

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Instructional Development
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Special points of interest:

- The **Teaching Tips Newsletter** is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/>) as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

Soliciting and Using Student Feedback in your Classroom

Try getting meaningful feedback from your students that will help you to identify the changes that you need to make to your teaching by the mid-semester. You might need to create a feedback instrument that will solicit this needed information.

Here are some suggestions that will help you in developing a feedback instrument for use in your classroom:

The One Minute Paper:



The One Minute Paper is usually “a quick write paper”. It is often completed at the end of a teaching learning session. It enables you the teacher to get a quick synopsis about the learning that is taking place in your classroom. It also provides you with important concerns that might inform the teaching that occurs in the next class. The One Minute Paper can be structured in ways to capture the “muddiest” point of the class too. The One Minute Paper can also be used as a feedback instrument.

The following questions might be the focus of the One Minute Paper:

1. What is the most important thing you learned in this class today?
2. What question is uppermost in your mind?



The Teaching Feedback Instrument

You might want to develop an instrument or if you like, a form that you can be used once or twice throughout the semester to solicit feedback.

Here are some suggestions about structuring your feedback form:

1. Please state one or two specific things that are done by your teacher in this class that advances your learning.
2. Please describe one or two specific things that your class teacher could change that would improve your learning.
3. Please indicate one or two specific things that you as a student in this class, could do that would improve your learning.

And here are some tips for soliciting and interpreting student feedback:

Administering the Survey Instruments:



When using the One Minute Paper, allow two minutes at the end of the class for completion. This is inclusive of administrative and form completion time.

- ◆ When using the Teaching Feedback Instrument, allow the students five minutes for both completion of the form and administrative time.
- ◆ Tell students about your reasons for carrying out this survey. Let them understand that you are interested in their opinions about the quality of teaching and learning in your classroom. Explain to them also that you will use the responses to improve your classes as best as possible.
- ◆ Allow students to answer questions anonymously

Processing the Feedback

- ◆ Review the responses and categorize them in relation to each question. Note the sentiments expressed in each response and find a way to keep a tally. The very first time a particular type of response occurs, you will want to write down a descriptor or description that summarizes it. You can then proceed by grouping such responses together.
- ◆ Pay the most attention to the items that appear frequently.

Giving the Students Feedback

- ◆ Provide prompt feedback to your students on their response. They will be expecting it and inform them of actions you will be taking to improve teaching or make changes for their benefit.
- ◆ You might want to summarize their most frequent responses.

The most attention should be given to suggestions for change, and the things that your students are dissatisfied with.

Where there are important suggestions or implementable ideas indicate that the concerns are meaningful and the suggestions are worth considering and you will implement (where possible).

The following comments might be useful:

- A. "That's a good idea, I will try it."
- B. "The suggestions are good, however, I am constrained to continue on this path because..." (Explain why you can't change).
- C. "I thank you for your suggestions. They sound wonderful. However, in order to meet in that direction we would have to do the following..." (Ask about how they think competing needs could be reconciled).

Of course, as the course facilitator, you must approach the soliciting and responding to student feedback on your teaching with openness and a willingness to listen. Please do not get overly defensive. Always remember that you solicited the feedback, you ask students to assist you to

Be cognizant of the fact that your own interest in and openness to feedback will go a long way in creating a positive climate in your classroom and building a psycho-social environment that promotes learning. Please also point out that they have an important role to play in advance learning in your classroom. In this regard, underscore the things that the students said that they needed to do to improve their learning. Remind them that this is a joint enterprise!

Learning Through Inquiry

"Learning through Inquiry" is an approach to active and interactive learning that focuses in a huge way on problem solving. In this approach, the skills needed for problem solving are developed through pedagogy that engages the student in working through real problems, issues and questions. They are challenged to look at issues in multiple ways and to use various approaches to inquiry.

Some general strategies for encouraging Learning through Inquiry in your classroom:

- ◆ Develop classroom activities in your course for students to explore together. This will allow students to engage in inquiry in groups and work with the content in more meaningful ways than just passively listening to a lecture.
- ◆ Construct assignments that are truly student-centred. These might be accomplished by allowing students to explore their own interests with some expert guidance from you the teacher. Generally students will be more engaged in the course content when they are allowed more room to explore areas of personal interests that have relevance to the course content.
- ◆ Provide clear guidelines to your students about expectations when you assign them course work/ assignments. You should share your goals for each activity and assignments. Let them be aware of the skills they are utilizing and those that they will be developing. When you share your goals with your students about your learning outcomes for them, this helps to clarify your expectations and students will come to realize that you are highly invested in their learning.
- ◆ Use various approaches to facilitate learning. In this regard try various assignments and assessment strategies. You should also use different approaches to teaching and learning in the classroom. When you vary assignments and teaching strategies, you create opportunities for some students to thrive in some of the classes and the exercises.