

A Simple Strategy for Collecting Mid-Semester Student Feedback

Collecting feedback a few weeks into your course is a great way to see how things are going and demonstrates to your students that you care about their concerns and ideas. One simple strategy you can use is called “Start-Stop-Continue”. It takes about 15 minutes of class time.

Ask the students to take out a piece of paper (or you can create a shared Google document/spreadsheet to work in) and have them answer the following questions (stress the anonymity of the process and that you are only interested in understanding how things are going and whether you should consider making any changes):

1. What can we **start** doing to improve your learning in this class?
2. Is there anything we should **stop** doing that is making it difficult for you to learn in this class?
3. What should we **continue** doing that is helping you to learn in this class?

Framing the questions around their learning helps keep students focused when responding.

Collect and process the students’ responses (organizing them into a table or spreadsheet can be helpful). During the next class period, take some time at the beginning to discuss the results with your students. Topics might include:

- Suggestions from students you are willing to act on and how you intend to do so
- Suggestions from students that you are not willing to act on and **why**
- Any contradictory responses (e.g., some students say the textbook is helpful, others say that it is not). Ask more probing questions to get clarification on these discrepancies.

Collecting this feedback benefits both you and your students because it helps you to identify problem issues while you are teaching the class, rather than after the class is over (which is often the case with more formal end of semester evaluations). It also helps build good will with your students and shows them that you value their opinions and ideas.

One important caveat is that if you collect midsemester feedback, you **must** respond to students’ input. Asking for their feedback and then not processing it in a meaningful way may alienate students and potentially damage any rapport you’ve built with them throughout the semester. I’ve found that if you engage in this process earnestly with students, they generate really insightful, helpful suggestions for improving the course.

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