



# the learning files

## CONSULTING STUDENTS

# 2

The learning files are an initiative of the National CPD Task Team. They are written by and for the Colleges of Education and deal with topics that concern education in general and education in colleges more specifically. The files give a mixture of literature, good practices, self-testing and tips and tricks to tackle a certain problem. In this case: **consulting students.**

Do you feel like contributing ideas or topics, please do not hesitate to contact us: [info.vvob@iconnect.zm](mailto:info.vvob@iconnect.zm).

"Are my methods taking care of the different learning styles? Do you find my assignments helpful? What topics do you find difficult? What challenges do you have? What do you think about the new ICT policy? Do I, as a lecturer, help you in a respectful way even when you do not understand?"

These are possible questions lecturers can ask their students to get feedback on their teaching.

Student consultation is a crucial tool in the quality assurance of a college. While it can play a role in accountability, it is mainly aimed at improvement. That is also the reason why it is mentioned in the *Teaching and Learning Policy*, Basic Colleges of Education, under Value 4 (and others).

There is a growing recognition that young people have a right to be heard and have something

worthwhile to say about their school experiences. Policy makers internationally are thinking differently about the contribution of young people to today's and tomorrow's world. It is seen as integral to the Citizenship curriculum and lifelong learning.

Instructors are always getting feedback from students – through the questions students ask, the looks on students' faces, and the course-work students do – but it can be difficult to interpret these indirect forms of feedback or to use them as a basis for decisions about teaching. Sys-

tematically collecting feedback during a course can help you see the course as students see it and help you identify ways to support student learning more effectively.

This Learning File shows you how to go about student consultations, how to overcome resistance and also gives you some tools to use.

## Consultation versus participation

**Consultation** is about finding out student views on things that matter in college. It may involve students in:

- offering advice about policy
- commenting on their experiences of learning and offering suggestions for improvement
- reviewing recent major initiatives at school or year-group or in classroom practice.

Ideally, consultations are conversations that build a habit of easy discussion between lecturers and students, and among students, about learning in school.



**Participation** is about involving students in the school's work and development

- through a wider range of roles and responsibilities
- through membership of committees and working parties, and focusing on real issues, events, problems and opportunities.

In this Learning File we will focus on Consultation.

## Story

One day I went to monitor a student teacher who presented a lesson in a grade 5 class on diarrhoea. When the teacher came to discuss the question "How to prevent diarrhoea" she did not allow pupils to discuss the answers but gave answers of which some were wrong, such as "To prevent diarrhoea, we must also warm every food before eating." One boy asked the teacher with stress: "Madam, did you mean we have to warm every food?" The teacher answered with authority, "Yes, every food. Keep quiet and do the following exercise." When she was writing the exercise on the board, the learners started making noise behind the class. The teacher was disturbed, stopped writing and asked the pupils what the problem was. One brave boy said,



"Madam, should we warm even Ice-cream since you said we should warm every food?"

## "Paying attention to learners' feedbacks may guide the teacher"

The above story could seem a joke, but the fact is that paying attention to learner's responses/feedbacks may guide the teacher to make good conclusions and explanations.

If the teacher would reflect on her own teaching, she could definitely improve her practice. Reflection is enhanced when it is fuelled by information received from students/pupils. In other words consulting students will help the teacher to become a better teacher.

*(William B. Walawala, Kitwe College of Education)*

**"Somehow educators have forgotten the important connection between teachers and students. We listen to outside experts to inform us, and, consequently, we overlook the treasures in our very own backyards: our students. Student perceptions are valuable to our practice because they are authentic sources; they personally experience our classrooms first hand.... As teachers we need to find ways to continually seek out silent voices because they can teach us so much about learning and learners."**

*(Soo Hoo, 1993, p. 389)*

## "We first put up defence, but students had a point"

formats of lesson plans which other tutors reject". Yes, as tutors we may put up defence but the students really had a point. This prompted a serious CPD on standardising the lesson plans in different learning areas. It was also great to see how much we learned about the learning areas other than ours.

In the review we also asked the students how well they were prepared for their teaching practice. One student said: "Sir, teachers in the schools don't teach as expected. They beat children. I have learned that children only listen if you have a stick in class." This feedback made us think about our training and how it relates to the field. We wonder if other colleges experience this challenge. Let us share our experiences, email me [nkolola\\_chitambo@yahoo.com](mailto:nkolola_chitambo@yahoo.com).

*(Chitambo Nkolola, Chipata College of Education)*

We recently did a review on teaching practice at our college. At this forum students are free to discuss their experience in the field, in terms of preparation, implementation and mentoring. One student said: "You lecturers confuse us because each of you have different



**"Each business that takes itself seriously, listens to its customers."**  
*(Marc Logman)*

Kasama College of Education, in the recent past, designed an evaluation instrument (evaluation of lecturers by students) and actually administered this.

The students had an opportunity to air some views with regards to how the learning/teaching business was conducted around here. We gave them a platform because they are our beneficiaries. It only took them a few minutes and we had all the data we were looking for.

How did we find their responses like? Well, the students displayed a lot of maturity in the manner they handled the whole business of evaluation. They pointed out very critical areas for improvement, and we all felt obliged to change in those.

## "Students displayed a lot of maturity"

I am highly indebted to our staff for their co-operation, commitment and time they dedicated to this exercise amid challenges that go with an evaluation process.

I wish to state here categorically that the evaluation of tutors by students drastically changed a number of things for the better and I would like, in the same vein, to urge our colleagues from other colleges to give it a try, a big try indeed. "The proof of the pudding is in the eating" and you will recall that "What is good for the goose is good for the gander".

*(Moses Musonda, Kasama College of Education)*



**Rudduck** (2003) indicates that benefits for students, lecturers and schools depend, among other things, on a clarity of purpose, a careful climate setting, an ability and willingness to listen and an understanding of what 'consultation' really means.

## What's in it for students?

Being able to talk about your learning helps students develop:

- a stronger sense of membership, feeling more positive about school and more included in its purposes – *the organisational dimension*;
- a stronger sense of respect and self worth so that they feel positive about themselves - *the personal dimension*;
- a stronger sense of self-as-learner so that they are better able to manage their own learning – *the pedagogic dimension*;
- a stronger sense of responsibility for the improvement in teaching and learning and wider school matters – *the political dimension*.
- a stronger sense for and skill in reflection enabling them to develop responsibility for managing their own learning.

We could easily add to this that if students see this happen in their college, they might pick up the reflective attitude in their (future) teaching career.

## “Why would we abuse the opportunity?”

“It was a bit strange to evaluate my lecturer. But it was good that we could do this. We were considering the effect this might have on the lecturer, but mostly we were happy that we could play a role in the quality assurance of teaching and learning at our college. Some lecturers don't seem to realise what is going wrong and by this evaluation we can make them think and reflect. I am sure some lecturers are worried that we will abuse this opportunity. Why would we? It is in our interest that things change for the better. The questions need to be very clear and straightforward and lecturers must be able to “translate” our answers. From a mirror you can learn.” (Peter is 2nd year student at Mimos College of Education)

## What's in it for lecturers?

- a deeper insight into student's capabilities including students' capacity for contributing constructively to the improvement of teaching and learning
- the capacity to see the familiar from a different angle;
- a practical agenda for improvement; a renewed sense of excitement in teaching.

**“I was a bit doubtful, but fully convinced now”**

“At first I was a bit doubtful about this student consultation. But it was well organised in the college. I gave all my students a list with clear questions. I learned from the students' feedback that I urgently need to invest in my ICT knowledge. Up to now I always postponed this as I didn't see it as very crucial for my teaching. Now I learned that I misjudged! But students also commended my openness, my preparedness to walk an extra mile and my structured way of teaching. It definitely makes me feel more confident knowing that I'm not completely missing something and that they appreciate the effort I put into the course. This is definitely something I want to do in future classes as well.” (Ms. Luse is senior lecturer at Victoria College of Education)

**“Who dares to teach must never cease to learn.”**  
(John Cotton)

## What's in it for colleges?

Strengthening opportunities for greater participation by students can yield

- a practical agenda for change that students can identify with
- this can lead to improved courses and programmes
- improve the provision of learning resources, facilities, equipment and services
- enhanced engagement with college and college learning;
- a different, more partnership oriented relationship between students and lecturers;
- a sound basis for developing democratic principles and practices;
- a more inclusive approach to self-evaluation;
- developing the capacity of the school as a learning organisation
- providing evidence of teaching quality for the purposes of appointment and promotion and teaching awards
- A serious step forward in doing quality assurance

**“Quality is high on the agenda”**

“The idea of doing this kind of consultation really made the temperature in our college rise. Lecturers were worried that students would abuse the opportunity; they were worried about the implications of this evaluation. That is why we prepared this together. First we agreed upon the procedure: in this stage the results of the evaluation would be something between the lecturer and the students. So lecturers are not forced to give the data to the administration. Secondly we jointly developed a tool, which was quite a challenge. There were some lecturers who volunteered to pilot the instrument. Mrs. Masambuka played a crucial role. They call her Moyo, meaning she brings life into the classroom. She has always asked her students to evaluate her lessons, and afterwards she works on their observations. She really has improved and changed the perception of evaluation of lecturers by their students.

Do you know what was amazing? During tea break I heard animated discussions in the staff room about the results of their evaluations. The lecturers asked colleagues advice on how to deal with an issue that they had picked up from their evaluation. The culture in this work place is slowly changing. Quality of teaching and learning is high on the agenda and the pass rates are improving!” (Mrs. Phiri is Vice-Principal at Mimos College of Education)

## Principles and cautions

### Principles

- Student feedback is an important component in monitoring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.
- Feedback processes should be systematic, rigorous and respectful of the rights of both students and staff.
- All students should have the opportunity and are strongly encouraged to provide feedback.
- Students should be informed about how their feedback has been used provided that students recognise that lecturers and / or the college may, on occasions, have legitimate reasons for not acting on certain feedback (e.g. pedagogical or resource reasons).

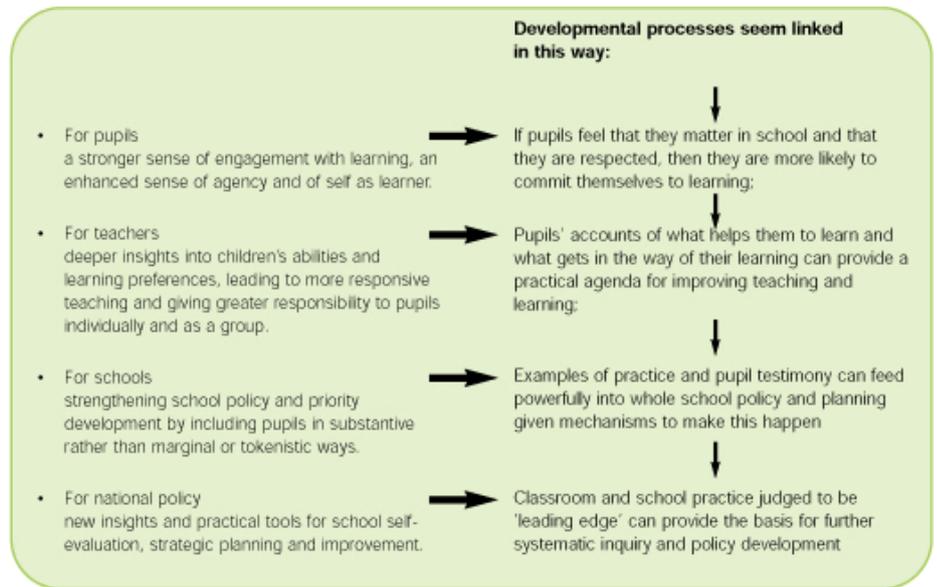


Figure 1: Development processes in student consultation (Ruddock, 2003)

### Some cautions

Traditionally we have bad habits of not hearing what students say and students for their part, often expect not to be heard. Breaking these habits requires new ways of listening.

- **Hearing the quiet voice** in the acoustic of the school. Beware of only listening to those who are articulate and assertive.
- Avoiding the creation of a 'student

**voice elite**'. Make sure that student representation really represents all students and not only "the happy few".

- The desire to hear what students have to say is **genuine**.
- Consult students on topics that they **find important** (sometimes you need to explain why they are important). Students tire of giving feedback when they sense that their lecturers are not really interested in what they have to say.
- **Sharing data and/or offering feedback to students**. Students need to know

what is happening as a result of what they have said, what is possible and what is not possible given diverse perspectives and external pressures. Students tire of giving feedback when they never see follow up actions.

- **Trust and openness** as a precondition of dialogue and action. This requires a framework that legitimates comment and provides reassurance that ideas will be welcome and not simply 'accommodated'. Students should be confident that giving feedback will not disadvantage them.



Figure 2: "Students should be confident that giving feedback will not disadvantage them." (Calvin&Hobbes, Watterson, 1993)

#### 1. School-wide issues

Students can be consulted on issues such as revising college mission statements, systems of rewards and sanctions, revising college rules, qualities needed in a new lecturer or member of administration, ....

#### 2. Year group issues

Some of the issues at this level are planning an induction for next year's year group, or-

## What can we consult students about?

organising parents' evenings, qualities needed in a year-tutor, suggestions for timetabling and class grouping and ways of organising assignments, study support and teaching practice.

#### 3. Issues in their class

Classroom issues include learning styles or preferences, things that help students learn

and get in the way of learning, understanding what makes a 'good piece of work', peer support, how they experience group work and learner support.

Consultations at these various levels share a broadly similar purpose but are shaped differently by the context in which they occur.

How ready are you for student consultation?

	yes	no
I treat students with respect and see them as equal partners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a clear idea of what I want to consult students about.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an instrument or methodology that will allow all students to give their inputs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I let students give feedback anonymously.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am prepared to really listen to what students have to tell about me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am genuinely interested in what students have to say.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am ready to explore alternatives suggested by students (even if they seem something	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I will develop a personal improvement plan after processing the data.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I plan a feedback session where I discuss with students the results and the implications.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Policy

It is good to develop a policy about student consultation. The Australian National University has a Policy on Student feedback on T&L. Have a look at [http://policies.anu.edu.au/policies/student\\_feedback\\_on\\_teaching\\_and\\_learning/policy](http://policies.anu.edu.au/policies/student_feedback_on_teaching_and_learning/policy)

**“Do you know how I convinced my lecturers to ask their students to evaluate them? I told them that they (=the lecturers) could also evaluate me! Since that moment lecturers feel safe to ask their students for feedback and I have learned a lot from my staff’s feedback”**  
*(A principal)*

## What about APAS?

Can student consultation be linked to a performance system? Yes, it can!

A performance system, or staff evaluation, could use feedback given by students about the teaching performance of a lecturer to add to other sources of information. If lecturers get feedback from peers, from their superior, from standards officers and from students they get what is called 360 degrees feedback. However, it is crucial that all staff members agree with the procedure and that there is a college policy about this.

## How to consult students?

A range of methods can be used for obtaining student feedback including:

- Surveys: questionnaires, interviews
- Informal feedback, conversations and discussions
- Student logging
- Suggestion boxes
- Staff-Student Liaison Committees (representation of staff and students is equal)
- Meetings with the student body (student representatives)
- Focus group discussions

Different approaches have their own strengths and weaknesses and are appropriate in different contexts and for particular purposes. In this Learning File some methods are explained in more depth: a teaching and learning questionnaire, suggestion boxes, and exit slips.

The frequency and timing depends on the topic you want to consult students about. Although a college should have a constant openness for feedback, formal consultation should not happen so often that students tire of responding.

You will find a variety of instruments on <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/consulting/studentfeedback.html#>

In this learning File we will discuss three possible ways: exit slips, suggestion boxes and a questionnaire.

## Instruments

Exit slips are written student responses to questions you pose at the end of class. They take no more than 5 minutes for students to complete, but give you a good indication of the students' understanding or opinion. Exit slips only take a few minutes for the teacher to read and help keep you in touch with your students.



The end of the school day, or at the end of an important learning activity is an excellent time to use exit slips. Simply distribute little pieces of paper (e.g. one A4 sheet cut into 8 pieces) to each student.

Pose a question for the students to respond to. The question must be short and should take the students a maximum time of 5 minutes to complete. As the students leave the classroom they are to drop their exit slip into some sort of container. Essentially, the exit slip is their ticket to leave. E.g.: List three things you learned today, 2 things that challenged your thinking and one question you have about the topic (3-2-1); What did you learn today?; What would you like me to review tomorrow? Why?; What would you like to learn tomorrow?; List 10

words that describe the concept you learned today; List 5 words that describe your learning experience today.

## Exit slips

The classroom teacher now has a quick assessment tool. By assessing the responses on the exit slips the teacher can better differentiate the instruction in order to accommodate students' needs for next class.

Exit slips are a way of doing formative assessment. But they don't always have to question the content of the lesson. You can also ask for feedback on a method used. By doing so, you get immediate feedback. Exit slips then become a tool for consulting students. Note that students are allowed to give feedback anonymously.

More info at <http://www.centralischool.ca/~bestpractice/exit/index.html>

If students can't learn the way we teach, we should teach the way they learn.

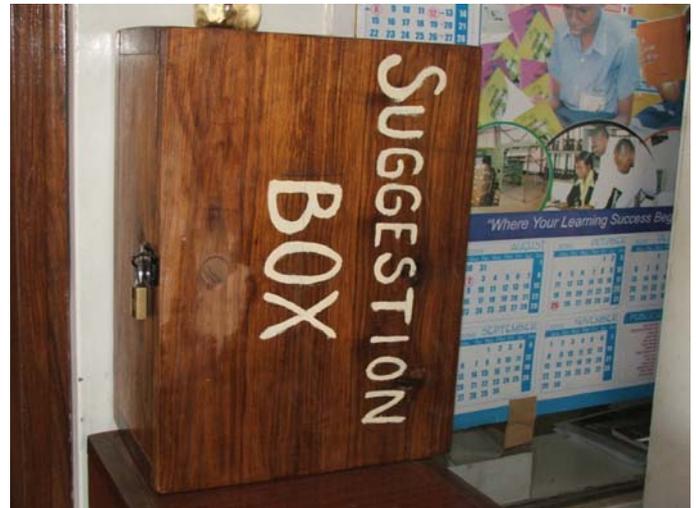
## Suggestion boxes



In June 2010 we, at DALICE, placed suggestion boxes in the college library, the recreation hall, the tuck shop, the dining hall and on the wall of the main classroom corridor. We wanted students to be very free and comfortable to drop in their ideas and suggestions without interference from any one. We first announced the boxes at the college chapel during assembly time. Then several meetings were held with students to sensitise them on the value of suggestion boxes. We asked them to contribute to the college welfare and development.



It is quite amazing. Students really drop a lot of suggestions in the boxes. At first we emptied them every fortnight, but now we do this several times a week. You are asking for some examples? Mmm, difficult, we have so many of them: students desire to know how their fees are used; students ask prompt feedback on their marked assignments; they give suggestions on how to handle exams for our student with visual impairment; they express need for attending to repair works in the student hostels, etc. We try to deal with the issue and give feedback via college assembly. We also have several meetings



with student leaders who are encouraged to discuss issues with their friends.

**Initially, not all staff was in favour but nearly all have seen the need and the value** of the suggestion boxes as we continue to see constructive contributions from students. The key to success of this process is persuasion of students on the value of the suggestion boxes and then students should receive sincere feedback on the issues they raise.

*(Patrick Kayawe, David Livingstone CE)*

It's okay to ask questions, but what do you do with the answers?

# Consulting students on Teaching & Learning Processes

**What?** With this instrument lecturers can ask immediate and standardised feedback from students pertaining to the perceived quality of teaching in the subject. It is a starting point for professional self-reflection and improvement of education.

Direct feedback from students, processed by the concerned lecturer himself is a very efficient way of quality assurance. In this process the lecturer takes responsibility from the start until the end. No external people are involved unless the lecturer wishes so. Since the lecturer conducts this evaluation in a safe environment, the impact on his own practice can be substantial.

If a college wishes to do so, doing this evaluation can become an annual event which can be even linked to the yearly evaluation talk lecturers have with their supervisor (APAS). It is important that the supervisor respects confidentiality of the process.

The questionnaire exists out of **7 sections**. Sections A to E refer to teaching practices, section F to assessment practices and the last section G refers to evaluation of guidance during teaching practice. In all these sections questions relate to both teaching activities, guidance and mentoring, tasks and self study, study materials and contents and outcomes.

Lecturers can select the sections that apply to them, in practice it will be mostly sections A-E.

Within the sections chosen, lecturers can delete questions and even sections, if they feel they are not relevant. Lecturers also decide when they will question the students.

The questionnaire only questions issues on which input from students is required. It doesn't touch on for example issues as absenteeism and punctuality of the lecturer. If the lecturer is honest, he knows very well whether he is in time in class or not.

It is important to realise that the quality of the exercise depends on **the real willingness and commitment of the lecturer to improve:**

Does he only select sections of which he knows his score will be high or is he honest to let students evaluate all in order to get constructive feedback?

Is he able to have a constructive conversation with students after processing the results?

Is he able to deduct from this evaluation strong points and weak points and set up a personal plan of action?

We hope this tool will be of assistance in the improvement processes of the college. Don't hesitate to send us feedback (lieve.leroy@vob.org.zm). With your inputs we can optimise the instrument and make it more user friendly.

Good luck on your journey!

**How?** On the next page you will see a series of questions on several themes. Not all themes will always be applicable. For example: a lecturer wanting to get feedback about his teaching at the end of the term, will only use sections A, B, C, D and E. F and G are relevant to check after examinations (F) or teaching practice (G).

In the Excel version of this document you can select questionnaire A-E or F or G by clicking on the right worksheet. You can even delete certain questions if you feel they are not relevant for you or you can adjust them. It is good practice to make sure that you cover both your strong and your weak points with the questions.

Print/copy the page as many times as you find suitable. In smaller groups, you can ask all students to evaluate you. In big groups you better ask minimum 20 and maximum 50 students to complete the questionnaire. Select students at random. Do this at the end of the lesson.

While students are completing the questionnaire, you leave the classroom for some minutes. Ask students to put the filled in forms in an envelope or empty box which you have put in the classroom. Only when everyone has put his questionnaire into the box, you enter the room again. Students are only supposed to complete the form when **anonymity** is guaranteed.

This instrument is meant for evaluation of teaching by the lecturer involved. The data will also be processed by the lecturer himself.

The results show which topics should be further discussed with some students to get clarifications/directions. It is important to ask students then for constructive feedback and not get into defence (e.g. NOT: "*You indicate that you find my class difficult, but didn't I give extra explanation?*" RATHER: "*I learned from many of you that you find my classes difficult. Do you have any suggestions for me?*")

The process is a starting point for self-reflection and improvement of professional practice. Whether this evaluation exercise has any impact on your practice depends entirely on what you will do with the results. Have you thought about setting up a **personal improvement plan?**

**Note** If you would like to use this instrument, you can either copy from here or you can ask us to email the digital version (Excel file). If there is a need/request we could also work out an excel format that automatically calculates your scores (averages, diagrams etc.) as you enter the data you have received from the students.

Please let us know!

# Instruments

## Consulting students on teaching and learning processes: student form

Please give your opinion on the below statements by ticking the appropriate box. If you really cannot answer a question, you can leave it open. In case there are no course materials for this subject, you do the following: if you feel there is no need for materials, leave the questions open. If you feel course materials are essential but absent for this subject, tick "1". After completing this questionnaire, you put it in the box or envelop made available by your lecturer. Only fill in this questionnaire when anonymity is guaranteed. Thanks for your inputs!		Completely not agree	Mostly not agree	More or less agree	Mostly agree	Fully agree
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>A Teaching activities</b>						
1	In class and between consecutive classes of this subject there is a clear line to be seen. The progress is systematic and coherent.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	The lecturer can explain (difficult) concepts and issues very well.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	The lecturer regularly summarises and gives overviews on the whole.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	During class, the lecturer uses diagrams and audio visual aids in an appropriate way.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	The lecturer sufficiently assesses problems in student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6	The lecturer uses examples, illustrations and applications in an appropriate way.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7	The lesson allows good note taking. The lecturer provides advice for this.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8	The lecturer makes me think (critically) during class.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9	The lecturer shows enthusiasm and commitment.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10	The lecturer uses a variety of teaching method in an appropriate manner.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>B Guidance</b>						
1	I get sufficient feedback on my progress made in this subject.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	When I have problems studying this subject, I can ask the lecturer for advice.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	The learning material available includes questions and self-evaluation tools that allow to get an idea of my insights and skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	The approach of the lecturer motivates me to regularly work independently to process the content.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	Via the feedback I have received, I know very well what and how I should improve.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>C Assignments and self-study</b>						
1	Via the directions given by the lecturer I manage to carry out assignments and self study tasks independently.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	The lecturer gave clear tasks and expectations towards the tasks.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	I perceive the tasks given as useful for my education as a teacher.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	The tasks helped me to apply knowledge and skills into relevant contexts.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	When I carry out an assignment or task, I get sufficient and quality guidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6	The assignments and tasks are planned in such a way that it gives me a feasible time-frame.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>D The course material</b>						
1	The course material has a clear structure (chapters, paragraphs, numbering, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	The course material include the majority of the content dealt with by the lecturer.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	The course material helps me studying (via tasks, tips, overviews, indications/ directions).	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	The course material stimulates me and assists me to work independently.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	The course material is timely available .	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Consulting students on teaching and learning processes: student form

(continued)		Completely not agree	Mostly not agree	More or less agree	Mostly agree	Fully agree
		1	2	3	4	5
<b>E The learning outcomes and contents</b>						
1	I understand why the learning outcomes of this subject are important for my training.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	I feel that the lecturer is competent in this subject.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	The learning outcomes give me a clear idea of what is expected from me.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	There are no disturbing overlaps with other subjects.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	The content of this subject perfectly links up with my prior knowledge.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6	I find the contents of this subject interesting and stimulating.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>F Assessment</b>						
1	The course materials and lessons allow me to prepare myself well and timely for the examination.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	The examination reflects the important issues emphasised during classes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	The form of assessment is adequate for the nature of the content and the learning outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	I have a good understanding of the criteria used to assess my performance.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	The assessment of my academic performance happens in a correct and objective way.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<b>G Practicals and teaching practice</b>						
1	In terms of content and methodology I was well prepared to efficiently start my teaching practice.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2	The learning outcomes of the teaching practice were concrete and clear before I started.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3	The tutor discusses regularly my learning points and experiences with me.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4	The tasks given to me during the teaching practice were enriching, gave me opportunities for practicing and were well linked with the learning outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5	I was well guided while doing the teaching practice both by mentor and tutor.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

(adjusted from EvOp, Vyt, A.)



Have you met Professor Con Sult? He will answer all our questions about student consultation.

**Q:** Don't students abuse the opportunity? Can we actually trust the data?

**A:** A lot of lecturers think that students will just give vent to their frustrations and make a mess. But research shows a different thing. What students report about their lecturers is sometimes confronting and even inconsistent, but always correct and constructive. Students don't trifle with their new responsibilities. They spontaneously focus their evaluation on quality improvement.

(More burning questions on page 10)

## Q&A

**Q:** How to interpret student feedback? What if students have different opinions?

**A:** Be open and ask yourself, "What can I learn by finding out how students experience my teaching?"

Identify patterns and underlying themes. Individual student comments that stand out from the rest still need to be considered, but they should be understood in the context of these common themes.

Consider other data. Record your own reflections, ask a colleague for his or her perspective, or work with a critical friend to help you make sense of the feedback in light of what is known about effective teaching and learning.

Student responses may be inconsistent or even conflicting. For example, some may report that they benefit from group discussions, but others say discussions are unhelpful. Knowing this range of student perceptions can help you see how students are experiencing the class differently and give you insight into students' diverse learning needs.

**Q:** How do I respond to student feedback?

**A:** Consulting students is not the end but just the beginning of a process. It is important to acknowledge and respond to students' feedback, but responding does not mean simply fulfilling student requests. Rather, being responsive means considering student input and finding ways to help align student expectations with your teaching

and course goals.

For example, you might choose to make a change recommended by students, but you might also address student perceptions by helping them see the value or purpose of something that they identified as unhelpful.

In your response, note students' positive feedback, and let them know you will continue to do what is working well. Identify specific changes you intend to make in response to students' feedback. Acknowledge student feedback that you are not planning to incorporate into your teaching, and explain why.

Your response to the feedback can open doors for further dialogue with students about their (and your) learning.

**Q:** I am a vice-principal. I would love to introduce some sort of student consultation, but there is a lot of resistance. Any advice for me?

**A:** Start with making sure your staff reads this Learning File. Discuss the issue in your staff meeting. Why do lecturers resist? Often this has to do with uncertainty. They might feel afraid that this evaluation by students will harm them. Try to set out some guidelines so that all people involved feel safe. You can also start this project with a few volunteers. They will soon convince the others. Make sure that you agree upon the purpose of the consultation: is it for personal use (so only for the lecturer) or is it part of a performance system. It is good, especially when there is a lot of resistance, to start with the first.



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## the learning files

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