

Feedback to Improve Teaching

As an instructor you will, from time to time, want to know how well your teaching is going and what or how much your students have learned. You can take the initiative to ask for various kinds of feedback, and use the information you receive to refine or revise your teaching.

You can also use information about your teaching and your students' progress to develop your Teaching Portfolio to support your case for teaching quality in a range of situations such as applications for promotion and teaching excellence awards.

What kinds of feedback I can get in relation to my teaching?

Dr. Barbara Davis, Director of the Office of Educational Development of the University of California at Berkeley has suggested seven areas where feedback is useful and can assist in improving teaching. These are:

1 Design of courses

The general question here is whether the course as a whole 'works':

- Are the course objectives reasonable?
- Is the syllabus well organized?
- Are the assignments and exams appropriately challenging?

2 Presentation of material

- Does the instructor convey enthusiasm for the subject matter?
- Are concepts clearly articulated?
- Does the instructor seem well prepared?

3 Command of subject matter

- Does the instructor exhibit an appropriate depth and breadth of knowledge?
- Is the instructor's information current and relevant?
- Does the instructor show continuous growth in the subject field?

4 Contributions to curriculum and instruction

- Has the instructor made a noteworthy contribution to the design and development of the department's curriculum?
- Has the instructor produced valuable instructional materials, for example, textbooks, course readers, videotapes, computer programs, slide presentations, or published materials related to teaching effectiveness or classroom activities?

5 Direction of student research

- How active has the instructor been in directing research projects and independent studies?
- What is the calibre of these student projects?

6 Advising

Does the instructor take an active interest in advisees' individual academic and career choices?
Does the instructor provide sufficient office time for students to obtain clarification and guidance?

7 Training and supervision of TAs

- How effectively does the instructor train and supervise TAs assigned to his or her course?
- How does the instructor contribute to the professional development of TAs?

(Davis, 1988)