

## Giving Constructive Feedback in the *Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching (SELT)* surveys

Students play an important role in providing constructive feedback about the learning and teaching they experience in their units at ACU. Both rating type responses and students' written comments are used by staff to improve the quality of units, including teaching practices, for future students of the units.

Your feedback is taken seriously and is used by ACU to review teaching quality and performance. Your comments are made available to the specific lecturer/tutor for a unit, the Head of School, the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) or equivalent and the Executive Dean of the Faculty.

In the *Student Evaluation of Learning and Teaching* surveys, you can comment on such things as:

- Assessments and feedback
- Content of lectures and tutorials
- Reading requirements
- Use of technology in lectures
- Communication between students and teachers

Here are some tips on giving feedback that will help the Lecturer in Charge and tutors, School and Faculty:

1. Be thoughtful when providing feedback. Constructive comments regarding the Unit and the teaching are useful and very important.
2. When commenting on teaching, provide general comments about the teaching in the unit section, and comments on an individual teacher in the section for that teacher.
3. Be specific with your comments and provide relevant examples.
4. Avoid comments that are personal (dress, appearance, manner, etc.); focus on the teaching and learning activities.
5. Try to describe the effect of the teacher's behaviour on your learning and offer alternatives.
6. Do not write anything that is offensive, racist or sexist. If the situation needs further investigation, the matter will be reported to relevant authority.
7. Avoid emotional language.
8. Point out both the good and bad parts of the unit and/or teaching.

Here are some examples of how the message can be made more constructive:

	Instead of saying...	You can make your feedback more useful for unit/teaching improvements by explaining what helped you learn, or what didn't help.
<b>BEST ASPECTS</b>	<i>The class was great.</i>	Explain what made the class 'great': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The class was great. Information was well organised and explanations were easy to follow.</i></li> <li>• <i>The class was great. I found the examples really helped me to ....</i></li> <li>• <i>The class was great. Assignments were challenging and I learned a lot by doing them.</i></li> </ul>
	<i>Enjoyed this unit.</i>	Say what aspects of the unit made it enjoyable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The unit provided relevant course content with different teaching methods such as...</i></li> <li>• <i>The content was aligned to our assessments and future careers...</i></li> <li>• <i>The teacher used interesting examples that made the class enjoyable and easy to understand.</i></li> </ul>

	<i>Teacher (Lecturer/ tutor) was fantastic.</i>	Give a bit more information on why the <i>teacher (lecturer/ tutor)</i> was fantastic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The tutor explained clearly and in detail for a particular topic.</i></li> <li>• <i>The lecturer was available to explain things that I was unsure of in a timely manner.</i></li> <li>• <i>The lecturer was very knowledgeable and good at linking theory and practical outcomes. He/she was enthusiastic and engaging, with real life examples/ industry experience in...</i></li> </ul>
<b>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</b>	<i>Useless feedback.</i>	Explain how the feedback could be useful, or what you would like in the feedback to support your learning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Timely feedback with weekly quizzes would have guided my progression in the unit.</i></li> <li>• <i>We need feedback on individual (or group) assignments before sitting exams...</i></li> <li>• <i>Getting feedback earlier in semester (not in Week 10 or 11) will give me more time to prepare for exams.</i></li> <li>• <i>Feedback on my assignment should show what specific areas I need to improve.</i></li> </ul>
	<i>[Teacher X] is boring, disorganised and should retire.</i>	Describe a teacher's actions or teaching behaviour that will help to create/increase your interest in the subject: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>[Teacher X] should try to engage students in class by ...[asking questions of students in class and using audio-visual materials].</i></li> <li>• <i>The lectures could be improved if the tutor updated the teaching materials and increased student activities in class.</i></li> <li>• <i>On two occasions the lecturer brought the wrong notes to class for the topic listed in the unit guide. He/she should check the lecturer materials before class.</i></li> </ul>
	<i>I can't understand anything he/she says.</i>	Indicate what the teacher (lecturer/tutor) could have done to help you understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>He/ She should explain difficult concepts in depth rather than only reading from slides.</i></li> <li>• <i>When the teacher uses jargon that we don't know, I have trouble taking good notes because I don't understand the words enough to write them down accurately.</i></li> <li>• <i>If you could write the technical terms on the board beforehand, I could check my spelling against yours to be sure I had written the words down correctly.</i></li> <li>• <i>Some students in class had more than one prerequisite unit and probably get a lot out of the complex examples that you used. I had problems in understanding the main points because I can't see a connection. Maybe you could invite us to summarise the key ideas, and then go over them briefly to be sure everyone is on the same page.</i></li> </ul>

Sources:

Marilla D. Svinicki, *Encouraging Your Students to Give Feedback*, NEW DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING, no. 87, Fall 2001

University of Tasmania, <http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/evaluate/constructive-feedback-principles>