



## **SATAL Mid-Semester Feedback Interpretation Guide**

This guide addresses student comments to question 2 (Q2) in the Mid-semester Feedback survey:

### **What suggestions do you have for the instructor to improve your learning?**

This guide will help instructors interpret and respond to student course feedback based on the Mid-semester Feedback (MSF) results. Student responses are aggregated according to their frequency. The results presented by Students Assessing Teaching and Learning (SATAL) are arranged from the highest to lowest frequency level of student agreement to help instructors prioritize and respond to students' needs. The notes in the guide address the five key features of learner-centered teaching: 1) The balance of power, 2) The function of content, 3) The role of the teacher, 4) The responsibility for learning, and 5) The purposes and processes of evaluation. These are five fundamental changes to instructional practices that need to take place to be considered learner-centered teaching, as identified by Weimer (2002).

### **1. The Balance of Power**

Instructors and students share power and decision-making. Instructors call into question traditional power structures and the role of authority in the classroom by redistributing power to students in amounts proportional to their ability to handle it.

#### **Resources**

- Consider first-day-class questions to get students-buy into active learning activities. Ask students, “Which of the following is most important to you? 1. Acquiring information (facts, principles, concepts) 2. Learning how to use information and knowledge in new situations 3. Developing lifelong learning skills.” Check this article for further comments [[here](#)]
- Consider active learning activities such as Think-Pair-Share, Solving Scenarios, Role-Playing, ... to engage students in practicing skills for learning, applying, synthesizing, or summarizing material. Check out these resources [[here](#) and [here](#) ] for tips on actively engaging students in your course.
- Consider the opening and the closing of the class session to increase student engagement. According to the primacy and recency effects, material taught at the beginning or the end of the class is more likely to be retained than other information. Check this resource [[here](#)]

- Consider addressing the long-standing question of why students and faculty remain resistant to active learning. Check out this article [\[here\]](#)
- Consider group work activities since students have reported learning from their peers' explanations
- Consider utilizing more real-world examples drawn from fields of interest of the students. Real-world applications connect academic concepts to real-life scenarios, encouraging students to find creative solutions.
- Consider doing a pre-course/entry survey [\[here\]](#) to gather information on student interests and, where appropriate, integrate ties to these in the class. Responding to entry survey results [\[here\]](#)
- Building trust is essential for student learning. Consider sharing more about yourself with the class to let them know you better. According to this source [\[here\]](#), students should be able to answer the following questions about you/their instructor: 1. Why are you here? 2. What do you know about me? 3. What's your relationship to me?

### **Learners' concerns addressed**

- Students feel disengaged
- Students feel intimidated by the instructor
- Students express a preference for lecturing over active learning activities
- Students resist active learning approaches such as group work
- Students suggest more group work to discuss material with peers

## **1. The Function of Content**

Second, in the function of content, course content plays a dual function in the curricula: establishing a knowledge base and promoting learning. Instructors challenge the conventional push to cover content and create time for developing learning skills and awareness of learning processes.

### **Resources**

- Consider students' prerequisite knowledge/skills.
  - Check your prerequisite assumptions with instructors of previous courses.
  - Consider making prerequisite review materials available.
  - Consider administering an entry survey to learn about the student's preparedness for the class and lived experiences [\[here\]](#) and reflect on address what students shared survey results [try this reflection guide
  - Consider highlighting the value of the readings assigned for homework in preparation for class activities.

- Consider providing explicit suggestions for approaching the readings and modeling how to read one in class.
- Consider providing an explicit breakdown of how long you expect them to spend on various readings and assignments outside of class.
- Consider whether you should trim the number or length of readings and assignments.

### **Learners' concerns addressed**

- The class is too hard
- The class pace is too fast/slow
- Students feel overwhelmed
- Students feel falling behind

## **2. The Role of the Teacher**

Third, in the role of the teacher, instructors guide and facilitate learning by stepping away from the center of the classroom and shifting from themselves to the students. Facilitation is the process by which an instructor is the “guide on the side” to help students acquire and retain information by constructing their own knowledge (Ambrose et al., 2010). More specifically, they are empowering students to discover knowledge and learn from each other in a learning environment that is encouraging, not controlling (Weimer, 2002). The role of content is built off the social constructivist approach that emphasizes students actively constructing their own meaning and knowledge by developing unique and individual ways of understanding content (Stage et al., 1998).

### **Resources**

- Consider creating a rich relationship environment by learning about students' names, getting to know your students' lived experiences, encouraging peer connection, and sharing information about you (1. Why are you here? 2. What do you know about me? 3. What's your relationship to me?). Resources for the instructor [[Relationship-Rich Education](#)] and for students [[video](#)] [[Connections are Everything -free copy](#)].
- Consider including more invitations to office hours in class.
  - Consider being more explicit about office hours availability, sometimes office hours conflict with course labs or other courses students take.
  - Consider what sort of help you can provide during office hours. Offer students some potential questions you will be covering during office hours to ensure that everyone participates. Sometimes students don't have a clear question for you since they don't know where to start, so they resist visiting your office hours.
  - Consider making an assignment early in the class that students must turn in to you in your office (this helps lower the barrier of coming to your office for help and builds rapport)

- Take a moment to refresh yourself on the best practices for supporting students with disabilities in your course including inviting students early to seek accommodation as needed, not asking students for condition details, keeping accommodation information private and confidential, and not providing informal accommodations outside of the formal process.
- Consider pausing more for questions (and pausing long enough for 5 seconds)
- Consider explaining concepts differently and asking students to explain them for the class to reach students with different learning preferences.
- Keep your CatCourse organized in modules for students to access files/information quickly.
- Conduct a class observation with a student-instructor interaction mapping to check for bias, discrimination, and sexism and/or any other unintentional microaggression. Lee and McCabe (2021) found that male students dominated in-person discussions in science courses compared to their female counterparts. Furthermore, they found that male students frequently spoke without raising their hands and used assertive language when speaking (Lee & McCabe, 2021).

### **Learners' concerns addressed**

- Building rapport with the instructor and peers
- Students feel disconnected from peers
- CatCourses organization
- Resistance to office hours attendance
- Fast class pace
- The instructor elicits responses from the same students.

### **3. The Responsibility for Learning**

Fourth, in the responsibility of learning, instructors create learning environments with fewer rules and requirements but more scaffolding, which are more conducive to student learning. Scaffolding is the process through which an instructor gives students instructional support early in their learning and then gradually removes it as students develop more advanced proficiency and sophistication (Ambrose et al., 2010). Also, students are motivated to build autonomy (Boud, 1988), self-directed learning (Brookfield, 1985), and self-regulated learning (Pintrich, 1995).

### **Resources**

- Consider offering choice and autonomy. By offering students choices in topics, projects, or presentation methods, you can allow them to take ownership of their learning.
- Scaffolding materials by explaining the step-by-step process on board or onenote supported by images.
- Asking students to repeat the information/steps to avoid the expert blindspot
- Consider providing detailed instructions on how students should prepare for class and study between classes. [\[here\]](#)

- Consider providing students with the class outcomes at the beginning of class
- Consider making more explicit recommendations on how to study and approach learning course material such as the textbook or research articles
- Provide pre-reading questions to focus the student attention on relevant information
- Share study guides and strategies with the class. Check resource [\[here\]](#)
- Encourage forming study groups to encourage discussion. Resource [\[here\]](#)
- Consider asking students to submit a reflection at the end of class with a summary of what they thought the key idea was and a question on what was most unclear to them. For more ideas on this, consider these checks for learning: [\[here p. 4\]](#), such as the muddiest point.

### Learners' concerns addressed

- Students feel disengaged
- Students are not completing the pre-readings/unprepared for class
- Students unable to read the textbook
- Students unable to identify relevant information during lecture

## 4. The Purpose and Processes of Evaluation

Fifth, in the purpose and processes of evaluation, instructors deploy a variety of assessment opportunities to enhance students' potential to promote learning and give them chances to develop self- and peer-assessment skills. These five learner-centered teaching practices provide a path to better student outcomes compared to traditional, teacher-centered ones (Weimer, 2002).

### Resources

- Foster a growth mindset: encourage students to view challenges as opportunities for growth and learning. Check fixed-growth mindset resource [\[here\]](#)
- Celebrate creativity: recognize and showcase students' creative work, promoting a sense of pride and accomplishment. Be a creative model: share your creative pursuits and passion projects with students, demonstrating the value of creative thinking.
- Emphasize process over product: focus on the creative journey rather than the end result.
- Insert more class assessments for you/instructor and students to check for understanding, for e.g., using clickers [\[here\]](#)
- Assess how you respond to student answers in class and on assignments. Try to provide more positive encouragement on the right components rather than just focusing on correcting the errors.
- Provide frequent and prompt feedback on student work
- Replace high-stakes assignments with low-stakes assignments that build to a larger project.
- Consider labor contracts as a substitute for the traditional letter grades evaluation.

- Consider exams/tests/activities wrappers. Here are some potential questions: 1) *How difficult was the exam?* 2) *Compare how you thought you performed to your actual performance,* 3) *How prepared were you for the exam?* 4) *What did you do to prepare for the exam?* 5) *Was there information or skills you needed but didn't have?* 6) *How effective was your preparation?* 7) *What would you do differently next time?*
- Consider replacing high-stakes assessments with low-stakes assessments and finding different ways for students to demonstrate knowledge/skills through art, writing, or role-playing.
- Diverse alternative assessment strategies, such as contract and specifications grading approaches. Check out this video resource [[here](#)]

### **Learners' concerns addressed**

- Students require more feedback on assignments
- Students require more quizzes to check for understanding
- High-stakes assignments determine student grade
- Students request low-stakes assessments instead of high-stakes assignments for more opportunities to improve their grade.

If you have received student feedback that you would like help addressing, please feel free to click on the link for a [pedagogical consultation](#) or a [technology consultation](#). Also, feel free to email us: adriana signorini <[asignorini@ucmerced.edu](mailto:asignorini@ucmerced.edu)> & Jackie Shay <[jshay@ucmerced.edu](mailto:jshay@ucmerced.edu)> for further discussion on pedagogical practices.