

## Lecturer Guide ‘Evaluating as an ongoing dialogue’ How to positively impact your education through evaluation?

How can you evaluate your course effectively? Students are invited to share their opinions and experiences via UvA Q at the end of every course, but you can achieve more impact by approaching the evaluation of a course as an ongoing and constructive dialogue. This guide provides you with examples of how to do so during different phases of a course.

### At the beginning of a course

If you plan to evaluate at one or more moments during a course, it helps to announce this at the beginning of the course. It is important to make students aware of this and to express explicit expectations about these evaluation moments.

#### How do you make students aware of their role in the evaluation as well as of its importance?

- By explaining what has been changed in the course in response to previous evaluations (this can also be done in the course manual). Explain also why evaluating matters, for you personally and for improving the education more generally.
- By making clear that students share the responsibility for making a course a success with their lecturer.
- By paying attention to the fact that giving constructive feedback is a skill that students have to develop: such as awareness of the education they receive, how it is organized and the reasons behind it.

#### How do you communicate about **what, when and how** students can give feedback?

It can be complicated for students to evaluate a course, especially when it comes to giving feedback to a lecturer. Providing them with a framework for doing so is therefore important, so you please let them know at which moments, in which ways and about which topics they can give their input. This will help students to determine what they can and should pay attention to during the course.

Below you will find some concrete suggestions:

- Topics:
  - Content of the classes / assignments. *How did you experience the assignment for this class? Would you like to prepare for a next class in the same way?*
  - Coherence. *How clear is the connection between the lectures and the seminars?*
  - Guidance / supervision. *How do you experience the supervision of the group assignments? Is there something that you need in the next few weeks to successfully complete these assignments?*
  - Process. *Many students do not appear to adequately prepare for the seminars: what is the cause of this and how could we improve on this situation?*
- Moments:
  - After a particular class. If you are trying out a new approach or teaching method, this could be a reason for a brief evaluation.
  - Halfway through a course: after several classes you can for instance choose to discuss the learning process with your students. *If you look at the desired learning outcomes of the course, do you have feeling you have reached them / what should we focus on in the coming weeks to fully reach these goals?*
- Ways:
  - Let students know how they can provide you with feedback and if you prefer a certain way: approaching you after class, via email or in another way? A thing to keep in mind is that miscommunication can easily arise via email.

### During a course

After a course has already started, it is especially useful to evaluate what could still be changed in the remaining classes. Here are some general things to keep in mind when asking students for feedback during a course:

- A safe and open atmosphere is of vital importance, with respect being a two-way street.
- Encourage students to come to you with points of attention, in the spirit of approaching evaluating as an ongoing process.
- Devote attention to how students can give constructive feedback to you as well as to their peers (see this link).
- Make the evaluation moments as concrete and specific as possible: general, unfocused questions can easily lead to feedback that remains too vague to be useful.

How do I organize this? Below you will find a few suggestions:

- You could ask students a question with several options, which you could link to the desired learning outcomes: *Would you like to focus in the next class on practicing exam questions or rather go over the feedback on your assignments?*
- Divide the students in small groups and ask them to evaluate a particular topic, like the discussions in the seminar or the supervision of assignments. They can also discuss points of improvement that you come up with together, such as: 'Not all students seem to participate actively during the discussions', 'Many students send the same questions by email, how can we organize this differently?' The results of the evaluation in smaller groups could be reported back to the entire class.
- Have students write a 'tip' and a 'top' – a point for improvement and a good practice – on a post-it and gather them on a flip over. You can provide specific categories or questions on the flip over to avoid feedback that is too general (like 'too much literature or 'I want more feedback').

### At the end of a course

Approaching the evaluation of a course as an ongoing dialogue means that the UvA Q evaluation at the end of your course will not come out of the blue for students. You can also reference the earlier moments at which you discussed the course with your students. *Did possible changes that were made during a course help the learning process of students? Did the course meet their expectations?* Looking back in this way during the last session also provides a clear and constructive context for students for filling out the UvA Q evaluation:

- Please allow students to fill out the UvA Q evaluation during the last class of the course! This significantly boosts the response rate and makes the results of the evaluation more useful.
- You can describe who will receive the results of the evaluation (not only the lecturer, but also the programme committee and the programme director) and what may be done with the results, for instance a change in the workload or literature.