

## MICRO CASE STUDIES

### Do not let Student Evaluations “Derail” Your Teaching



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One of my students approached me expressing that they would appreciate it if we, as faculty professors, **collected feedback from students in the middle of the term** rather than solely doing it at the end of the academic term. Recalling some of the **harsh sentences expressed by my own students**, I still remember the horror when I first read them early in my career.

Reflecting on this request of my student, I feel that they have a point in requesting so and I have decided to give it a try again. As a faculty member, who has not tried out this practice for a while, I feel that I have to equip myself with the right strategies and have the right kind of **mindset** before I actually implement it. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

## Approach to the Solve the Problem

One good approach to this could be to review these “**harsh**” student feedback thematically. Some of these are about the following:

- The instructors’ expectations were not clear.
- The instructor did not provide enough structure.
- The instructor was not approachable.

# Solution Suggestions -1

*Harsh Student Feedback: “The instructors’ expectations were not clear”*

Coming from a high-school system, rigorously working for a formidable university entrance exam, students may find themselves in a chaotic situation in terms of fulfilling their responsibilities as undergraduates, especially in their freshman and sophomore years. While trying to adjust to university life on many levels, students fear even the slightest changes in the syllabi thinking that their grades will be adversely affected and they will even fail the course.

Now that students are responsible for their studies in a less structured environment as undergraduates, it may be important to consider the following while communicating your course organization and/or curricular changes with them:



Make sure that students know about “your end of the course goals” at the very beginning. A very important suggestion could be to “**advertise**” these goals by referencing **the practical value they have in their professional careers**. At this stage, it may be a brilliant idea to elicit these practical values from your students. This may help them recognize the importance of your class and they will feel **involved** from the first week on.



Create an **open door policy** for students in case they have further questions on the components of your syllabus. Rather than merely setting office hours at the beginning and putting them in your syllabus, you may also want to **remind** your students of your office hours from time to time and invite them to come and knock on your door if they feel uncertain about an assignment.



While making adjustments, articulate the reasons why you have decided to do so. **Create a safe space** for students to be able to share their thoughts, suggestions and concerns.

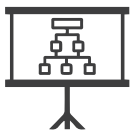


**Test students only when they are ready.** Remember even a short quiz with a 5% weight in the assessment may affect your students’ morale adversely if they take it at a bad time.

# Solution Suggestions -2

*Harsh Student Feedback: "The instructor did not provide enough structure"*

Students may feel lost in a less structured learning environment due to lack of adaptation from high school to university as mentioned above. It may be important to consider the following in the semester in terms of giving them a sense of the course structure:



**Model your expectations in class.** Try to verbalize what you expect students to do for particular tasks. They may feel safer when it comes to real implementation.



Conduct **rubric training** in class. Give your students a student sample and have them use the rubric to evaluate it in groups. Then discuss the findings with them and **negotiate** the grade with them.



Provide **extra guidance** whenever you can. Show students **good and weak student assignment samples** and have them discuss the strengths and areas for improvement.



**Think aloud** in front of your students to show them how they should approach a particular task.



The more you articulate your expectations, the more clear your students will be on the course structure. **The more clear your students are, the more you will find willing participants!**

# Solution Suggestions -3

*Harsh Student Feedback: "The instructor was not approachable"*

Due to the pandemic our daily routines have changed. We wear masks in the classroom, which inevitably prevent us from using gestures and facial expressions. Due to lack of socialization and physical contact, students may sometimes feel lonely, isolated and even like an outsider in classes.



Upload a welcome video on **LMS** at the beginning of your course to talk about the sectoral value of your class as well as your expectations in general.



Being **more open** about your personality may help your students open up as well.



Students would appreciate having **small chats and conversations with faculty members**. The topic of the conversations could vary from faculty members' experiences in the sector, golden tips to study effectively, suggestions to improve classes and so on.



Make use of **formative feedback tools** to gain insights on their learning processes from time to time. Such formative assessment components could even entail personalized questions such as:

- Share one important thing you have learned;
- Share one thing that has surprised you;
- Share one thing, which is still muddy for you;
- Share one thing you would like to explore;
- I wish we had less \_\_\_\_\_ in our courses & I wish we had more \_\_\_\_\_ in our courses.