Approaches to Evaluation in Higher Education

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Session goals

- To explore purposes and approaches to evaluation of university teaching, faculty performance, and program quality
- To briefly describe the quality assurance system currently being developed at ANU
- To describe the role of the ANU Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching in supporting and improving evaluation of teaching
- To consider strategies for following up formative evaluation to enhance teaching effectiveness

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Some questions about evaluation

- What are we evaluating?
  - Teaching?
  - Research/Scholarship?
  - Service (internal, external)?
- What is the focus?
  - Individuals?
  - Courses?
  - Units (departments, Faculties)?
  - Institutions?

Evaluation Approaches

- Products (long-term and short-term)
  - Papers, grants, patents
  - Student achievements
    - exam results
    - evidence of learning gains (e.g. on generic measures)
    - transfers to other institutions
    - prizes and scholarships
    - lifetime career success and earnings
- Stakeholder/Customer Satisfaction
  - Student evaluations of teaching
  - Generic measures of student perceptions (CPQ, NSSE, exit polls)
  - Employer and parent perceptions of quality
- Reputational indicators (formal and informal)
  - Media reports, faculty honours and awards, etc.

The traditional vitae

RESEARCH	Publications Grants Honours	Published papers Original data?
UNIVERSITY SERVICE	Committee memberships	Committee reports?
COMMUNITY SERVICE	List of organisations	-----------------
TEACHING	List of courses Number of graduate students	-----------------

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Purposes of teaching evaluation

- To improve teaching quality based on knowledge of teacher's strengths and weaknesses
- To guide student course choice
- To provide evidence for career decisions, such as promotion
- To aid curriculum planning
- As part of researtch on teaching
- Public relations

## Sources of information about teaching

- **HEARSAY**
  - Comments and gossip from colleagues
  - Student comments and complaints
- **DIRECT OBSERVATION**
  - In team teaching
  - In conference presentations, seminars
- **STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRES**
- **EVIDENCE OF EFFECTS OF TEACHING**
  - Student learning outcomes

Four aspects of teaching

- **CLASSROOM PRESENTATION**
  - E.g. clarity of explanations, voice quality, enthusiasm, ability to handle questions, etc.
- **COURSE CONTENT**
  - E.g. organisation, level of complexity, coverage of field, use of examples, etc.
- **COURSE MANAGEMENT**
  - E.g. assessment methods, availability to students, quality of feedback, liaison with teaching assistants, organisation of student projects, field trips, etc.
- **NON-CLASSROOM TEACHING**
  - E.g. counselling students, mentoring colleagues, curriculum planning, writing textbooks and other teaching material, etc.
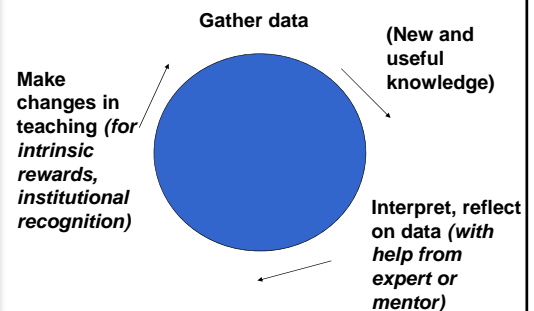
Typical Approaches to Teaching Evaluation

- Student questionnaires
  - Selecting items
  - Administration (timing, format, confidentiality)
  - Results
    - Who sees what?
    - What changes follow (and are seen to follow)
    - Consequences for teacher
- Peer evaluation
  - Who? How? What?
  - Training and bias
- Evidence of student learning
- Teaching dossiers/portfolios
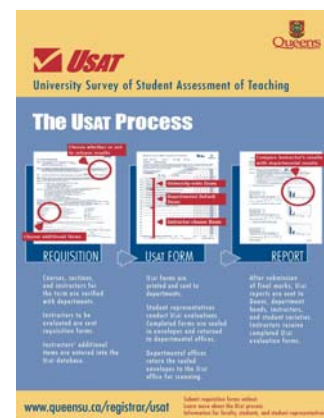
Formative and summative evaluation

	Formative	Summative
Sources of evaluation data	Students, colleagues, experts, self	Students, colleagues, experts
Role of evaluator	Evaluator acts as consultant or coach to provide feedback for understanding and improvement	Evaluator acts as judge to decide on teaching merit
Goals of evaluation	Feedback for change and improvement	Evidence of worth for career decision
Process of evaluation	Change and growth over time	Snapshot in time

An evaluation circle

Gather data

(New and useful knowledge)

Make changes in teaching *(for intrinsic rewards, institutional recognition)*

Interpret, reflect on data *(with help from expert or mentor)*

Approaches to formative evaluation

- In class-evaluations (classroom assessment techniques)
- Peer assessment
  - of syllabus, goals, materials, in-class teaching, student work an exams
- Peer consultation
  - Class visits, meeting with students
- Reflection on teaching
  - Teaching philosophy
  - Teaching portfolios

Getting feedback on your teaching

- End-course teaching evaluations
- Mid-term feedback questionnaire
- Checking classroom behaviour (verbal, non-verbal)
- Student performance on tests, exams
- Quality of student assignments, projects
- Student advisory group
- Learning gains or attitude change, compared with pre-tests
- Classroom assessment techniques

Instant questionnaire:
A= Always true for me
B= Often true for me
C= Sometimes true for me
D= Seldom true for me
E= Never true for me

1. I understand the lecture content
2. I have encountered this material before
3. My notes are incomplete and probably inaccurate
4. The pace is a bit slow
5. I have questions about the lecture I need to ask someone about

1. What aspects of today's class did you especially like?

2. What aspects of today's class did you dislike?

3. If you could change one thing about today's class, what would it be?

4. On the back of the card please write down the most important thing you learned from today's class.

Start . . .

Stop . . .

Continue . . .

TO COMPLETE AT START OF CLASS

Here's what I already know about today's topic:
_____
_____

How's what I hope/expect to learn today:
_____
_____

TO COMPLETE AT END OF CLASS

Here's what I learned in today's class:
_____
_____

Here are some questions I still have:
_____
_____

Here are some things I don't understand well enough to formulate a question _____

Brookfield's Questions

- At what moment in the class this week (today) did you feel most engaged?
- At what moment in the class this week (today) did you feel most distanced?
- Was there anything the teacher (or another student) did you found especially helpful?
- Was there anything the teacher or another student did you found especially confusing or frustrating?
- Was there anything in the class this week (today) that really surprised you?

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Providing feedback to teachers

- How do we provide feedback?
- Example: *The University of Adelaide Student Evaluation of Learning & Teaching service*
- University teachers receive:
  - Feedback data (scores, means, etc.)
  - Written, research-based guidance

Providing feedback to teachers – an example

Q4 Shows enthusiasm for encouraging student learning

Showing enthusiasm for student learning means assisting students to have a positive attitude and confidence in their own ability to learn … Ways of showing enthusiasm include:

- promoting **active involvement** of students in their learning. Cannon, R. & Newble, D. (2000). *A handbook for teachers in universities and colleges* (4th ed., pp.38-57, 58-86) discuss involving students in small and large group teaching …….

Providing feedback to teachers: A resource

www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/selt/download/SELT_Tcommentaries.pdf

The Queen's Exit Poll

- Given to all students before they graduate
- Began in 1994
- Focus on:
  - Quality of the learning environment
  - Contribution of Queen's education to student's learning and development
  - Student satisfaction with services and facilities
- Results tabulated by Faculty and department
- See: www.queensu.ca/registrar/aboutus/reports/exitpoll.html
- Cumulative data over time show changes and trends
- While students are generally positive, results differ among units and are an important guide to planning teaching and curriculum

Think back to your experiences as a student at Queen's and rate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

- Overall, my learning experience has been enjoyable
- Overall, my learning experience was intellectually stimulating.
- I was generally able to enroll in the courses I wanted
- Assessment methods (exams and marking) were fair
- Instructors took an active interest in my learning
- Instructors showed a positive attitude toward students
- Instructors provided helpful feedback
- Instructors made an effort to check that students understood the material taught
- My program had a good balance between theory and practice

Please indicate the degree to which your education (both inside and outside the classroom) at Queen's contributed to your learning and development in each of the following areas.

- Critical judgment
- Problem-solving skills
- Speaking skills
- Self-confidence
- Ability to work independently
- Ability to work well with others
- Creative thinking
- Writing skills
- Leadership skills
- Sensitivity to ethical issues

The student experience of university (NSSE)

ACADEMIC CHALLENGE
Do faculty hold students to high standards?
How much writing is expected?
ACTIVE LEARNING
How often do students make class presentations?
Do students have opportunities to tutor or teach other students?
STUDENT-FACULTY INTERACTION
Are faculty members accessible and supportive?
Do students receive prompt feedback on academic performance?
ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES
How often do students interact with peers with different social, political, or religious views?
What percentage of students participate in community service?
SUPPORTIVE CAMPUS ENVIRONMENT
Are students satisfied with their overall educational experience?
To what extent does the university help students deal with their academic and social needs?

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Consequences of evaluation

- Rewards for good teaching
  - promotion, merit pay
- Teaching awards
  - departmental, institutional, national
- Exemplary teachers and capacity building
- Rewarding entire departments
  - The Sydney U approach
  - Changing the teaching culture

Quality Assurance

- QA traditions
  - Accreditation (by government, professional associations)
  - The assessment movement (USA)
  - Internal QA
  - National audit systems: UK, Australia, Hong Kong
- Measurement issues
  - Quantitative vs. qualitative approaches
  - Measuring what's easiest to count (faculty qualifications, publications, grants, etc.)
- The nature of evidence collected
  - Inputs, Outputs, Processes, Change
- Experts and their limitations (inspections and visitations)
- QA and teaching

Measures of quality

- Inputs
  - Student demand, entering grades
  - Student diversity and access
  - Qualifications of staff
  - Range of programs and courses
  - Books in library
  - Research grants awarded
- Outputs
  - Student completion rates
  - Student perceptions on exit polls
  - Student employment and lifetime income
- Adding value and claiming credit

Good practice in quality assurance

- No single quantitative measure (multi-faceted)
- Linked to clear educational goals and criteria
- Reflects different stakeholder interests and goals
- Formative, iterative
- Reflects empirical research on student learning
- Long-term