

GUIDELINE "FEEDBACK DIALOG ON COURSE EVALUATION"

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THE FEEDBACK DIALOG

The feedback dialog is a central component of the student course evaluation (SCE) at Ruhr University Bochum. It gives you, as teaching staff, feedback on the delivery of your course and potential pointers for improving your teaching. It is therefore about the joint exploration of the evaluation results and the joint exchange about teaching with your students.

>> The goal is to establish a feedback culture in which the shared responsibility for the success of teaching is visible and lived.

WHY IS FEEDBACK ON FEEDBACK IMPORTANT?

- You will show your students that their opinion counts and is taken seriously.
- You get the chance to receive differentiated feedback on your results.
- Together with your students, you will develop approaches to solutions and possibilities for development.
- You reflect on your own courses and quality of teaching.
- You will provide more transparency (and this will also have a positive effect on future participation in evaluations).

PREPARATION

Timing of the student course evaluation: mid-semester until penultimate session at the latest

Time of the feedback dialog: session after the evaluation (last session at the latest)

Time frame: approx. 20 minutes

Selection: You will not have time to go through the results of the whole questionnaire with the students. Select according to these questions: Which results are particularly important to you? Which feedback surprised you? Which aspects are not clear to you or contradictory? Which results differ strongly from your self-assessment? Are there questions and aspects that you are interested in that are not included in the evaluation form? Which topics are important for your (future) teaching?

Media preparation: selected profile lines and selected free text answers

DOUBLE ROLE

Be aware of your double role in this conversation. Mainly, you are an attentive feedback receiver and listen actively. At the same time, as a moderator, you are responsible for the exchange. Ask specific questions and, if necessary, give impulses to support the students in their search for answers. During the moderation, you should preferably remain neutral (no judgement or influence). The students should have the opportunity to present their perceptions and suggestions from their point of view.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Communicate that student feedback on the course is important to you
2. Present (selected) results from the evaluation
3. Ask for further assessments and constructive suggestions for improving teaching
4. Take position on the question "What do I do with the feedback as teaching staff?"

FEEDBACK RULES FOR STUDENTS

- Try to be as specific as possible. Refer to a specific situation.
- Try not to generalise, be clear about your position.
- Think about concrete suggestions for improvement.
- Also give positive feedback.

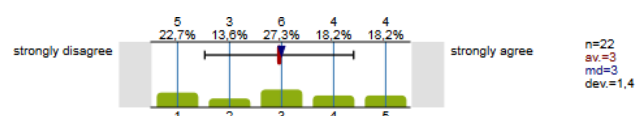
TIPS FOR STRUCTURING THE CONVERSATION

- Maintain anonymity of free text responses with unclear message by asking for everyone's ideas: "What do you think could be meant by this feedback?"
- Avoid suggestive questions.
- Ask for consent from the whole group concerning specific points in free text answers.
- Do not influence students in their feedback.
- Involve as many students as possible in the conversation to get a variety of opinions and perceptions.
- Ask for constructive feedback, e.g. with "How do you imagine good preparation for exams?"
- Let the students' feedback stand side by side.
- Accept the feedback. You don't have to defend yourself.
- Make sure you have understood the feedback correctly.

CLOSED QUESTIONS

Scenario I: You discuss feedback from the section with closed questions where a large variance in responses has been shown.

The teaching methods are well suited to impart the course's subject matter.



You like to find out the reason for this variance. For example, ask the students:

- Which methods do you find helpful and why?
- Which methods would you have preferred and why?

OPEN QUESTIONS

Scenario II: You use answers from the section with open questions that are of particular interest to you. For example, you have received the feedback: "*More variability in the accompanying documents, please*". Ask the whole group e.g.:

- Which documents did you find particularly helpful and why?
- What did you miss specifically and why?
- Are there other opinions on the variability of the documents?

DEALING WITH CRITICISM IN FREE TEXT ANSWERS

Addressing sensitive points can be difficult. Example: A free text response says: „*Your time management is poor*“. To ensure that you do not take this as a personal attack, it is helpful to keep **Friedemann Schulz von Thun's model of the Four Sides of a Message** in mind. For the given example it might look like this:

- **Subject level:** Your course is lacking time for discussion.
- **Self-revelation:** Students are afraid of not fully understanding the course material.
- **Relationship level:** The students would like to have a more intensive exchange with each other and with you as teaching staff.
- **Appeal:** "Please point out at the beginning what content is on the schedule" or "Please finish on time because students need to change rooms on campus", for example.

You see: You do not have to take supposedly personal criticism personally; instead, you can opt for a deliberately factual approach to the statement, which may have been formulated in an unfortunate manner.

Ask students open-ended questions like:

- What would you like to have more time for?
- What would help you to learn better in the time you have?
- Are there other opinions as well?

And: Don't just look at critical free-text responses. Look specifically for the praising statements and positive results. You will see that you are already doing a lot of things well in your teaching.

LARGE COURSES

To collect feedback on your questions, you can divide students into small groups, both in face-to-face and (synchronous) online teaching. Afterwards, let the students compile their results in plenary.

CONCLUSION

Write down the most important results and tell the students what you take away for yourself. These can be direct conclusions (e.g., that you will try to be more transparent about goals and requirements in the future) or thought-provoking ideas.

Of course, it is up to you which consequences you draw: You decide what is helpful for the design of your (future) courses.

USAGE OF THE RESULTS

The results "belong" to you. The evaluation regulations define: *"Results from student course evaluations may only be shared by the teaching staffs involved in the course themselves. Supervisors have no right to view the results. [...] It is not permitted to aggregate results at the person level in terms of instructor profiles."*

You are free to voluntarily share or publish your results with colleagues and/or supervisors while maintaining the students' anonymity.

Evaluating institutions receive an aggregated overall report that may be part of the teaching report. Evaluation committee chairs may also prepare their own aggregate reports.

STUDENT COURSE EVALUATION

Course evaluation is part of RUB's quality management and is contextualized and explained in the Evaluation Regulations of 2022 (AB No. 1532). At least every three years, all courses of all evaluating institutions are evaluated. Special rules may apply for student-supported teaching, e.g. in exercise groups and tutorials.

LINKS

Information on course evaluation: <https://l.rub.de/9br9oe66>

Information on the feedback dialog: <https://l.rub.de/6ddrad43>

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