



## The Classic Movies Come to Class

By Pamela Reese,  
Indiana University  
Purdue University  
Fort Wayne, Indiana  
reesepr@ipfw.edu

If you are a professor of a certain age, you may have had the experience that I had in my first semester of teaching. I asked, “Who’s seen *Norma Ray*?” (I wanted to use it to illustrate that working in a mill causes hearing loss.) “Who’s seen *Young Frankenstein*?” (I wanted to highlight the Abby Normal brain.) The response from students was “Huh?” Today’s students haven’t seen the same movies most of us have, and they don’t seem a generation inclined to watch old, classic movies. A movie in black and white? Forget it.

The fact is, though, that students today can be shown the relevance of classic films, and while experiencing these works they can have thrilling revelations that bridge directly to what they are studying. Film studies, of course, have been around as curricular staples for decades, but every discipline can be augmented by the creative use of movies, beginning with liberal arts and extending even to the sometimes-forbidding “hard” sciences.

A colleague of mine in the English department frequently shows a BBC production of Oedipus Rex to teach the argumentative essay. He stages a mock trial of Oedipus, in which the student jury must vote on the king’s innocence or guilt. He reports that rousing class discussions invariably ensue, not only among future English majors but also among current linebackers (“The dude is going down!”). The same professor uses the 1960 version of *Inherit the Wind* (Spencer Tracy and

Frederick March) as the basis of a longer research essay, leading the students to a comparison of the film and the actual 1925 trial in Dayton. He watches with the joy good teachers always feel when a revelatory moment occurs. “But the real John Scopes wasn’t arrested at all! Hollywood is lying!”

As a communication sciences and disorders (CSD) professor, I use classic movies whose main characters have communication problems. I show one each semester, outside of class, for a Cinema CSD experience. To date, Cinema CSD has aired *The King’s Speech* (stuttering), *The Miracle Worker* (deafness and blindness), and *Rain Man* (autism). Although a few students had seen the more modern *The King’s Speech*, none had seen the original, Academy Award-winning performances of Anne Bancroft and Patty Duke in the black-and-white *The Miracle Worker* or Dustin Hoffman’s Academy Award-winning performance for Best Actor in the Best Picture of 1988, *Rain Man*. In the reflective essays about the movies my students wrote for extra credit, many noted they were astonished by how much they enjoyed a movie made in black and white.

The question remains, though, could you find a film relevant to the content to show in every course? I can’t say for sure, but I have to feel that the answer is yes. History? What teacher would not want to show *Gettysburg* or any of the painstakingly made (*The Longest Day*) World War II movies? Or even the Kenneth Branagh *Henry V*, with its wondrous reconstruction of the Battle of Agincourt? German? What about *The White Rose*, which depicts the execution of University of Munich students found

distributing anti-Hitler exhortations in 1943?

But chemistry and physics? Of course chemistry and physics! In fact, especially chemistry and physics, because too often students see science as merely concatenations of numbers and symbols rather than statements about, and we hope improvements upon, the human condition. Films (*Dr. Erlich’s Magic Bullet*, *A Beautiful Mind*, *Madame Curie*) are in a unique position to remedy this problem and provide the kind of fusion between science and humanities that some writers (C.P. Snow, *The Two Cultures*) have been advocating for decades.

And so, if you haven’t tried to connect to your students through classics of cinema, you may want to give it a try—but don’t forget the popcorn! 🌿

### In This Issue

Student Views of the Student Evaluation Processes . . . . .	2
Faculty Misbehaviors . . . . .	3
Ten Study Strategies for Students and Their Teachers . . . . .	4
Distributed Practice . . . . .	5
Making the Grading Process More Transparent . . . . .	6
Ready for College . . . . .	7
“What Were You Thinking of When You Decided on That Rating?” . . . . .	8

**Editor-at-Large**

Maryellen Weimer, Ph.D.  
E-mail: [grg@psu.edu](mailto:grg@psu.edu)

**Editor**

Karin Van Voorhees  
[karin.vanvoorhees@magnapubs.com](mailto:karin.vanvoorhees@magnapubs.com)

**President**

William Haight  
[whaight@magnapubs.com](mailto:whaight@magnapubs.com)

**Publisher**

David Burns  
[dburns@magnapubs.com](mailto:dburns@magnapubs.com)

**For subscription information, contact:**

Customer Service: 800-433-0499  
E-mail: [support@magnapubs.com](mailto:support@magnapubs.com)  
Website: [www.magnapubs.com](http://www.magnapubs.com)

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## Student Views of the Student Evaluation Processes

Are students taking their end-of-course evaluation responsibilities seriously? Many institutions ask them to evaluate every course and to do so at a time when they're busy with final assignments and stressed about upcoming exams. Response rates have also fallen at many places that now have students provide their feedback online. And who hasn't gotten one or two undeserved low ratings—say, on a question about instructor availability when the instructor regularly came early to class, never missed a class, and faithfully kept office hours? Are students even reading the questions?

There's some comfort to be found in a survey of almost 600 students enrolled in a wide range of degree programs at four different kinds of institutions. "We found that the majority of students generally held positive views about their role in the evaluation process and that they reported taking the evaluation process seriously." (p. 311). A bit over 66 percent agreed or strongly agreed that student evaluations of teachers were useful, and 95 percent indicated that they often or very often honestly assessed the instructor's teaching ability. Were the students giving answers they deemed socially desirable? The researchers tested a subset of the larger sample for that and found evidence that the students were not reporting what they believed were socially appropriate responses. Despite the positive views of a majority, over 16 percent of the students did not think the ratings were useful, and over 18 percent considered them a waste of time.

Students in this cohort were not clear about how their ratings were used. Just under 14 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the ratings had an effect on professors' salaries, and just under 30 percent thought that they were used in tenure decisions. Related, less than half the students reported writing comments in response to open-ended questions, and that's probably because only 43 percent

believed that their comments were often or very often read by professors. Most faculty read those comments religiously, often finding them more useful than the numerical scores. An occasional mention of what was learned from the ratings and what changes were made as a result of them can let students know that their comments are read and considered and some course aspects may be changed as a result. This message can be reinforced if student feedback is collected midcourse and the results discussed with them.

The sample included students enrolled in 107 different majors, which the researchers placed in seven categories. They found "scant" evidence that student views of the rating process varied by major, and student views were also not related to the kind of institution they were attending. The same views were held regardless of class standing or gender as well.

The survey also contained an open-ended query: "Describe your general perceptions and beliefs about the course evaluations you complete each semester about your professors." It generated a wide range of responses, including a fairly regular mention of time students in classes are given to complete the evaluation. When the surveys were passed out at the end of the period, students reported that they felt rushed to complete them. The researchers note that not giving students enough time conveys messages about the value of the activity.

These data do not rule out the possibility that some students take the evaluation process less seriously than it deserves. But according to these survey results, those students are not in the majority.

**Reference:** Kite, M.E., Subedi, P.C., and Bryant-Lees, K.B., (2015). Students' perceptions of the teaching evaluation process. *Teaching of Psychology*, 42 (4), 307-314. 🌳

## Faculty Misbehaviors

These behaviors, studied at length in the *Communication Education* research, “refer to any instructor classroom behavior that interferes with instruction and learning.” (p. 133). They were first identified in research published in 1991 and have in subsequent studies been shown to compromise students’ affective learning, their cognitive learning, and their levels of motivation. They also have been shown to “produce oppositional responses from students.” (p. 135)

The original research identified 28 of these faculty misbehaviors, which fall into three categories: instructor incompetence, which does not relate to a lack of content knowledge but to a lack of basic teaching skills; instructor offensiveness, which results when instructors use poor interpersonal communications skills; and instructor indolence, which refers to a lack of basic procedural skills.

The Goodboy and Myers research team felt that given the continuing importance of this research, an update of the original work was in order. Technology is now widespread on campuses, affecting how both students and professors communicate. “It is likely that these classroom technologies that were not available in 1991 play an important role in how students perceive and respond to their instructors’ communication....” (p. 135) The researchers also believe that the changing culture of college students has implications for classroom communication. The characteristics and needs of millennial students have been written about extensively. They perceive themselves to be more entitled than previous generations did and therefore expect that time and effort will be directed toward them. If faculty do not respond to these expectations, students may perceive these responses as misbehavior.

The research team had two goals, which they accomplished through three studies. First they wanted to update and revise the typology of instructor

misbehavior. Second, they wanted to create a reliable and valid instrument that would operationalize the behavior. To revise the typology, they started by asking students to “think back over your college career and recall specific instances where teachers have said or done something that irritated, demotivated or substantially distracted you in an aversive way during a course.” (p. 136) The 233 participants came up with 1,783 unique examples of misbehavior. Researchers grouped them in 43 categories, which included 27 out of 28 of the original behaviors and 16 behaviors not previously identified.

The top 10 behaviors, in rank order, were (1) ineffective teaching behaviors; (2) deviation from the syllabus; (3) boring lectures; (4) unfair grading; (5) technology [as in not using it effectively]; (6) information overload; (7) late return of work/items; (8) time management, tied with unresponsiveness to students; and (10) email [as in not responding to it].

To create an instrument of manageable size, the researchers used factor analysis, which enabled them to identify 16 items that accounted for almost 60 percent of the variance. Factor one they labeled *antagonism*, and it included teacher put-downs, aggression, lack of professionalism, being opinionated, and playing favorites. Factor two they labeled *lectures*, and it included boring lectures, information overload, and confusing/unclear delivery of content. Factor three they called *articulation*, and it included speaking with an accent and problems with pronunciation.

In study three, various empirical methods were used to verify the reliability and validity of the 16-item instrument. Goodboy and Myers found that the first two factors were valid in that when instructors displayed those behaviors, various student learning outcomes were compromised. Associations between the third factor and learning outcomes were weak.

Some of the new faculty misbehaviors identified in this research are interesting. For example, *email*; students expect instructors to use it and to use it correctly. They consider requiring *unnecessary expenses* for course-related materials misbehavior, especially if those materials are rarely or never used in the course. And they consider it misbehavior when faculty don’t offer everyone in the class *extra-credit* opportunities. The emergence of these *student preferences* “highlights the entitlement students bring with them to the classroom, as this [category of] misbehavior centers on the dislikes they associate with instructors’ expectations and requirements.” (p. 147) These student behaviors reflect “the idiosyncratic needs students believe should be met by their instructors. . . he ‘expects us to take tests on Fridays’ and she ‘asks for an excuse when we miss class.’” (p. 147) The researchers did not consider this evidence of the change in student culture a legitimate category of faculty misbehavior. From the student perspective, actions like these may be annoying, irritating, and unpleasant, but they don’t compromise learning. In fact, some of them actually promote it.

It’s easy to read descriptions of behaviors like these and conclude that “these aren’t things that I do.” But often what one person considers a put-down wasn’t intended as one at all. A careful review of the behaviors identified in this research, along with honest self-reflection, is a healthy activity for every teacher. And for those who really want to know, this research has generated an instrument that could be given to students.

**Reference:** Goodboy, A.K. and Myers, S.A., (2015). Revisiting instructor misbehaviors: A revised typology and development of a measure. *Communication Education*, 64 (2), 133-153. 🌱

## Ten Study Strategies for Students and Their Teachers

Here's one of those articles that really shouldn't be missed, particularly for those with interest in making teaching and learning more evidence-based. Current thinking about evidence-based teaching and learning tends to be more generic than specific. Use any active learning strategy intermittently or even regularly, and some would call the teaching evidence-based. That's a superficial understanding of what it means to use practices that have been proven to promote learning. This article leads to a deeper level of understanding.

It's a review of mostly cognitive psychology research that explores 10 learning techniques. The cognitive psychologist authors provide the background. "Psychologists have been developing and evaluating the efficacy of techniques for study and instruction for more than 100 years. Nevertheless, some effective techniques are underutilized—many teachers do not learn about them, and hence many students do not use them, despite evidence suggesting that the techniques could benefit student achievement and with little added effort. Also, some learning techniques that are popular and often used by students are relatively ineffective." (p. 5)

Here are brief descriptions of the 10 learning strategies reviewed in the article.

- **Imagery for text**—attempting to form mental images of text material while reading or listening
- **Rereading**—reading text material again after having read it initially
- **Practice testing**—self-testing or taking practice tests on the material to be learned
- **Distributed practice**—scheduling practice so that it spreads study activities over time
- **Interleaved practice**—mixing different kinds of problems or materials within a single study session

The article makes recommendations about the utility of each study technique. Those recommendations are based on assessment of how the technique is performed across four categories: materials, learning conditions, student characteristics, and criterion tasks. The materials category refers to the content students are expected to learn and whether the technique has been tested and shown to be effective with a variety of different kinds of content and levels of content complexity. The learning conditions "largely pertain to the way in which a learning technique is implemented." (p. 6) Considered here are variables like the frequency with which the technique needs to be used and whether it works when used by individuals and/or in groups. Student characteristics include age, ability, and level of prior knowledge. Has the technique been shown to be effective for students at different age levels and with different levels of ability and prior knowledge? The criterion tasks include the different outcome measures used to assess the effectiveness of the technique.

The article is packed full of information about each of these learning techniques. They "vary widely with respect to their generalizability and promise for improving student learning." (p. 5) The two that receive the authors' highest recommendations are practice testing and

distributed practice—both techniques not widely used by college students. For most college students, the fewer the tests, the better. But practice testing is low- or no-stakes testing. These are not summative assessments with scores that count for significant percentages of a course grade. The technique can be as simple as using a set of flash cards. It's any method that forces the student to retrieve newly learned material. The research documenting that it expedites learning and promotes retention goes back more than 100 years and includes hundreds of studies.

Distributed practice (see p. 5) is the antithesis of cramming. Periods of study happen regularly, not all at once the night before the exam. "Although cramming is better than not studying at all in the short term, given the same amount of time for study, would students be better off spreading out their study of content? The answer to this question is a resounding yes." (p. 35) But cramming is a way of life for most students. They use the technique because so many of their exams contain questions that can be answered with memorized details, and if that's the case, then cramming works. The problem is that materials can be memorized without understanding, and if that's how they've been "learned," they will be quickly forgotten.

Several details about the article: It's long, but very well organized and written so that each technique can be read individually. Even though written by a group of cognitive psychology researchers, the article is easy reading for faculty from other fields.

For teachers serious about making teaching and learning evidence-based in specific ways, this article is an invaluable resource. The techniques it explores and evaluates are simple, straightforward strategies that students can use and teachers can promote. Most require very

## Distributed Practice

What's the best way to learn complex skills, like problem solving, for example? Looking at the way homework problems are typically laid out in textbooks and often assigned by teachers, the answer would appear to be by giving students problem sets that focus on one kind of problem at a time. The next homework set gives students practice working a different kind of problem. As the name implies, in distributed practice students work homework sets featuring a new type of problem but also including some problems from previous sets so that the review of all kinds of problems is ongoing.

"Mass" practice, doing all the review at once, promotes short-term but not long-term retention. "The student develops a false sense of confidence in her abilities as she finds she is able to correctly work several problems on the same topic in one sitting, and thus concludes she has mastered the content." (p. 2) In the course where this study of distributed practice occurred, the instructor-researcher offers an example of what happens when students don't review material they believe they've mastered. "By the time of the final exam, students may not have worked a problem requiring expected value and standard deviation for discrete random variables in over a month." (p. 2) So, when students face a final with problems from all parts of the course, it feels like an extraordinarily hard exam, which is probably why students would rather not have cumulative finals.

Distributed practice provides regular, ongoing review. Its efficacy has been documented by extensive research in cognitive psychology, mostly conducted in labs, but across a wide range of skills, not just problem solving. Distributed practice works because each time the skill is revisited, retrieving it is easier, more of it is remembered, and a growing familiarity results from these encounters spaced across time.

The problem, of course, is that distributed practice makes learning harder work. When all the problems are the same type, there's no need to retrieve anything learned previously. It's easier, and that's why students so relentlessly badger teachers for unit tests, on only what's been covered since the last exam. But if every quiz and exam is cumulative, then review is ongoing and everything on the final looks familiar.

The comparison of mass and distributed practices reported in this study occurred in three sections of a business statistics course. Students were randomly assigned 10 massed homework problems or 10 homework problems, five review problems, and five of the new problems. In both cases the 27 homework assignments counted for 5 percent of the course grade. All students took the same two exams and final. "While mean scores on all the outcome variables [all three exam scores, data assignments, lab activities, and homework] were higher in the DP [distributed practice] group than the MP [mass practice] group, the

difference was not statistically significant on the final exam scores." (p. 11) The difference was clearly significant on exam one. Due to circumstances beyond the researcher/instructor's control, a third instructor assumed responsibility for one of the three sections after the course had started and it could not be determined whether that influenced the results.

Because distributed practice is a harder way to learn, selling students on the idea is not easy. Many students still mistakenly believe that the best learning is easy learning. However, one of the enduring lessons of college should be that most learning isn't easy. If the learning is to be deep and lasting, not memorized for the test tomorrow but gone the day after, that requires different approaches to study. Students do pay attention when there's evidence that something improves exam scores, and this study is one of many documenting the benefits of distributed practice. This research can be shared with students; maybe a quasi experiment can be conducted in class and certainly individual students can be challenged to try the approach for themselves. They should regularly review previous problems and see whether that makes understanding the problems easier and scores on exams higher.

**Reference:** Crissinger, B.R., (2015). The effect of distributed practice in undergraduate statistic homework sets: A randomized trial. *Journal of Statistics Education*, 23 (3), 1-22. 🌳

### TEN STUDY STRATEGIES

FROM PAGE 4

little training. "We limited our choices to techniques that could be implemented by students without assistance (e.g., without requiring advanced technologies or extensive materials that would have to be prepared by a teacher)." (p. 5) Given the learning skills of many of today's college

students, teachers need to know what learning strategies have a proven track record so they can work with students on approaches that truly are evidence-based. Not all the recommendations faculty make fall into that category. What are the two learning techniques on this list these researchers don't recommend? Rereading and highlighting, both favorites of students. Read the article and discover

why they aren't recommended.

**Reference:** Dunlosky, J., Rawson, K.A., Marsh, E.J., Nathan, M.J., and Willingham, D.T., (2013). Improving students' learning with effective learning techniques: Promising directions from cognitive and educational psychology. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 14 (1), 4-58. 🌳

## Making the Grading Process More Transparent

College teachers are always on the lookout for ways to help students better understand why their paper, essay answer, or project earned a particular grade. Many students aren't objective assessors of their own work, especially when there's a grade involved, and others can't seem to understand how the criteria the instructor used applies to their work.

As the author Matthew Bamber notes, grading is not a transparent process to students, even if they have been given the criteria or rubric beforehand. He devised an exercise for his master's-level accounting and finance students that they found "eye-opening." In the UK, students "sit" for lengthy exams—in this case, a three-hour, closed-book essay test. In the exercise, students began by answering one lengthy essay question. When finished, they were given a suggested answer to the question (it contained a problem they had to solve and a written analysis), a marking guide, and a set of grade descriptors. Then they were given an anonymous answer to the same question and told to grade it using the materials provided. After having completed that step, students were given a teacher-graded copy of the anonymous answer. The exercise concluded with students being told to grade their answer to the question.

What an experience for students! You can see why they'd call it eye-opening. Adaptation of the whole exercise or parts of it could profitably be used during exam review sessions. Students could work individually or in groups with a problem or an essay question, maybe one from an exam used in a previous course. The grading criteria or a rubric will be helpful when students have little or no experience grading exam answers or other kinds of written work. The exercise is made powerful when the grades given by the students are compared with those given by the teacher and students can see how the teacher has applied the grading criteria differently than they did.

In the case of these accounting-finance students, they saw not only the final score but also how the instructor scored the various parts of the answer.

If students are new to grading, it may be better to start by having them look at an anonymous answer first. Author-instructor Bamber notes that the quality of the answer students grade is important. If it's a superstar answer with little that needs correcting, students may

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*The idea of having students look at their own work with the objective of grading it is the kind of experience that begins to develop accurate assessment abilities.*

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not learn much from the process. On the other hand, they may not learn very much if the answer is poor and does not exemplify any aspects of a good answer. In his case, instructor Bamber chose an answer in the midrange.

Early on as well, students may benefit from group collaborations. They can start by making an individual assessment of the answer. Then when they convene as a group, those individual assessments can be shared and used to generate a group assessment of the answer. This gives students the opportunities to hear how others read and responded to the answer.

The idea of having students look at their own work with the objective of grading it is the kind of experience that begins to develop accurate assessment abilities. The accounting-finance students were surprisingly accurate in

their assessment of their answers after having graded the anonymous one. Obviously, this part of the exercise must be designed so that it encourages students to be honest. It's not about the grade they want but the one they think their work deserves. Here too, having the criteria, rubrics, or checklists is helpful. An incentive may be necessary as well, since students may not see any reason to take the activity seriously. Whatever grade they give their answer doesn't count.

The accounting-finance students in this article gained an appreciation for the grading process. "Many indicated their surprise at the amount of time, energy and concentration that this exercise required of them." (p. 480) They also expressed concerns about the integrity of the process when teachers have many answers to grade. The instructor concludes, "The findings suggest that this exercise has the potential to enhance participants' understanding of a subject as well as its assessment criteria." Even though the exercise as described here probably can't be replicated in most North American courses, adaptations of it can. The exercise in various iterations has the potential to make the assessment of graded work more transparent to students.

**Reference:** Bamber, M., (2015). The impact of stakeholder confidence of increased transparency in the examination assessment process. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 40 (4), 471-487. 🌳

## Ready for College?

Talk with almost any faculty member and they will tell you that many (sometimes it's most) of their students are unprepared for college. They lack basic skills in reading, writing, and computation but also don't have very effective study habits and techniques. Most teachers try to convey their concerns about this lack of preparedness to students, but often it feels as though those messages are falling on deaf ears.

In a survey, nearly 700 students, mostly sophomores, were asked how ready they felt for college. Did they think they were prepared for college-level work? Eighty percent of the sample had come directly from high school to college, and 70 percent said that their high schools had prepared them well for college. However, over 50 percent of these students considered college more challenging than they expected. When given a list and asked what two academic skills they wished that high school had helped them develop further, 48 percent said time management, 39 percent said exam preparation, 37 percent identified general study skills, and 27 percent noted independent thinking. Only 12 percent identified studying to understand and remember.

The survey also inquired about those academic skills and habits of the mind students intended to develop further in college. Their responses corresponded with those skills they wished had been better developed in high school, with the top three being time management, exam preparation, and general study skills. Only 15 percent intended to further develop their ability to think independently, and a modest 8 percent mentioned the skills needed for studying to understand and remember.

A good bit of research has documented the tendency of beginning college students to overestimate their skills and abilities, so the value of these data do not lie in their accuracy so much as in the insights they provide into student

thinking about their preparation for and success in college. The researchers point out that data collected from fellow college students might be what it takes to get new students to move in the direction of more accurate self-assessment. If they don't believe what their teachers tell them is necessary for success, maybe they will pay attention to their peers who are reporting issues with time management and exam preparation.

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The data reported here are institution-specific data, although the researchers include results from the national Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement showing that their results are comparable. The article does contain the instrument used in the survey, so institution-specific data could be collected, and it could easily be repurposed to solicit student assessments of their preparedness for a given course. If students taking the course reported that it required more study time than they'd expected and they wished their textbook reading skills were better, those assessments could be a useful addition to the syllabus or course website.

Several of the results merit further consideration. These students were very concerned with time management. It is an important skill for success in college, indeed in life. But is it something explicitly taught or considered in most courses? It's implicitly taught with due

dates and penalties for missing those deadlines, but procrastination and putting things off until the last minute still seem like the default modes of most students. Are there design features of assignments that might help students with time management? Assignments can be partitioned with sequenced due dates, and that approach does prevent procrastination, but does it teach students how to manage their time when a task isn't partitioned and deadlines aren't provided for them?

It is also troubling that very few of these students saw the need to develop independent thinking capabilities or study skills that resulted in understanding and remembering course content. They did see the need to learn how to better prepare for exams but apparently didn't think that understanding the material was a good way to prepare. Yes, the students are wrong, but what is it about our policies and practices that is making them think that understanding and remembering the content isn't important?

As the researchers note, "The skills and habits underlying self-regulated learning that facilitate college readiness also are those needed for career readiness." (p. 169) "Students need to be made aware that, even with good grades, underdevelopment of [these] skills may jeopardize their employment prospects." (p. 169)

**Reference:** Verrell, P.A. and McCabe, N.R., (2015). In their own words: Using self-assessment of college readiness to develop strategies for self-regulated learning. *College Teaching*, 63 (4), 162-170. 🌳

## “What Were You Thinking of When You Decided on That Rating?”

Most student rating instruments include a question related to the feedback provided by the instructor. It may ask whether it was constructive, actionable, delivered in a timely manner, or some combination of these characteristics. Most teachers are conscientious about giving students feedback. Because they devote so much time and effort to providing it, they are often disappointed and frustrated when students don't rate the quality of the feedback very positively.

That's what was happening in the faculties of arts and social sciences and of law at the University of New South Wales. The question on their student rating form asked students whether they were given helpful feedback on how they were doing in the course. “Members of the staff [faculty] whose courses have been rated lower on feedback than on other factors have been puzzled as to just what it was that they would have to do in order to score really well on the feedback question.” (p. 50)

Article author Shirley V. Scott conducted a series of focus group conversations with students in these two programs. Her approach was direct. She gave students a copy of the question from the student rating form, asked them to think of a course they were enrolled in now and a course they had already completed, and rate both on the feedback question. Then she asked them to reflect and write about what aspects of those courses shaped their answer to the feedback question. “What were you thinking of when you decided how to rate that course?” (p. 51)

Her follow-up question is an excellent one, likely to generate answers that help the teacher and the students. When deciding how to rate an aspect of instruction, students read the item, and then events, actions, experiences, behaviors, and feelings rush through

the mind. Without much conscious integration, they coalesce into a score. Thinking about them explicitly clarifies the rationale behind the score for both the student and teacher.

In this case, the written responses and a follow-up discussion were used to formulate a definition for feedback, although it was clear that not all students were defining it the same way. About a third of them thought of feedback

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*This need to know “how am I doing?” more or less continually may be a feature of this generation of students. It could also be indicative of learners not confident or able to self-assess.*

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exclusively in terms of the teacher's response to assignments. The rest of the students defined it more broadly, including features like the teacher's nonverbal responses.

Both perspectives were incorporated in the definition: feedback is what students use to gauge throughout the course how well they are doing in terms of the knowledge, understanding, and skills that will be used to determine their overall grade in the course. (p. 52) Author Scott believes this understanding of feedback explains why an abundance of teacher feedback still may not result in a high score on the rating item. If some comments on a paper are positive, some negative, and some neutral, that's

good feedback, but from the student perspective it may not clarify how they are doing in the course.

This need to know “how am I doing?” more or less continually may be a feature of this generation of students. It could also be indicative of learners not confident or able to self-assess. They can't decide how they're doing, are afraid their assessment is incorrect, or may believe that what they think doesn't matter, since their understanding of how they're doing doesn't count. Author Scott Shirely recommends helping these students by giving them exemplars so they have a better understanding of what they're aiming to achieve.

Feedback doesn't have an agreed-upon definition among scholars, among those who teach, or, as this analysis shows, among students. What was discovered here is specific to students and faculty in two programs at one institution. The most valuable part of the analysis is the approach used to discover what students were thinking when they came up with a particular rating score. It's a technique that could easily become an activity in any course, and it seems like a useful way to gain insight about scores on any evaluation item where the student rating isn't what was expected or doesn't seem to make much sense.

**Reference:** Scott, S.V., (2014). Practicing what we preach: Towards a student-centered definition of feedback. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19 (1), 49-57. 🌱