Guidelines for Student Evaluation of Courses

Supporting Educational Performance and Evaluation for Improvement

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FOREWORD

Student evaluation of courses is an integral and critical component of a coherent educational experience and part of the institution's repertoire of evaluative questioning processes. The purpose of student evaluation of courses is to integrate evaluation naturally within the context of learning and teaching so that learners and teachers engage in dialogic practices to enhance learning and teaching. Evidence of teachers valuing student voice and feedback is critical to student engagement with evaluation and consistent with Unitec's approach to curriculum. Therefore, programmes and departments are required to embed a culture of evaluation from the very beginning of the student experience.

To this end, these guidelines have been prepared to:

- Explain the tertiary sector's evaluative quality assurance framework and the context within which Unitec intends to oversee and report educational performance;
- Describe principles, methodologies and approaches to the evaluation discipline;
- Inform staff about Unitec's requirements and expectations regarding student evaluation of courses;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities for implementing evaluation and improvement activities;
- Provide a range of potential tools and techniques for implementing effective evaluation practices.

This is the first edition of the Guidelines and it is expected that content will continue to develop as our evaluation capability develops along with the contributions from the users of these Guidelines. A special thanks to the following individuals who provided significant contributions to the content of specific sections of these Guidelines:

Trudy Harris	Appraisals Administrator, Waikato University
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SECTION 1: BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 THE TERTIARY SECTOR'S QUALITY ASSURANCE ENVIRONMENT

An evaluative approach to quality assurance has been developed and mandated by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) in response to the Tertiary Education Reforms. Self Assessment (SA), and External Evaluation and Review (EER) has been designed to improve educational performance and support a culture of continuous improvement throughout the tertiary education sector. Every Tertiary Education Organisation (TEO) is now accountable for achieving educational outcomes that benefit the learner and is required to demonstrate capability in evaluation practices for ongoing self-improvement.

In simple terms, evaluation is a discipline which provides a systematic basis for answering questions about quality and value. The quality assurance framework designed for the tertiary sector uses evaluation theory and practice to focus on the quality of educational outcomes and key contributing processes. Evaluation methods, tools and techniques enable judgments to be made about the quality and value of the key outcomes and the key processes that contribute to these outcomes (NZQA, 2009).

Three main principles underpin the quality assurance framework:

- **High Trust and High Accountability**
  A high trust environment recognises that a TEO has autonomy over its own processes. Quality is the direct responsibility of individual TEOs and each is accountable for the educational outcomes it achieves and the on-going improvement of educational performance;

- **Quality as a Dynamic Concept**
  In the context of tertiary education, what matters most is the value that learners gain from their learning experience, the utility of their qualifications and the extent to which positive longer-term outcomes occur;

- **A Focus on Outcomes**
  Traditional quality assurance has focused mainly on inputs, systems and activities and assumed that if doing these things well, quality is assured. Evaluative quality assurance looks at processes from the perspective of the utility or impact of these processes on what is done and achieved – the **valued outcomes** of tertiary education.

Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs) have been developed and implemented within the SA and EER framework to explore what are considered the most important dimensions of educational quality: programme content and design, and delivery and outcomes (NZQA, 2009):

Outcome questions:

1. How well do learners achieve?
2. What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

Process questions:

3. How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?
4. How effective is the teaching?
5. How well are learners guided and supported?
6. How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

While these KEQs are among the tools used during EER to reach judgements about educational performance and capability in self-assessment, they are also useful tools for self assessment activities. They provide a strong link between SA and EER and enable engagement in evaluative conversations using common definitions and understandings. That said, providers are able to design their own questions to reflect unique features of their organisation (NZQA, 2009).

1.2 OVERSEEING AND REPORTING ON UNITEC'S EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The Academic Board has ultimate responsibility for overseeing and reporting to Council on the institute's educational performance and on related evaluative questioning, development and improvement. Educational performance spans two sets of drivers:

1) Institutional self-assessment and external evaluation and review;
2) Government priorities stated within the Tertiary Education Strategy.

1.2.1 Self-Assessment and External Evaluation and Review

Government has gazetted self assessment as a formal requirement for Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology. An extract from the New Zealand Gazette (04/12/08) reads:

> *"From 1 January 2009, all organisations whose courses are approved pursuant to these criteria (Criteria for Approval and Accreditation of Courses), shall undertake self-assessment of their own performance and the results of this self-assessment shall be used to monitor and continuously improve the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders."*

NZQA has expectations regarding the development of organisational self-assessment capability which Unitec has termed 'evaluative questioning'. The KEQs mandated by NZQA (shown in Section 1.1 above) give rise to further evaluative questioning in order to respond to the KEQs:

i) What do we know about the outcomes being delivered?
ii) What do we know about what causes and contributes to those outcomes?

iii) How valid and reliable is the information used to answer the outcome KEQs [*1. How well do learners achieve?; 2. What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners]*?
iv) How is the information and analysis referenced or benchmarked externally?
v) How is the information and analysis used to bring about improved outcomes?
vi) What is the evidence that improvement is actually occurring?

It is essential that the outcomes of self assessment activities provide sound answers to these questions as self assessment activities will be 'validated' through the EER process.

Unitec's first EER occurs in 2011 and will result in a statement of confidence about Unitec's educational performance and about Unitec's capability in self-assessment. Confidence ratings of Highly Confident, Confident, Not Yet Confident or Not Confident will be drawn from a synthesis of evaluation ratings for Focus Areas. Focus Areas will be mostly individual programmes or programme groups but will also include central support units and cross-functional processes. Focus Areas are rated Excellent, Good, Adequate or Poor for both educational performance and self-assessment capability.

1.2.2 Government Priorities and the Tertiary Education Strategy

The Tertiary Education Commission's expectations of Unitec's educational performance are agreed and reflected in Unitec's Investment Plan in relation to four Educational Performance Indicators that TEC use to 'measure' the performance of individual TEOs. Unitec's Investment Plan responds to Government priorities stated in the TES and includes numerical performance measures and targets related to Participation, Educational Achievement, Programmes, Research, Students, Graduate and Stakeholders. Of specific relevance to these Guidelines are the performance measurement and targets included in the Investment Plan for:

- student evaluation of courses;
- student engagement;
- student satisfaction.

1.3STUDENT EVALUATIONS IN CONTEXT

Students are key stakeholders and gaining student feedback on programmes and activities relating to teaching and learning is a high priority process of strategic importance to Unitec. It is also consistent with Unitec's approach to curriculum which sees students as active partners in their learning processes. Ensuring students participate in answering evaluative questions is essential to enhancing effective self assessment capability at Unitec. The primary purpose of student evaluation of courses is to provide information that can be used to improve student learning.

Contemporary international research focuses significantly on the purposes of evaluation and suggests that it is time to move beyond instruments that measure student satisfaction or 'happiness' and focus more on student engagement with learning. The Australian Council for Educational Research reports that 'satisfaction is underpinned by more than happiness. […] we need to look beyond satisfaction at more fundamental educational factors to identify how to enhance student outcomes and their overall experience' (ACER, 2008, p. 1). Anderson, Brown and Spaeth (2008, p. 2) note that 'students remain disengaged when the evaluation process consists of a single number to rank faculty on a truncated scale rather than providing a productive, formative exercise that promotes improvement while honouring students' rich and complex experiences as learners'.

To ensure students are engaged in a culture of evaluation and that outcomes of student evaluations are of value to teachers themselves, we need to be using instruments that deal absolutely with learning context, process and success and not merely with satisfaction. It is paramount that evaluation instruments generate useful, actionable information that informs Unitec's educational performance and self assessment capability. To this end, evaluation practices must enable students and teachers, the department, the faculty and the institution to identify clearly both student feedback and corresponding action, and to interpret from this, ongoing trends in evaluation engagement and outcomes.

SECTION 2: EVALUATION FUNDAMENTALS

2.1 PURPOSE OF EVALUATIONS

Evaluations in any form are generally conducted for one or two reasons:

1) to find areas for improvement; and/or
2) to generate an assessment of overall quality or value of something (Davidson, 2005).

> "*It makes you look at yourself and be honest and see what you can do to improve … I like that it focuses on the learner and the delivery of programmes and what the learner is getting out of the programme.*"
>
> TEO staff member [cited NZQA, 2009, p.8]

The purpose of student evaluation of courses is to:

- determine how well a course/programme is meeting students' learning needs and expectations;
- gauge students' experiences of the courses at Unitec;
- identify students' views on areas of strength;
- identify where improvements can be made;
- identify potential professional development needs for teaching staff.

2.2 EVALUATION QUESTIONS

> "*It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.*"
>
> Eugene Ionesco [cited in Preskill & Catsambas, 2006, p. 75]

The essence of evaluation is generating credible answers to questions about the performance of a programme or activity (Rossi, Lipsey &Freeman, 2004).Evaluation questions are pivotal to evaluation planning as they define the issues an evaluation will investigate and are framed so that they can be answered using methods available to the evaluator and in a way that is useful and of value to stakeholders. As discussed in Section 1.1, the six KEQs are intended to elicit answers that inform judgments about the quality of educational outcomes and the key processes that influence these outcomes. Although specifically developed for external evaluation and review, they provide a good basis for an organisation's self assessment practices and framing evaluation conversations (NZQA, 2009). Good evaluation questions that frame evaluative enquiry must address the issues that are meaningful to programmes, activities and the concerns of key stakeholders. A set of carefully crafted evaluation questions is "the hub around which evaluation revolves" (Rossi et al., 2004, p.68). Putting this in context, the six key evaluation questions designed for external evaluation and review and Unitec's repertoire of evaluative questioning provide the "hub" around quality learning and teaching.

Good evaluation questions are a key ingredient of effective self assessment and the importance of well designed questions cannot be stressed enough. There are numerous resources available and you are encouraged to search for a resource that will be useful for you and your team. For example, Rossi et al. (2004), acknowledge the pivotal role evaluation questions play by devoting an entire chapter on evaluation questions – *Chapter 3 Identifying Issues and Formulating Questions*.

2.3DATA AND INFORMATION

> "*Never draw a conclusion based on a single piece of evidence*."
> Jane Davidson, 2005, p.55

Evaluation is underpinned by the collection of data. Methods of evaluation involve dialogue, reflection, questioning and interpreting data and evidence which includes identifying and clarifying beliefs, and challenging assumptions and knowledge (NZQA, 2009). Conclusions drawn from evaluation activities must be backed up by solid irrefutable evidence resulting from different types of data and from multiple sources of information (Davidson, 2005).

While there are many different approaches to evaluation, most evaluations use both quantitative and qualitative data to better understand what is happening in a course, programme, activity, and across the organisation as a whole (NZQA, 2009). Quantitative and qualitative data may be presented separately or together however, recent developments in evaluation practices have seen more use of combinations of quantitative and qualitative data (Patton, 1987).

> *"Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted."*
> Albert Einstein, cited Patton, 2006, p. 35.

Quantitative data is often defined simply as objective data that can be measured. It involves numbers and statistics. Typical examples are the scores, rankings or percentages reported from student evaluation surveys such as response rates, satisfaction levels.

Qualitative data is subjective data that deals with descriptions. It is data that can be observed but not measured. Patton (1987) describes three most common methods for collection qualitative data:

1. **Interviews** - data collected from open-ended interviews consists of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge;
2. **Direct observation** - data collected consists of detailed descriptions of programme activities, participants behaviours, staff actions, and all other interactions that occur within the activities of a programme;
3. **Documents** – includes excerpts, quotations or entire passages from records, correspondence, official reports and open-ended surveys.

Evaluation of courses enables the collection of data in the form of students' opinions and experiences on:

- First impressions;
- Teaching practices, e.g. style, pace of delivery, a teaching innovation, new tool/technique;
- Programme structure;
- Course content, e.g. understanding new concepts, relevance to workplace;

- Resources, e.g. presentation and accessibility of learning materials, library books, electronic resources;
- Learning environment;
- Learning progress;
- Assessment activities;
- Timetabling; etc.

In undertaking student evaluation of courses, staff are encouraged to use multiple methods of evaluation from the very beginning of the student learning experience to provide a fully rounded and contextualised perspective on the quality of teaching and learning. These guidelines describe a range of tools and techniques that may be used to engage students in evaluating courses and will be explained more fully in Sections 4 and 5.

2.4FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE EVALUATION

> *"When the cook tastes the soup, that's formative; when the guests taste the soup, that's summative."*
>
> Bob Stake, cited in Scriven, 1991, p.169.

In simple terms, **formative evaluation** provides information about a programme, activity or organisation for the purpose of improvement. Typical audiences for formative evaluation are usually internal staff e.g. teaching staff, programme management and faculty management.

Summative evaluation provides information about the overall effectiveness, impact, and/or outcomes of a programme or activity and is typically undertaken for reporting and decision-making purposes. Typical audiences for summative evaluation are organisational leaders/governors, funders, sponsors (Davidson, 2005; Torres, Preskill &Piontek, 1996), however, outcomes of summative evaluation of courses also provides immediate pertinent information for teaching staff, programme management and faculty management.

The debate about use of formative versus summative approaches has dominated evaluation discussions for decades but in recent times most evaluation practitioners agree that there are strengths in evaluation activities that embrace both approaches (Patton, 2009). Michael Scriven, cited in Deshler (1984), claims that formative evaluation should be viewed as "early warnings" for summative evaluation.

In applying these definitions to student evaluation of courses at Unitec, **formative** evaluation consists of all the ongoing evaluation that takes place throughout the delivery of the course and **summative** evaluation consists of the final course evaluation activities. Departmental evaluation plans require the engagement of both approaches.

2.5 EVALUATIVE CONCLUSIONS

For any form of evaluation, the process is not complete until the evaluators and/or decision makers have made sense of the evaluation findings. Following collection of all quantitative and qualitative data evaluation conversations focus on - so what? Now what? Actual quality or value needs to be determined which requires some form of measure or rating to be applied to a particular attribute or level of performance. Evaluators commonly use rubrics to determine - so what?

Rubrics are tools for converting a mix of quantitative and qualitative data into some rating of the quality or value of an attribute or level of performance (Davidson, 2005). A rubric provides an evaluative description of what quality or performance "looks like" at each of two or more defined levels, e.g. Excellent, Good, Adequate or Poor.

NZQA has developed a series of rubrics for the EER process which will determine the level of confidence in Unitec's educational performance and self assessment capability which determines how "good" Unitec is in providing quality tertiary education (refer to Section 1.2.1 of these Guidelines).

To enable Unitec to respond to the evaluative questions about teaching and learning we need to know:

WHAT DOES QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING "LOOK LIKE"?

A rubric has been developed to provide a single point of measurement for evaluation of courses that will enable programme committees to make judgments about courses and provide guidance for improvement. Faculties will be able to provide course ratings that will assist the Academic Board in reporting on Unitec's educational performance. The rubric identifies key dimensions of teaching and learning practices, possible sources of evidence, and judgement statements to determine levels of quality that will be rated excellent, good, adequate or poor for each of the key dimensions. Make sure you are familiar with the rubric as it will assist you when planning evaluation activities and in selecting the most suitable evaluation tools for your courses. Refer to **Appendix 1 (still under development)**.

SECTION 3: STUDENT EVALUATION OF COURSES

3.1 EMBEDDING EVALUATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

For self-assessment to be truly effective, evaluation activities should be ongoing, reflective and integrated into everyday work activities. This is what Sanders (2003) refers to as "mainstreaming" which is about moving evaluation to the forefront of thinking and behaviour. This view is reflected within Unitec's institute-wide systems and mechanisms that have been, and will to continue to be, developed to provide a systematic "collection" of self assessment practices – evaluation approaches that are naturally embedded within everyday activities, i.e. what we do and what we think. It is therefore exceedingly critical that as teachers, programme managers and faculty managers we engage in an evaluative approach in our learning and teaching practices.

> "*Not to examine one's practice is irresponsible; to regard teaching as an experiment and to monitor one's performance is a responsible professional act.*"
>
> Rudduck [cited in Smyth, 1991, p. 118]

Take some time now to look back at Section 1 of these Guidelines. Think about some of the key points about Unitec's quality assurance framework that are critical to the educational experience of our learners, teachers and managers. For example:

- The focus on **valued outcomes** and the impact of what is done and achieved:

  The focus of our self-assessment activities must be of "sufficient relevance or importance to learner outcomes to warrant the effort involved" (NZQA, 2009, p. 13).

- The six **Key Evaluation Questions**

  These are designed to "explore what are widely regarded as the most important dimensions of educational quality: programme content and design, and delivery and outcomes" (NZQA, 2009, p. 8).

  Look at these four KEQs in particular and think about what we do and the implications and impact for the learner:

  KEQ 3) How well do programmes and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?

  KEQ 4) How effective is the teaching?

  KEQ 5) How well are learners guided and supported?

  KEQ 2) What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

- Unitec's evaluative questioning processes provide the "deeper questions" underpinning the KEQs:

  How do you/we know if the programmes/courses meet the needs of our learners?

  How do we know what our learners needs are?

  What did we do when we identified learner needs weren't being met?

  What do the students tell us about our teaching practices?

  What do the students tell us about their learning experiences?

How have we responded to what students tell us?

How do we know that what we did made a difference for the students?

Did the actions we took lead to actual improvement within the programme or within our teaching practices? What evidence do you/we have?

To what extent were the improvements relevant and worthwhile?

3.2 STUDENT EVALUATION OF COURSES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Engaging in activities that truly embed evaluation naturally within the context of learning and teaching is the essence of Unitec's Student Evaluation of Courses policy and procedure. If you examine the KEQs and the underpinning evaluative questions it is clear to see that the voice of the learner is exceedingly crucial in our answers to these questions. Valuing what students tell us is critical to their ongoing engagement in our evaluative conversations about courses, programmes and the students' overall learning experience. Research tells us that students feel valued when they know they have been listened to and when they can see improvement or the change they expected.

Student evaluation of courses is not a new activity for Unitec but the approach to undertaking student evaluation of courses has been improved to further develop self assessment capability and to locate ownership of evaluation at programme and department level. You will need to make yourself familiar with the content of the policy and procedure here.

In summary, there are two main sections:

2. Policy Statement(s)

1) Unitec will employ appropriate student evaluation of courses practices that:

a) Focus on enhancing the quality of student learning, student success and student engagement in their own learning;

b) Require timely responses to current students and clear information regarding action to be taken resulting from their feedback;

c) Generate useful, valid, actionable information;

d) Provide a coherent range of both formative and summative opportunities for student feedback;

e) Provide confidentiality for students' evaluations;

f) Avoid excessive evaluative demands on students.

2) Programme Committee(s) must devise, implement and monitor an annual evaluation plan which will include both formative and summative evaluation practices.

3) Student evaluation must balance transparency and accountability for the quality of teaching and courses.

3. Procedure

3.1 Evaluation Planning

3.2 Implementing the Evaluation Process

3.3 Evaluation Reporting

The policy and procedure defines the specific roles and responsibilities for Programme Committees, sets the minimum standards for course evaluations and defines the procedures for evaluation planning, implementing the evaluation process and evaluation reporting.

3.3 GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATION PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

The policy and procedure requires an annual course evaluation plan to be submitted to the Faculty Academic Committee for approval at the first meeting of the academic year. A template for the annual plan is provided in **Appendix 2 (still under development)**.

What courses to evaluate

Consideration needs to be given to which courses will be included within the annual Plan. The Student Evaluation of Courses policy and procedure (Clause 2.2) sets out the minimum standards for summative evaluation and allows flexibility in determining evaluation activities beyond those parameters. The Plan must also show the courses that will be subject to formative evaluation. You will need to think about:

- *New courses* – how can we be assured that a new course is working well and there are no student concerns?
- *Established courses*– Is content still current, relevant and does the course continue to meet student needs/stimulate learning?
- *Course changes* – have the significant changes made prior to this delivery led to actual improvement? i.e. is the course working as well as expected, e.g. content, assessments, texts/electronic resources?
- *Proposed changes* – what information can the current students provide for the proposed programme/course redesign?

It is acknowledged that the need to depart from or amend the Plan may arise throughout an academic year. Such changes will be managed as part of the ongoing monitoring and reporting of implementation.

Selecting formative and summative evaluation tools

The Plan must include an appropriate mix of both formative and summative evaluation processes. Before engaging in any form of evaluation activity it is important to consider what it is that you want to know. Apply this principle when selecting the formative and summative evaluation tools. The purpose of formative and summative processes has been discussed in Section 2.4 of these Guidelines. Sections 4 and 5 provide examples of formative and summative tools that are appropriate for engaging students in evaluation of teaching and learning practices. Section 4 provides a description of each formative evaluation tool and the best time to use.

Look back to the KEQs and the underpinning evaluative questions. Consider the course and the cohort of students undertaking the course. Which of the tools provided in Sections 4 and 5 will be suitable for your course and the students you/we need to engage with? If unsure, refer to the resources provided in the reference section of these Guidelines or consult with your peers or programme/faculty managers.

> "*When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.*"
> Dr Wayne Dyer [cited in Preskill &Catsambas, 2006, p. 35]

For example:

- a staff member who has been teaching for several years may benefit from a more rigorous, independent method of evaluation to truly challenge personal perceptions about teaching effectiveness. Including the Small Group Instruction Diagnosis (SGID) as a formative evaluation tool within the Plan will provide more in-depth information from the students' perspectives about the effectiveness of teaching practices and overall delivery of the course;
- new teachers will benefit from keeping a learning diary and peer observations/support;
- a course containing new or significantly revised content or teaching methods will benefit from instant feedback tools such as the Minute Paper or Chain Notes.

Resourcing

When selecting evaluation methods for inclusion in the Plan, identify additional resourcing that may be needed. For example, if a SGID is included within the Plan you will need to contact Te Puna Ako for assistance. An independent facilitator is required.

Notifying Students

All methods of formative and summative evaluation require the engagement of and with students. Keeping students well informed will help to ensure they provide a more considered response to the evaluation questions, It is important that students are informed about:

- what methods of evaluation will be used throughout the course and when;
- what the evaluation is for; and
- what you intend to do with the information that is generated.

A range of ways can be used to inform students including: student handbooks, Blackboard or Moodle posts; email notifications; or in-class notifications to students,

In using any form of evaluation, students must not be forced or pressured to participate, nor should any student be excluded from participating in an evaluation activity. Participation is voluntary and students are entitled to withdraw from participation at any time, without consequences.

Timing

Timeframes for when evaluation activities will be implemented need to be shown in the Plan. Ideally evaluation activities should cover the entire duration of the course without "over evaluating". Obtaining feedback from students throughout the course is important because it nurtures a partnership between students and teachers, and demonstrates a commitment to working together to achieve outcomes.

Striking the right balance between too much and too little evaluation needs careful consideration when planning implementation time-frames. Formative evaluation activities strategically timed throughout course delivery should overcome concerns about over-evaluating with summative methods. There are a number of quick, simple tools that will enable you to obtain instant feedback so that improvements can be made to the course whilst still being taught. An added benefit is that students see that their feedback has been considered.

Timing is also critical when considering the KEQs and underpinning evaluative questions. At what point have the students been engaged in the course long enough to be able to provide useful, informative answers to the questions being asked?

<u>Beginning of Course</u>
Establishing a good student/teacher rapport as early as possible is critical to student engagement, retention and success therefore the Plan should include an appropriate formative evaluation component. For example, using the Self-Confidence Survey is a useful way to initiate engagement with new students or students engaged in lower level programmes. It is also a useful tool to gain knowledge about student expectations for the course and/or their prior knowledge and experience which can then be used to inform continued teaching practices.

<u>During Course</u>
Seeking feedback during a course enables teaching staff to improve and monitor teaching practices, students' achievement and their overall learning experience. Timing may need to be early or later in the delivery period depending on what you are seeking feedback on and what information you need. For example:

- organisation of the course;
- teaching style/methods;
- pace of delivery;
- clarity of a topic/session;
- a particular teaching innovation/tool;
- a practical exercise/field trip;
- an assessment task;
- students' interest in a topic or the course overall.

<u>End of Course</u>
The end of course evaluations are usually undertaken to provide an overall student "assessment" of the course, its delivery, and the students' learning experience. Week 11 or 12 of the semester are ideal times for summative and end of course formative evaluations. Comparative timing should be used for other teaching periods such as summer school or block course delivery. It is not good practice to administer evaluations during the last week of tuition.

Acting on Feedback

You will need to consider <u>how many</u> comments of a similar nature are 'important' enough to require action. For example, in a small class of 10 or less, two or three may justify attention while five or six in larger classes of 16 or more may indicate a significant issue for attention. More importantly, however, is that what gets acted upon will depend upon the nature of the response and how it impacts on learning outcomes and the students. Even one response may be worth acting on because of its significance or because it is an excellent idea for improvement.

When considering responses to formative evaluations and the open-ended questions within summative evaluation surveys it may be helpful to collate and analyse the common themes that emerge from all the comments in order to gain a clear, overall picture.

Reporting Back to Students

Processes for reporting back to student on evaluation activities must be outlined in the annual Plan. There are a variety of ways this can be achieved:

- Summarise feedback and the actions taken and display in class or on-line;
- Open discussion in class e.g. end of a day, week, or topic;
- Regular class forums (scheduled);
- One-on-one with student (if requested and appropriate);
- Via student liaison or class representative;
- Advising next cohort of students of changes made based on previous cohort's feedback (especially relevant to end-of-course summative evaluations).

When reporting back it is critical to emphasise that students' views are highly valued and paramount to Unitec's quality improvement processes. Even if issues raised cannot be acted upon in the manner in which students may expect, acknowledge the feedback and give an explanation. This is often sufficient for the students to feel that their voices have been heard.

Confidentiality

Information obtained from student evaluations often relates to identifiable personnel and must be handled with utmost care. It is often difficult to strike the perfect balance between the need for transparency and accountability to ensure quality teaching and learning practices and maintaining the rights of staff in regards to confidentiality of personal information. It is essential that at all times, the student evaluation of courses procedures are implemented and managed to be supportive of staff and for improvement purposes and that they are not used for punitive processes.

Confidentiality and anonymity is also important for students and it is essential that evaluation methods ensure students feel 'safe' in providing their feedback. Engaging with student early, openly and honestly without 'fear of retribution' will encourage ongoing, meaningful dialogue. Select evaluation mechanisms that will instil students' confidence to engage.

Evaluation Reporting

It is a requirement that all programmes are subject to an on-going evaluative questioning and improvement process which informs the Annual Programme Report. This process is defined within the Programme Evaluation and Reporting policy and procedure and available by clicking here. Outcomes from the Student Evaluation of Courses policy and procedure are a key contributor to this process. When preparing the annual Plan, have this "end-point" in mind to ensure you have selected the best tools to capture the pertinent information to inform the annual programme evaluation.

SECTION 4: FORMATIVE EVALUATION TOOLS

A special thanks to Trudy Harris, Waikato University, for the significant contribution to this Section.

There are two important points to be considered before making your evaluation method selection:

1. Just one form of formative evaluation might not be enough to provide the information that you require. A combination of evaluation methods might be needed.
2. Resourcing - especially in terms of time which will need to be allocated for each of these methods, and also for analysis and feedback to the students.

To assist with your method selection, the grid in Table 1 below shows a number of different formative evaluation methods and the typical information that each can collect. Following the grid is a basic outline of what each method entails and at what point the method may be used. This list is not exhaustive but rather an introduction to the field of formative evaluation. Further information may be sourced from the list of references provided at the end of these Guidelines.

Table 1: Formative Evaluation Methods and Types of Information Collected

Information that can be collected / **Formative evaluation tool**	The immediate learning experience	Students' reactions that occurred during the learning experience	The success of learners in achieving the intended learning outcomes	Student s' reactions after the experience
Self- confidence surveys	*			
Dynamic lists of questions	*			
Learning reflection exercises/Journal	*	*		
Collecting comments from groups	*			
Focus groups/Interviews				*
Regular anonymous feedback	*	*	*	*
Critical Incident questionnaire	*			
Minute Paper	*			
One-Sentence Summaries	*			
RSGC2			*	
Regular reflection	*			
Diary	*			
Questionnaires				*
Peer feedback	*			
Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID)		*		*

At the Beginning of a Course

4.1 Self-Confidence Surveys

This survey looks at the knowledge, skills and apprehensions that new students bring to your class for the first time. This can be a few direct questions about the skills and competencies that you think are critical to the paper or module. For this type of survey, it is important to provide feedback to the students as it will boost self-confidence to let them know that they are not unusual in their concerns.

During Course Delivery

4.2 Dynamic lists of questions

Before a learning activity the students draw up a list of questions which they hoped would be answered by the end of the activity. As the activity progresses they delete questions, but add new questions and needs as they arise. At the end of the activity the students give their list to the teacher who then has a list of questions and needs that have not been answered at the conclusion of the learning activity/ies.

This type of evaluation provides three types of information:

- The teacher is informed with time to respond, about the priorities that the students have for an activity.
- The teacher finds out what needs are still unfulfilled at the end of an activity and can respond if there is sufficient time.
- The teacher is aware of the types of issues that students can face during the activity

Please refer to George and Cowan (1999) for a fuller description of this method.

4.3 Learning reflection exercises

As part of the course assessment students can be asked to write regular reflection exercises on their learning process. These may take the form of a learning journal or single reflection pieces. These exercises can also give teachers an insight into the relation between their teaching and student learning.

4.4 Collecting comments from groups

Comments can be collected while the students are engaged on an activity. For example:

- Snowball technique: used for a group accumulation of comment. The students usually start by addressing a question individually then working in pairs and then groups of four. This allows time for the students to gather their thoughts.
- Chain notes: the teacher poses a question on the outside of an envelope. The envelope is sent around the class and the students have to submit their answer on a slip of paper placed in the envelope. The reactions are relevant and can act as an early warning device!

4.5 Focus groups

Focus groups can provide an excellent way of gaining an in-depth insight into student learning and experience of teaching. Small groups provide the optimum context for using a focus group. However, focus group discussions can also be conducted in a larger class with a small group of invited students when the teacher wants to examine some particular aspect of the course or teaching more closely. Examples include investigating the students' grasp of a particular theory or new teaching strategy. Focus groups must be conducted by a facilitator.

At the End of a Class or Section of Learning

4.6 Regular anonymous instant feedback

This can be done in a variety of ways. The aim is to provide quick feedback on a particular lecture, class or section of learning. These are simple, easy to obtain, read and analyse. Students may, for example, be asked open-ended questions to identify two key points:

- The aspect of the lecture/section/class that they found most interesting, e.g. What was the most important point made in class today?
- The point of the class that they may find most difficult to understand or grasp, e.g. What question remains uppermost in your mind?

4.7 The Minute Paper

The Minute Paper (also known as the "one- minute paper" because it requires one minute or less to complete) is a way of obtaining regular, instant feedback. There are several adaptations of the Minute Paper and the tool is typically used to seek anonymous feedback from students. However, some teachers give students the option of identifying themselves if they want a personal response from the teacher. Teachers who use Minute Papers report that they help to build teacher-student rapport, identify common misunderstandings or points of difficulty/confusion, give timid students an opportunity to ask questions, and provide a means for 'checking in' that students have heard/learned what was intended in the lesson plan/course design.

A minute paper could look like this:
1. What was the most useful or meaningful thing you learned during the session?
2. What question/s remain uppermost in your mind as we end this session?

Or, as Tom Angelo suggests:
What was the 'muddiest' point in this session?

4.8 One-Sentence Summaries

Another common strategy is to ask students to write a one sentence summary of the main learning in a particular class. A comprehensive collection of in-class feedback exercises can be found in the compilation of these exercises by Angelo and Cross (1993). This feedback can be written and handed in or posted on-line.

It is crucial that the teacher responds to trends in student feedback or revisits concepts that many students appear not to grasp. The ensuing conversations can extend and enhance the classroom learning experience for both students and teachers.

4.9 The Critical Incident Questionnaire

This is a particular form of instant feedback suggested by Brookfield (1995). This questionnaire, which teachers are encouraged to distribute regularly to students, monitors the affective dimensions of the students' learning experience as well as their cognitive understanding. Examples of the questions are:

- At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
- At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
- What about the class this week surprised you most?

4.10 RSQC2

Recall: At the end of a class or activity, ask the students to make notes of what they recall of the learning. Ask them to pick out five main points and rank in order of importance

Summary: Ask the students to summarise as many of the five points as possible in one sentence. This should be a suitable summary for the heart of the learning in that class.

Question: Ask the students to write down one or two questions that were left unanswered at the end of the class.

Connect: Connect what was learnt in the class to the rest of the course

Comment: Ask the students to evaluate what they found positive or negative about their experience of that activity, or part of the course

Ongoing Self Evaluation and Reflection

4.11 Regular reflection

An important part of professional development is ongoing reflection on and evaluation of one's own practice. When evaluating a particular aspect of your teaching and assessment practices, useful criteria for evaluating your practices are:

- The intended learning outcomes
- Your teaching philosophy
- Research-based evidence on effective teaching and learning practices
- Your own experiences as a learner (Brookfield, 1995).

4.12 Keeping a learning diary

"*There is considerable evidence that how you feel in the moment is very different from how you remember feeling.*"

Tamlin Conner, Sunday Star Times, 31 Oct 2010

To enhance and sustain reflection, it is helpful to keep a diary in which you regularly jot down your impressions of your sense of the teaching and learning that has occurred. There are numerous questionnaires available to help you to ask precise questions about specific aspects of your teaching, such as those provided by Brown and Race (1995), Forsyth, Joliffe and Stevens (1995), Moon (1999) and Kahn and Walsh (2006).

4.13 Peer feedback and support

Working with colleagues on teaching can have enormous benefit. Sharing of ideas about practice can enrich the teaching practices of individuals and working in a collaborative way provides enormous support. Such sharing environments can be:

- Informal departmental gatherings that invite people to discuss current classroom experiences with colleagues
- Teaching-focussed departmental seminar series
- Open lectures by experienced academics followed by discussion sessions
- Peer teaching observation using criteria that have been negotiated on an area identified by the person wanting to be observed

There are five key steps in the peer observation process:

1. Choosing an appropriate peer – choose someone who has sound teaching and learning experience and with whom you can have a trustful and respectful working relationship;
2. Briefing – meet before the observation and agree on the objectives of the observation; identify any specific issues or areas of focus for the observation, confirm how the observation will take place and how feedback will be provided;
3. Data collection – confirm how the observations will be recorded for post observation discussion;
4. Post-observation discussion – discuss suggestions/recommendations for improvement with your peer observer;
5. Critical self-reflection –Consider the outcomes of the observation. What am I doing well? What needs to be improved? How will I bring about these improvements?

Remember to keep any recorded observations for submission with your teaching evaluation and for evidence of evaluative questioning in action.

4.14 Teaching portfolios

A teaching portfolio is a teacher's recording of teaching and professional development. A portfolio is an important tool for professional development as it is a comprehensive record of teaching progress. A teaching portfolio is often required for appointment processes and promotion. It can contain both formative and summative elements.

Portfolios can be written in a variety of ways and presented according to individual tastes. Generally, the contents should include the following basic points:

- Teaching beliefs/philosophy;
- Course and assessment descriptions;
- Evaluation (student formal and informal, student comment samples, student work samples, feedback to student samples and student improvements, teacher diary jottings);

Analysis, reflection, successes, questions, proposed changes; Professional development activities – courses, reading, consultations, work with peers.

4.15 Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID)

SGID is a method of evaluation that uses facilitated small group discussion among students to provide feedback to a teacher for the purpose of improving teaching, developing ideas for strengthening the course/programme, and enhancing communication between students and teachers [add reference, SGID webpage]. Interviews are conducted by an independent person trained in SGID and usually take between 15-60 minutes depending on the size of the group. Student responses are collated and summarised by the SGID facilitator and reported back to the faculty member who requested the SGID. Student feedback is anonymous and SGIDs are confidential. The faculty member decides on the process for communicating the outcomes of the SGID, i.e. what and with whom.

Many users of the SGID process report positive experiences due to it being a participative and consultative intervention with a clear and simple structure that asks student to give their opinions in an open and fair forum. SGID is usually conducted mid-term to enable necessary adjustments to be made during the course to facilitate student learning. Faculties who use SGID report increased student motivation after discussion of the SGID results with their classes (SGID Home, 2002).SGID is recognised as a qualitative research method in its own right.
Further information on SGID can be sourced from http://www.miracosta.edu/home/gfloren/sgid.htm.

Note: If you choose to use SGID as an evaluation tool you will need a trained facilitator.
Please contact Te Puna Ako for assistance.

SECTION 5: SUMMATIVE EVALUATION TOOLS

A special thanks to Dr David Tippin, Auckland University, for the significant contribution to this Section, in particular, the item bank for end of course evaluations sourced from the Auckland University - Handbook on the Evaluation of Courses and Teaching: A Guide for Teaching Staff and Academic Heads 2009.

Student evaluations undertaken for summative purposes typically occur towards the end of a course, as opposed to obtaining student feedback during a course. They are usually undertaken in-class on pre-printed questionnaires or on-line on approved templates, and provide an overall student "assessment" of the course. Evaluation forms should contain a preamble which informs students of the nature of the evaluation, how responses may be used, and explaining that the process is voluntary and anonymous.

5.1 Guidelines for implementation

General procedural steps for implementing summative evaluation procedures are as follows:

Teaching Staff Member

1. Refer to the annual evaluation plan for the courses to be evaluated and timing of the evaluation. Ideally, end of course evaluations should not be conducted during the last week of tuition;
2. Identify the focus areas that require evaluating, e.g. the course overall, assessment activities, workload etc. Refer to Section 5.2 below;
3. Select appropriate evaluation items. These can come from a variety of sources including but not limited to: the item bank in Section 5.2 below; internationally recognised evaluation tools; locally generated questions that articulate with the KEQs and/or with the characteristics or potential indicators of the Living Curriculum as outlined in the Living Curriculum resources on The Nest, and available by clicking here. Seek input from peers and/or students as appropriate;
4. Prepare the summative evaluation;
5. Arrange for an independent staff member to administer the evaluation;
6. Inform students that the evaluation will take place, explain the purpose, what the information will be used for, and how outcomes will be reported back;

Evaluation Administrator

7. Administer the evaluation ideally in the last 10-15 minutes of the scheduled class. Teaching staff should not be present during evaluations. Re-emphasise the importance, purpose and use of student evaluation of courses;
8. Collect the completed evaluation forms and submit to those identified in your department/faculty for collation and reporting;
9. Ensure confidentiality is maintained at all times;

Head of Department/Programme Leader

10. Ensure the evaluation data is collated and the evaluation report is included in the APR and reported to the FAC.

5.2 Generic Items for End of Course Evaluations

The following item bank may be used to:

1. Create a summative evaluation form;
2. Construct a formative evaluation (refer to Section 4.1 above).

Course

1. The course content was structured in a clear and logical manner
2. I had a clear idea of what was expected of me in this course
3. The course resources and materials helped me to learn
4. The volume of work in this course was fair and reasonable
5. I was clearly informed how my learning would be assessed
6. Assessment supported the aims of the course
7. I received helpful feedback on my learning progress
8. This course helped deepen my understanding of the subject
9. I found the course intellectually stimulating
10. Overall I was satisfied with the quality of this course
11. The teaching facilities (eg lecture theatres, labs, tutorial rooms) were adequate for this course

Generic Open-Ended Questions for Course

1. What was most helpful for your learning?
2. What improvement would you like to see?

Assessment

1. Assessment tasks were effective aids to learning
2. Part of the course assessment should be for tutorial participation
3. Assessment linked well with the course objectives
4. The grading system was explained clearly
5. Assessment requirements were made clear
6. Requirements for the group assignment were clearly explained
7. I understood clearly the grading criteria for group-based assignments
8. The group-based assessment were fair to me
9. The assessments in this course challenged me to do my best work
10. Assessment placed strong emphasis on the comprehension and application of knowledge
11. Methods of evaluating students were fair

Course Content, Design and Organisation

1. The components of the course fitted together well
2. This course was well organised
3. Sessions were structured in a clear manner
4. The components of the workshop fitted together well
5. Workshops were structured in a clear manner
6. The course content was useful/relevant
7. The course meets its stated learning outcomes
8. The level of difficulty of the material covered was appropriate for a course at this stage
9. The course draws on current research and developments in the discipline
10. Lecture and practical classes were well integrated
11. Lectures and tutorials were well integrated
12. The content of this course was very good
13. The sections of the course taught by different teachers were well integrated

14. There is too much overlap between the material in this course and that covered in other courses
15. Course objectives agreed with those taught so I knew where the class was going

Deep Learning/Understanding

1. I have learned something which I consider valuable
2. The course prepared me to understand the structure of the language
3. The course helped me develop effective language learning strategies
4. The course prepared me to understand the cultural aspects of the language
5. I learned a lot in this course
6. The course increased my understanding of the subject
7. I learn more effectively in a class of less than 35
8. I learn more effectively in a class of over 35
9. Small group work added to my learning
10. I have learning to make connections between the course content and my profession
11. The size of the class impeded effective learning

Facilities/Learning Environment

1. The classroom's physical environment was comfortable
2. The classroom's seating was comfortable
3. The classroom's temperature was comfortable
4. The classroom's sight lines were good
5. The classroom's lighting was good
6. The classroom's acoustics were good
7. The lecture theatre provided a satisfactory setting for discussion and learning
8. The laboratory provided a satisfactory setting for learning

Generic/Transferable Skills

1. The course helped develop my problem solving skills
2. The course sharpened my analytical skills
3. The course helped me develop my ability to work as a team member
4. The course helped my skills in written communication
5. The course helped me to develop the ability to plan my own work
6. The course discussions/presentations provided good opportunities for oral practice
7. The course helped me to expand my vocabulary
8. I have learned how to direct my own learning
9. Classes assisted in developing skills in critical analysis and writing
10. Coursework and assignments have helped advance my skills
11. The course helped me develop effective essay writing strategies
12. The course helped develop my critical evaluation skills
13. The course has enabled me to enhance my professional practice
14. The course helped me to communicate confidently in the language
15. The course stimulated self directed learning
16. I have learned how to apply principles from this course in new situations
17. I have learned how to prepare material for presentation to others
18. Conversation classes helped me to develop conversation skills

Goals and Standards

1. The course objectives were clearly stated
2. It was always easy to know the standard of work expected

Intellectual Motivation

1. The course encouraged me to read material beyond the given texts
2. The teaching staff of this course motivated me to do my best work
3. The course opened up new areas of interest for me
4. I would like the opportunity to further my study in this discipline
5. My interested in the subject has increased as a consequence of this course

Learning Activities

1. I have found the problem based learning very useful
2. Teaching material was interesting and stimulating
3. Classes offered scope for student discussion of ideas
4. Coursework helped develop understanding of the subject and material
5. The learning activities in this course helped develop my understanding of the subject
6. The mix of learning activities was appropriate
7. The fieldtrip was a worthwhile component of the course
8. The mix of classroom and field work is appropriate
9. The mix of theory and practice in the course was helpful
10. Real world examples were useful
11. The discussion forum helped me to learn
12. I have found the case study based learning very helpful
13. Student seminar presentations were a good way to learn
14. Seminar discussions were a good way to learn
15. Experiments and demonstrations were a useful learning experience
16. The videos shown in class contributed to my understanding of the course
17. The skills exercises assisted my learning
18. The group project was a good learning experience
19. Attendance at tutorials should be compulsory

Learning Resources and Materials

1. The course web site was effective
2. Web based material was useful
3. The availability of recorded lectures in this course helped me learn
4. The combination of on-lone and course guide materials helped my learning
5. Prescribed readings were suitable
6. The reading list was useful
7. Overhead and audio-visual material was useful
8. Audio-visual materials were useful
9. The Library’s general collection has been useful for this course
10. The Library’s short loan collection has been useful for this course
11. Technical help was adequate
12. Texts provided were useful/relevant
13. Course materials were interesting and stimulating
14. Workshop handouts were helpful
15. The contribution of the mentors was valuable
16. The course manual assisted my learning
17. The guest lecturers added to the interest of the course
18. The course handouts were clear

Workload

1. The course proceeded at a pace that I was able to cope with
2. The amount of required reading was manageable
3. I spent more time studying for this course than other courses
4. The workload in this course was manageable

DEFINITIONS

Continuous Improvement: A systematic ongoing focus on improving the quality of an organisation's processes and outcomes (NZQA, 2009).

Evaluation: The systematic determination of the merit (quality), worth (value) or significance (importance) of the quality of outcomes for learners and other stakeholders and processes that contribute to this (NZQA, 2009). Terms used to refer to this process include: appraise, analyse, assess, critique, examine, grade, inspect, judge, rate, rank, review, study, test (Scriven, 1991).

Evaluative Conclusions: Conclusions or findings that are explicitly evaluative in nature, that is, that say how good, valuable, or important something is rather than just describing what it is like or what happened when something was implemented or used (Davidson, 2005).

Evaluative Conversations: Discussions that explore what a Tertiary Education Organisation knows about outcomes for learners and other interested parties and what processes contribute to these (NZQA, 2009).

Evaluative Questioning: Unitec's internal interpretation of the self-assessment component of NZQA's Self-Assessment and External Evaluation and Review (SAEER) process

External Evaluation and Review: A periodic process carried out by a quality assurance body that leads to judgements about the quality and value of a tertiary education organisation's activities as they relate to outcomes for learners and other interested communities or individuals. It encompasses, but is not restricted to, validating the organisation's self-assessment process (NZQA, 2009).

Formative Evaluation: An evaluation conducted for the purpose of finding areas for improving an existing evaluand (Davidson, 2005).

Grading Rubric: A guide for classifying evaluands or evaluees into categories that represent their absolute (i.e. not just relative) quality or value (Davidson, 2005).

Key Evaluation Questions: High level, open-ended questions intended to elicit answers that inform judgements about the quality of educational outcomes and the key processes that influence these outcomes (NZQA, 2009).

Ranking Rubric: A guide for classifying evaluands or evaluees into categories that represent their quality or value on some dimension relative to a group of other evaluands or evaluees (Davidson, 2005).

Rubic: A tool that provides an evaluative description of what performance or quality "looks like" at each of two or more defined levels (Davidson, 2005).

Self-Assessment: The ongoing process whereby tertiary education organisations evaluate the quality and value of their own performance and educational provision (NZQA, 2009).

Summative Evaluation: An evaluation done primarily for reporting or decision-making purposes (Davidson, 2005).

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