

### **Interpreting the results of the Course Experience Survey (VET)**

Staff are given a three page document summarising the results for each set of survey forms that were processed by the RMIT Survey Services Centre. Information at the top of page one includes staff name and course code and name. Useful demographic details on the cohort surveyed include age distribution, distribution of number of hours per week studied in the course, and the numbers of fulltime / part time and local / international students. These details provide background information against which to interpret the later results. The most important piece of data in this top section is the number of surveys completed. Unfortunately this output does not also provide the number of students enrolled in the course. Staff may wish to calculate a percentage response rate to use alongside the total number of survey responses when considering their reaction to the survey results.

The second part of page one gives a summary of responses to the survey items. The survey comprises 22 items with responses coded from 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'. All items are worded positively, so that higher scores indicate greater student satisfaction. The summary graph shows the percentage of respondents who answered in the top two categories ('agree' or 'strongly agree') for each item. Note that the scale displayed for these graphs varies according to the highest percentage achieved. Anyone scanning a number of these summary documents should be careful to take note of the scale used. As a general rule, any item achieving less than 50% agreement should give cause for reflection.

The final piece of information on the summary page is the Good Teaching Scale score, comprising items 4, 5, 9, 17, 19 and 20. This gives an overall indication of student satisfaction, and is the same scale used in the program surveys including Student Experience Surveys. The remaining pages of the document give the results for individual items, including the three additional items that may have been included by the teacher. These must obviously be examined with the additional information of the wording of the items as provided separately to the students. Each individual item has a bar graph showing the response distribution together with a mean score based on the numerical values given to the responses. A mean of 4 or higher indicates a positive student response (an 'average' in the 'agree' to 'strongly agree' range).

Staff reflecting on their feedback results should first consider the overall Good Teaching Scale score, and then look at responses to individual items. Consistently low percentage agree scores or mean response scores in items grouped under a particular theme can indicate a need to focus on strategies for improvement in that area.

Course teams can also make comparisons with program and School aggregated data on the Survey Services Centre site – though this is not available until all course surveys are processed, usually after semester assessment cutoff dates.

The items in the Course Experience Survey can be classified into themes. These are listed below, together with some suggestions for staff to consider when formulating their response to the student feedback.

### **Teaching style: organisation**

1. *The learning objectives in this course are clear to me*
2. *I am learning what I expected in this course*
3. *The course is well organised*
4. *My instructors have a thorough knowledge of the course assessment*

Do you:

- Understand the competencies and performance criteria from the Training Package competencies relevant to your course?
- Incorporate these competencies and performance criteria into your learning objectives and outcomes?
- Clearly articulate the relationship between course content, learning and teaching resources, key competencies and relevant training packages?
- Align learning objectives, learning outcomes, and assessment? Do you evaluate this alignment? For example, do you know if there are gaps in it? Do you assess what you teach? Does your content contribute to the stated objectives of the course?
- Look at the teaching and assessment schedule. Are the assessment tasks evenly placed through the semester? Is there sufficient time between introducing a concept and assessing it? Is the student workload spread fairly through the semester (within and between courses/programs in your School?)
- Use student centred teaching styles? Do you know on a weekly basis where your students are in relation to the learning outcomes of the course? Do you use micro evaluation techniques, such as asking your students on a regular basis: "What is the key thing you have learnt to day?", "What was the key thing you learnt in the last session?"
- Use learning contracts?

### **Teaching style: delivery**

5. *My instructors provide opportunities to ask questions*
9. *My instructors treat me with respect*
10. *I enjoy doing the work for this course*
15. *I feel I can actively participate in my classes*
19. *My instructors communicate the course content effectively*
20. *My instructors make the course as interesting as possible*

Do you:

- Chunk your lecture into coherent sections? Introduce each section with an overview and explanation of where it fits with what has gone before? Summarise key points of each section at the end?
- Engage the students by seeking informal feedback at intermediate points in the class?
- Use relevant examples of concepts (from current events, popular culture, etc) so students can connect to the content?
- Value-add to what is in the textbook? How do you do this?
- Think about how the students engage with your material – do they just sit and listen? Are there opportunities through the lecture for students to make active responses?
- Provide work related examples to your students so that they may make the link between theory and practice.
- Organise guest speakers to give a lecture in your course which may add value to the content? How often do you invite a guest speaker?

### **Assessment and feedback**

*7. Assessment tasks in this course require me to demonstrate what I am learning*

*8. The amount of work required in this course is about right*

*17. My instructors understand my learning needs*

Do you:

- Provide opportunities for regular formal and informal feedback throughout the semester?
- Align the competencies required for the training package under study with appropriate learning objectives, learning outcomes and assessment?
- Do you evaluate the above alignment? If yes, how?
- Use strategies for providing bulk feedback. For example, using technology (eg Blackboard) to give common comments on assessment deficiencies, common problems or issues?
- Provide a mark sheet to return with assignments which lists the assessment criteria, competency criteria, and training package criteria so students can see their performance against each criterion and how the overall mark was awarded?
- Provide model answers, peer review and/or peer assessment opportunities? Do you know how to provide these opportunities in ways that benefit you and the learner?
- Cross course assess?
- Sit with (at risk) students and go through the feedback with them?
- Use specific strategies with students from non English speaking background or students with comprehension and learning difficulties?
- Use, or are you aware of, contemporary teaching and learning assessment/plagiarism support packages, such as, TURNITIN, and ACKNOWLEDGEMENT?

### **Competencies / workplace readiness**

*6. My instructors have a good knowledge of workplace skills*

*16. There is a good balance between theory and practice*

*18. I can see how I'll be able to use what I am learning in this course in my career*

*21. This course contributes to my confidence in tackling unfamiliar problems*

Do you:

- Use real life examples from the workplace in your lectures?
- Do you relate the content of your course to a particular training package and/or competencies? Do you relate your content to other courses in the program as appropriate?
- Evaluate your students' recognition of the alignment between your course content, competency based teaching requirements, and particular training packages? If yes, how?

### **Resources / facilities**

11. *I find the learning resources for this course useful (eg notes, handouts, readings, AV materials)*

12. *The web based (online) materials for this course are effective in assisting my learning*

13. *There is effective use of other computer-based teaching materials in this course*

14. *The facilities (such as classrooms, lecture theatres, studios, labs) are adequate for this course*

Do you:

- Check your slides for accuracy and readability?
- Up date your readings regularly? Are your content and teaching tools relevant to your students' experiences? Are they relevant to particular competencies and training packages that inform your course? Are they up to date? Do you look for new readings each year?
- Is your Blackboard site maintained regularly? Do you know where to go to receive Blackboard training?
- Direct students to relevant external websites?
- Know how to make full use of the technology that is available to you in the classrooms of Building 108?
- Actively direct students to library and learning support resources as appropriate?
- Use mobile learning techniques to support your teaching style and student learning? For example, pod casts of key course concepts that students find difficult to grasp; BLOGS to receive student information and to offer online feedback?
- Present your content around a small number, no more than three, key concepts that are crucial to the course, and/or that previous student evaluations/assessments have highlighted as problematic areas of student learning?
- Use the online learning and teaching support services that are available to ALL academic staff in the Business Portfolio through the Business Academic Development Group?

Lyn Atkinson  
Louise Bricknell  
Rae Subramaniam  
Academic Development Group  
Business Portfolio

With input from John Milton, Learning & Teaching Development.

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