaluation of teaching to evaluation of learning.

Resource: The recent decision from Memorial University "Developing a comprehensive system of evaluating courses and teaching effectiveness" is insightful mun.ca/senate/about/ECTE_report.pdf

Q: Is it summative feedback for PARS or is it formative feedback so that the instructor can change what they are doing?

"If I was to do a formative feedback session for myself I would be asking the questions that get all kinds of information that could easily be viewed as negative. I would really not want to put that into a PAR."

Q: What about the workload for administrative assistants?

A: The scantron system of the past is gone. The CTLT will also not be administering these evaluations. Admin assistants will likely have to work with their departments and faculty members to determine what digital work needs to be done with the data.

Q: I teach courses that students love to hate. In physical science the course builds on each other- students come back years later and say, "it was relevant after all." An eval just after the course is ending doesn't capture the evaluation of the whole program and whether or not it prepared them adequately.

"Excellent point M!!! a sort of program summative eval for graduating seniors"

"A true "exit survey" about all of the courses. It is not just M's courses where this happens."

"M's point could also address whether or not we are 'right' about how students will learn/integrate from one course to another."

"The old evaluations were shallow and their purpose was unclear. It wasn't clear who was receiving the feedback in the end. According to discussions between the student senators and Dan Ryan (a few years ago, pre-COVID) Many students thought it was a quality control process by the university, not a personal improvement tool for the instructor, so their feedback was misplaced. Clearer questions with a more obvious focus will really help get relevant feedback back out of them."

"Digital evaluations are much more flexible. Scantron had us locked into questions and we had to pay to change them."

"With the formative type feedback – Bill mentioned that we could put this in PARs. We could actually create our own evaluations and describe what we are doing and what changing we will make. Need training on how to put the right info into PARs, not just how to conduct an evaluation technically. Could also conduct "beef & pizza feedback sessions" in Engineering – where students give feedback on the program. "

"Those science discussion social events were good fun-- it was nice to be heard by faculty but also do it in a non-intimidating and informal way." (alumni/student perspective)

"It feels like there are a number of different goals. - Instructor feedback, to improve their own teaching; learning efficacy feedback, to improve the student's absorption of the material for their degree; course feedback, to improve the range of material available for the students and ensure their course selections are relevant to their degree... all of which are separate from overall quality control of our course delivery at UNBC"

- "I agree - I think what we are looking for is an institutional means to listen to students about their learning experiences, consistently reflect over time, and improve programs/courses based on the student feedback."

"People who experiment with teaching in their classroom – will this hamper teaching evals. Some UNBC instructors are experimenting with 'ungrading' – where they give feedback not grades. This is a big change from what students are expecting. "

"I tried something like ungrading in 1995 and the students hated it. I think it was because it was so different than what they were used to. I'd like to use it again but students need grades for going on to graduate school."

"We do have student feedback as part of the self-study for external reviews, but it is something that we could/should be doing independently of the external review process."

"I think the comment mentioned earlier about 'what students are learning from a course is important.'"

UNBC has Learning Outcomes for each program – perhaps that is something that we should be looking at/ revising.

The Evaluation working group does have sessions set up with both ugrad and grad student associations to get feedback on what they feel should be evaluated.

"There is the aspect of improving your teaching, but also giving Faculty multiple ways of proving their teaching. Give Faculty the tools to make their case – make it multi-faceted and intertwined."

"I strongly support that the student voice must be heard, and we need to take care how we facilitate that."

"3 [facets]... student, peers, and personal reflection."

The new West-Coast Teaching award – they want the story with it, context, not just numbers.

Would like to have flexibility for Instructors to do their own questions, especially in the midterm evals.

"Personal reflection: After every class ask yourself "What went well?" and "What would I do differently?" Find a partner to ask if you don't like talking to yourself."

"One other aspect is separating "teaching evaluation" from evaluation of the course. For example, we often get comments such as "great teacher but lousy course" (or the reverse...)"

"There should be a new process to give negative feedback when they are experiencing issues in the course. They need to know where to give this feedback other than on the evaluation. - Feedback for irrelevant/outdate course materials that are not useful for their degree, or feedback for an instructor who is not adequately conveying the information – quality control issues and where to send that feedback. The current evaluations just send the information to the instructor, not the university governance. UNBC's quality control procedures are not clear to the students."

"We went to a similar committee in Vancouver on a similar issue. If students were not given a place to say what they wanted, they would find a place to give it. If we are not careful where our questions are, students may put them where we [faculty] don't want them to."

"We need to ensure we have enough lines of communication for students, the Working group is addressing that."

"CTLT is working on a new Faculty Orientation to Teaching. Having people reflect on their teaching, and where to go to improve their teaching. If faculty want a better relationship with teaching and/or want to more effectively impart what they are teaching, we're trying to facilitate that. The CTLT is not a 'hospital for sick instructors' but rather a place of support."