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## Alternatives to the SGID: Instructor-Administered Mid-Term Evaluations for Formative Assessment



*Beth Dietz*

For a number of reasons, including a desire to improve our courses, to give students a voice, and performance reports, formative assessment is of value. There are, of course, many ways to conduct formative, indirect assessments in our classes. These can include student interviews, Small Group Instructional Diagnoses (SGIDs), Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs), or mid-term surveys. In this blog entry, two Miami faculty members report on their experiences using mid-term feedback surveys.

**Beth Dietz** (Psychology–MUM) uses a mid-term survey based in part on Tom Angelo’s (2014) “Teaching Feedback Form.” The survey consists of 4 parts: (1) Questions about Yourself (e.g., “I am self-motivated to learn this course material”; “I invest enough time and energy to meet/exceed course requirements”); (2) Questions about the Course (e.g., “The objectives and the criteria for meeting them are made clear”; “The level of intellectual challenge is high”); (3) Questions about the Instructor (e.g., “The instructor clearly connects the course objectives to course activities, assignments, and assessments”); and (4) Summary Questions (e.g., “The course increases my desire to continue learning about this material”). All but the last two questions (which are open-ended questions asking what students would change and what they would keep the same) are based in Likert scales, which allows for ease of analysis and reporting. Beth administers this form electronically (using Google Forms) and gives students a few days to complete it. Then she provides the responses to students (which is easily accomplished using Google Forms) and initiates a conversation about the course. Because the questions tend to be more formative than summative, the discussion with the class is generally helpful. Most of the time, it has led her to make some changes to the course (for example, students wanted more guidance in their writing, so she started “walking” them through sample papers and even creating video “walk-throughs” that students could watch outside of class to reinforce what they heard in class). But it also created opportunities for Beth to explain the pedagogical rationale for why she would not make suggested changes, such as reducing the

amount of writing or eliminating group work. She believes that this assessment accomplishes several goals: 1. It lets students know that she values their feedback, 2. It opens the door for a productive dialogue with students, and 3. It provides her with valuable feedback leading to changes that, ideally, improve student learning.



Jennifer Blue

**Jennifer Blue** (Physics) uses an even simpler mid-term evaluation. (Note: She started doing this nearly 20 years ago, upon the suggestion of another teacher; she'd love to hear from anyone who has a citation for this method.) Students pull out a blank piece of paper and fold it into quarters. In one quarter, they write what the professor has already been doing to help the student learn. In the second quarter, they give suggestions of things the professor could change to improve student learning in the course. In the third and fourth quarters of the paper, they repeat the process, but this time they focus on themselves: What has the student already been doing to help himself or herself learn?

What could the student change to help his or her learning in the rest of the course? Jennifer usually gets good suggestions from the students, and she is also impressed with how well the students can reflect on their own actions. On this anonymous evaluation, students are honest about what they have and have not been doing to help themselves learn. The class can have a productive discussion of the shared responsibility for student learning.

## Reference

Angelo, T. (September, 2014). *Doing assessment as if deep-learning matters most*. Paper presented at the Drexel Assessment Conference, Philadelphia, PA.



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