

How can I use *LearnJCU* to evaluate my teaching?

(Prepared by Scott Bradey, Teaching and Learning Development 2005)

- ☑ **Online surveys** are a particularly useful way of obtaining instant, anonymous feedback from students about any aspect of your teaching or subject design. Some traditionally paper-based evaluation tools that could be easily set up as online surveys include:
 - ✓ **One-minute paper** – A single open-ended question such as “What was the most important thing you learned during the class?” or “What important question remains unanswered?” can be completed after the lecture, the results automatically collated and used as a starting point for the next lecture.
 - ✓ **Class opinion polls** – One or two issues can be chosen and developed as a Yes/No or multiple choice survey questions. Uncovering students’ opinions on specific issues can allow you to better gauge where and how to begin teaching about those issues and where the stumbling blocks are likely to be. Class polls also encourage students to discover their own opinions about issues, to compare their opinions with those of their classmates, and to test their opinions against evidence and expert opinion.
 - ✓ **Critical incident** – A critical incident questionnaire can be set up as a series of open ended questions focusing on critical moments of students’ learning, either in a specific learning and teaching session or a section of the subject (eg. At what moment were you most engaged as a learner?). A critical incident questionnaire can provide significant feedback on student engagement and the dynamics of the student experience in the learning environment in which you are teaching.
 - ✓ **Checklists** – A checklist can be set up as a multiple answer survey question (eg. Which of the following elements of the lecture/tutorial did you find helpful? Tick all that apply.) Checklists may not provide detailed feedback about the quality of your teaching, but can be easier to analyse and assess than more detailed questionnaires.

Some tips for writing effective survey questions

- Be clear on the audience
- Be clear on the purpose of the questionnaire
- Consider the issues of anonymity
- Make the purpose of the questionnaire and how the data will be used clear to the respondents
- Give clear instructions on how to complete it
- Keep questions clear and unambiguous
- Group questions on a particular theme together
- Keep a consistent style
- Avoid double barrel questions e.g which activity did you like best, Activity A or Activity B?
- Too many questions may lead to shallow responses
- If possible, pilot the questionnaire
- Put sensitive issues towards the end
- Include a thank you statement at the end

Source: <http://www.lts.rmit.edu.au/renewal/evaluate/table4.htm>

- ☑ **Discussion forums** can be used as a public or small group forum for collecting feedback. For example you could set up a discussion forum as:
 - ✓ **A suggestion box** that invites feedback about aspects of the subject (with netiquette guidelines)
 - ✓ **A set part of online discussion activities** where you could ask students what they thought of the discussion topic, what they would change about it or how comfortable they were with the topic
 - ✓ **A focus group** where a group of 6-12 students are invited to identify and clarify key issues. The transcript of the discussion is automatically available for analysis.
 - ✓ **A student liaison facility** for the purpose of improving communication between lecturers/tutors and students by providing a medium for identifying and responding to problems quickly and improving student morale.

You could also ask an experienced colleague to observe or make comments about your facilitation of an online discussion forum to **obtain feedback** and **establish an evaluative dialogue**.

- ☑ **Email** can be used in regular communications with students to collect regular, informal feedback on the content and process of the subject and on students' thoughts, feelings and attitudes.
- ☑ **Reflective journals or e-logs** can be used to obtain students' interpretations of the process of understanding and learning allowing you to establish the context for any problems and for students to record issues as they occurred. You may need to provide examples of the structure and content of a 'good' journal entry to move beyond a fairly low-level description of events and experiences. Students could compile their journal as a Word document and email it to you at set intervals.
- ☑ **Confidence logs** can be used to get a snapshot of how confident students are with a particular learning activity or to compare changes in confidence before and after a lecture or learning event. It might also be informative to compare the results with your own expectations. You might consider compiling a list of concise statements to put to students such as "very confident", "confident", "some confidence", "little confidence", "no confidence". Students could compile their journal as a Word document and email it to you at set intervals or you could set it up as a short online test to obtain the results automatically.
- ☑ **E-portfolios or Web folios** can be used as a combined learning and evaluative tool by combining students' personal reflections and examples of their work modified as a result of these reflections. You could also create an **Online Teaching Portfolio** to evidence, reflect on, and improve your own teaching practices.
- ☑ **User tracking** can be enabled to collect basic statistics on students' activities in your subject site. For example, you can monitor login times, resource usage, and access to different parts of the subject.