LTC14D157

Title:	***Use of Mid-Module Evaluation***
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Issue

This is a paper on 'The Use of Mid-Module Evaluation'. Mid-Module Evaluation is already used either explicitly or implicitly in the number of schools at UEA, and the purpose of this paper is to identify the techniques and methods employed so as to disseminate best practice and to provide concrete, proven examples that Module Organisers can experiment with moving forwards. Mid-Module evaluation is an increasingly common aspect of routine student engagement in HEIs in the UK and has been 'flagged' in previous sector reports by the QAA and other agencies, as one of the things that students value highly, since **they** often get to benefit from the actions taken, rather than the next cohort of students on the module in question.

Recommendation

The paper identifies some principles that should inform the use of Mid-Module Evaluation, and identifies some examples of good practice that might be helpful to Module Organisers wishing to employ this form of student engagement in their modules.

Resource Implications

No significant resource implications – this is already being utilised in a number of schools.

Risk Implications

No significant risks – the most significant one is that associated with schools potentially failing to feedback actions taken to students in an effective and timely manner.

Equality and Diversity

It is not envisaged that any of the recommendations contained in the report will impact on groups with protected characteristics. Quite the contrary – increased participation and use of Mid-Module Evaluation will ensure that the needs and feedback of all students are used to drive future enhancements in modules.

Timing of decisions

The report contains some principles for LTC to consider. These can be communicated immediately following LTC in order to support/encourage Module Organisers wishing to use Mid Module Evaluation in their modules.

Further Information

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Background

Student engagement – especially with regard to their involvement in quality enhancement – is a key focus of Chapter B5 of the UK Quality Code. Mid-Module Evaluation can provide an important means of building this engagement and ensuring that student feedback results in positive change in modules.

Discussion

The paper is for discussion and contains some principles for LTC to consider.

Future Use of Mid Module Evaluation
A Paper from the Academic Director for Taught Programmes (ADTP)

Introduction

A version of this paper was considered at TPPG on 4 March 2015. This paper included data from a series of questionnaires on the issue which were mostly completed by School Directors of Teaching and Learning. At this meeting TPPG members identified some issues that LTC should be aware of.

- Within the sector practice varied in terms of the approach to mid-module evaluation. Sometimes a very informal approach was taken, at other times more formal.
- From the questionnaires it was apparent that within UEA most Schools MOs employ some form of informal mid-module evaluation already. The methods employed were varied.
- It should be encouraged, and examples of good practice should be made available to MOs, but it should not be made 'compulsory'.
- A 'one size fits all' approach was felt to be inappropriate. Members of Union of UEA Students felt that Mid-Module Evaluation should be employed but should be flexible in how it is managed.
- If the approach to mid-module evaluation was 'formalised' that it must not detract from fixing issues with modules where they are identified early or in other ways (i.e. via SSLCs).
- TPPG members will note that the feedback from Schools is variable on the topic. Some are in favour of it, some are more cautious and have concerns that it might impact negatively on end of module online evaluation participation rates.
- SCI felt that in order to judge how effective the mid module evaluations and whether they affected end of module evaluations, data would be required which showed the pattern over a period of years in order to gain actionable insights.
- The Group felt that it was the role of the Module Organiser to take any evaluation data on board and feed this back to the students on the module.
- The Union of UEA Students felt that a mid-module evaluation could be undertaken in simple and informal ways (such as gathering views using post-it notes) and had the potential for encouraging engagement in end of module evaluations.
- IT was not felt that a risk-based approach based on 'triggers' was appropriate – instead MOs and CDs should be free to consider where and how Mid-Module Evaluation could be employed to maximum advantage.

The ADTP agreed to take forward a paper to LTC focused on encouraging good practice and its promotion amongst academic colleagues.

Practice at UEA

Mid Module Evaluation is something which is already employed in a number of Schools: e.g. MED, HIS, HUM, PPL, SWK, PSY, ENV, ECO, EDU, and LAW. It is not currently employed in CHE, MTH, NAT, DEV. It is carried out to a limited extent in NBS. The method employed is mostly subject to the preference of individual Module Organisers.

Observations on Mid Module Evaluation include:

- *How beneficial it would be rather depends on the current relationship between the students and the module lead. The students perceive this as 'just yet another form', it won't help.*
- *I am very supportive of a dialogue between tutors and students that helps to improve the teaching in order to achieve the learning objectives. However, I would caution against introducing a formal procedure for mid-term evaluation.*
- *Giving up a little class time to this does allow for reasonable rates of return. Low return rates on end-of-module online evaluations does cause frustration.... It is of course possible that return rates (even for online methods) would improve if students thought that mid-semester input would be of more direct benefit to them – although this is untested in our experience at present.*
- *I am at a loss to see a real purpose behind this except when the timetable and content is very flexible. This is not the case for any module in X. Any problems which occur I want to be identified as soon as they occur and corrective action put into place immediately not 5 or 10 weeks into a module. Modifying the teaching is almost out of the question since end of year examinations will have been set by the time of mid-module evaluations. In practice very few modules are newly run so we have past experience from end of year evaluations from the previous year.*
- *Better to have an open door policy or open email policy letting students contact staff about problems.*
- *Formal mid-module evaluation is not appropriate for single-semester modules where there are a sequence team members each covering a different topics.*
- *For year-long modules formal mid-module evaluation might provide feedback on teaching in the Autumn semester that is otherwise a distant memory when end-of-module evaluation occurs in April.*
- *I am not convinced that there is much benefit and can see that there are a lot of disadvantages. It will take time that would be better spent learning, It will reduce still further the chance of students filling out the evaluations at the end of semester and it is unlikely to lead to significant improvements within the semester.*
- *With such low response rates to our current end of module evaluations I would prefer that effort was directed at raising the response rate on these significantly.*
- *There are some opinions that mid module evaluation may be more useful than the final ones. More students would probably fill them and teaching can be re-adjusted when needed.*
- *Module may be adjusted in ways which take too much account of immediate popularity relative to interests of best long term student learning.*
- *Students more likely to suffer from 'survey fatigue'.*
- *IF this can be done without the imposition of another formal set of administrative reporting tasks then I think wider use of mid-module evaluation would be welcome.*
- *It is the kind of practice where a one-size-fits-all approach will not work well. In some modules an online survey around week 5 or 6 might be best, in others*

- *a session in class with a wall of post-it notes, in others an oral fortnightly review. Mid-module evaluation may well have a very useful role to play in helping to close the feedback loop but I think the downsides of a centrally driven roll-out are very likely to outweigh the benefits.*
- *The vast majority of course directors in EDU felt that 'formal' mid module evaluations were not needed. They felt that this already happens in modules anyway (informally), as part of being a good module organiser (i.e. listening to students and making alterations/changes to modules when necessary). Many course directors cited the fact that UEA students are surveyed far too many times during a typical academic year and that a mid-module evaluation in every module would be a case of overkill.*
- *There are of course advantages to mid module reviews. Having discussed this issue at some length the team feel that it is best undertaken from a practice perspective, and oriented to the needs of the students and the teaching personnel involved. We recognise that it would be particularly useful for new modules, for new staff or when specific innovations are introduced, and would encourage this as part of our everyday practice.*
- *It is important for students to feel that they are able to raise their views at any time, without having to wait to be specifically asked for them. The School believes in open communication and on-going dialogue with all students.*
- *The informal approach is very effective within the PG programme due to the nature of the students on both courses and the relationship between these comparative small groups of students and the respective Course Directors.*
- *The benefits of routine mid- module evaluation are already being realised. MOs benefit from a confidential perspective on problems on course delivery (rare) which gives them an opportunity to clarify information being given to students regarding issues such as assessment criteria or (if possible) adjust style of teaching delivery. These benefits may be compromised with a more <u>formal</u>, regulated approach.*
- *Colleagues suggested that a mid-module evaluation might be useful as a monitoring option in the yearlong modules.*

Some examples of methods employed include:
MED – On the MBBS evaluation is completed on-line. The e-learning Masters is through Moodle. Within PBL evaluation is usually oral/face-to-face, although some tutors use hard copy. "Clickers" have also been used to collect evaluation.
ECO – Year-long modules are evaluated at the end of the autumn semester via Blackboard. Some lecturers may carry out other surveys or use clickers to get an idea of how the module is progressing.
NBS – To a certain extent feedback on modules is carried out during the course of the year at the UG & PG SSLCs (3 times a year). Student representatives are asked to comment on the teaching that they are receiving.
EDU – A range of mid module evaluations are used across a number of UG and PGT modules and courses in EDU. Most courses use mid module evaluations in either all modules or a few modules. Most course directors reported that hard copy mid module evaluations seemed to work best. Some courses also found the online (via Black Board) method useful in collating the mid module information. However, the practice is very variable due to the diverse courses in EDU (e.g. the use of post-it notes, traffic light systems, one-to-one tutorials, broad categories, open-ended questions, fixed categories etc.).

HIS – Verbal, dialogue is employed to gather feedback. Some colleagues use hard copies. One colleague uses post-it notes, which students put on the back of the door leaving the room (to allow for anonymity).

SWK – Hard copies work best for because we can ensure that more of the students complete them than may be the case online.

PPL – Experience is limited to MO-administered hard copy questionnaires.

ENV - Formative assessment is seen as as an indicator of understanding (most modules). In addition the School employs a range of mid-module evaluation methods:

> **Informal discussion and feedback during classes** (most modules).
>
> **Hard copy feedback sheets** – bespoke or using hard copy of standard LTS evaluation (achieving 100% participation compared to the unrepresentative 30-40% sample for online LTS system).
>
> **Structured informal feedback session** in class (3 modules). e.g. one example: ask the students to write some brief comments on three post-its: 1. Any general comments on the module so far, 2. One thing they've liked so far. 3. Any things they think could be improved and how. However, even the workshop approach rarely allows amendments to current module and rather informs subsequent year delivery (as informed by Student evaluation).
>
> **Blackboard surveys** to try and gather feedback on specific aspects of modules (3 modules) – but low participation.

Practice in the sector
Within the sector things are moving fast and practice is evolving in response to the UK Quality Code and to address student concerns that the student voice becomes a key driver quality enhancement. There is a very important principle underpinning Mid Module Evaluation – namely, that students want to see enhancements implemented in response to their feedback so **THEY** can benefit from it, rather than simply benefitting the next cohort of students who do the module in question. Leaving evaluation to the end point of a module is too late for the students to benefit directly from the feedback they have provided.

Analysis of practice in the sector indicates that Universities are adopting a wide range of approaches to the issue of Mid Module Evaluation. Rather than employing a 'one size fits all' approach, the norm is to encourage **a diverse range of methods**, such that the method employed reflects the nature of the modules being taught, the size and complexity of the student body, the format of delivery, and the needs of Module Organisers. Examples of practice relating to Mid-Module Evaluation are provided in **Appendix A**.

Comment from Connor Rand (UUEAS UG student Officer)
The ADTP has received the following note from Connor Rand:
"Currently a number of institutions are utilising mid-module evaluation to allow students to make a direct impact on their modules whilst they are studying them. Practise is varied. However, the principles of it being a simple to complete task which brings about quickly implemented actions are common.
Examples of how this is carried out include:
- Anglia Ruskin University courses use a 'Keep, Stop, Start' method using post-it notes

- Reading University use 'Poll Everywhere'- a software package that allows students to instantly respond on a mobile device in class.
- The University of Leeds uses electronic voting through clickers in lectures.
- The University of Wolverhampton use a "One-minute paper" technique.
- The University of Birmingham use online quizzes.

Anonymity is still a concern for students when completing these mid-module evaluations. However they are willing to engage in this process where it brings a positive outcome and where they are informed of the other routes to feedback (for example through their Rep).

It is important that mid-module evaluation is not seen as the only opportunity to feedback and the information it yields does not become hidden from students".

Recommendations
Rather than making Mid-Module Evaluation a 'compulsory' requirement, this paper sets-out, instead, some examples of existing good practice at UEA and within the wider HE sector as a means of encouraging other Module Organisers consider the benefits to be gained, and to consider the method that might be most effective or appropriate in their modules.

Point 1
Should Module Organisers are encouraged to employ the method(s) they believe will be most effective in securing the feedback that will enable them to identify potential enhancements.

Point 2
Module Organisers are free to consider the kinds of Questions they might ask as part of the Mid Module Evaluation process. These might include, for example:
1. What are the key things you have learnt so far?
2. Is there anything that remains difficult to understand?
3. What changes to the teaching activities might improve your learning?

Point 3
Mid-Module Evaluation should be viewed as an 'informal' mechanism for seeking student feedback. It is not intended to replace or undermine the importance of more 'formal' online End of Module Evaluations.

Point 4
Module Organiser should take any Mid-Module evaluation data on board and feed actions/responses back to the students in a timely fashion in the method they feel is most appropriate to their modules. Examples of the kind of structured feedback which might help to facilitate this process is provided below:
   i) Actions which can/will be taken immediately.
   ii) Actions which the MO believes can be implemented before the end of the module
   iii) Actions that are likely to be implemented after the module ends.
   iv) Actions that cannot be addressed (e.g. due to practical, legal, resourcing or other constraints).

Point 5

Mid-Module Evaluation should not detract from fixing issues with modules where they are identified early or in other ways (i.e. via SSLCs). Timely use of SSLGs may constitute an effective means of Mid-Module Evaluation.

Point 6
There is no right or wrong way of employing Mid-Module Evaluation. Instead, there are many strategies available, which have been proven to be effective at UEA and elsewhere. These include:

- Informal discussion and feedback during classes (most modules).
- Hard copy feedback sheets/evaluations handed out and returned in class, or returned via Student Rep.
- Informal student focus groups.
- Student reps collect student feedback on flip-chart paper or post-it notes, and pass these to MO at end of the session.
- 'Keep, Stop, Change' method using post-it notes and flip chart paper, or post-it notes placed in a hat.
- Blackboard based surveys and quiz tools.
- Electronic voting via use of mobile devices and voting software Apps and/or use of 'clickers' in lectures/seminars.
- The 'One-minute paper' technique.
  http://homepages.math.uic.edu/~bshipley/MinutePaper.pdf
- SSLGs – preferably with the Mid Module Evaluation led by student reps in class.

The list of methods above is not intended to be exhaustive – there are other, equally vaid and effective strategies available.
Module Organisers are encouraged to consider the method(s) that might be most appropriate or effective in their modules.

ADTP
9 March 2015

Appendix A
Practice in the Sector
Many Universities carry-out Mid Module Evaluation already as a routine aspect of their quality assurance and enhancement processes.
Some examples are provided below:

Leeds University
For example, at Leeds University Mid Module 'snapshots' are required in modules which fall into the following categories:
1) All new modules
2) Modules where the form of teaching has significantly changed
3) Modules where action has been taken following an earlier unfavourable evaluation.

Leeds provides the following guidance to Module Organisers:
"Examples of how mid-module snapshot evaluations might easily be facilitated include using electronic voting systems ('clickers') in lectures or short surveys delivered via the VLE. Sampling of students and focus groups, etc., might also be considered".
See: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/qat/review/module-surveys.html

University of Wolverhampton
At the University of Wolverhampton, Module Organisers are encouraged to implement mid module evaluation and to use 'traditional' approaches like using post-it notes etc:
Mid Module evaluation is a useful tool to support the retention, progression and attainment, process. Ask your students questions such as:
1. What are the key things you have learnt so far?
2. Is there anything that remains difficult to understand?
3. What changes to the teaching activities might improve your learning?

Responses can be on post-its for students to stick on the wall or they can write responses on a piece of paper which they put in a collection box/hat/bin. Report back to students what you can change in response to their comments.
See: http://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/internal-departments/centre-for-academic-practice/how-to-guides/how-to-conduct-a-quick-and-useful-mid-module-eval/

York St John University
"As part of the new mid-module evaluation process a regular, planned, timetabled, collaborative mid-module review should be regarded as standard and best practice and undertaken by all module leaders for each module. The style of mid-module review is up to the module leader, it should suit the module style, location and student group, and should be facilitated in collaboration with students. Formats could vary from online feedback (using Moodle/TextWall/Google Forms etc.), a 'conversational' approach, quick 'Stop-Start-Continue' feedback, questions from an agreed broad framework, written post-it feedback or a student representative focus group. The approach chosen would reflect the learning approach of the student group and module 'style' and the ethos and nature of the course."
Phil Vincent, *Technology Enhanced Learning*, York St John University.
See: http://blog.yorksj.ac.uk/moodle/2014/10/17/moodle-feedback-activity-for-mid-module-evaluation/

University of Reading
In addition to the requirements set out above in relation to end-of-module evaluation, all Schools are strongly encouraged to undertake some form of informal, light-touch mid-module evaluation for all modules on an annual basis. This can be particularly useful in the resolution of practical and operational issues and provides an opportunity for module convenors to react quickly and efficiently to feedback from students and to make (minor) changes which will benefit the current cohort. Student feedback obtained via the Students' Union and from research carried out by the National Union of Students and the QAA on the student experience in 2012 suggested that this would be welcomed by students and would encourage them to engage in future feedback opportunities.
28 Module convenors may wish to select from a variety of methods of mid-module evaluation, including (but not restricted to):
(i) verbal feedback gathered informally by an academic member of staff with no responsibility for the module under review or by a Course Rep, during a lecture;
(ii) use of the 'Poll Everywhere' tool administered using mobile phone responses during a lecture either via PowerPoint with no live feed or via a web connection with a monitored live feed;
(iii) Post-it and flip-chart method; for example, students are asked to note what is working well on the module and what, if anything, could be improved.
University of Reading, *Guide to policy and procedures for teaching and learning. Section 4: Student representation, evaluation and complaints*. (2013)
See: http://www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/studentevaluation.pdf

Coventry University
Many universities seeking feedback on courses and lecturers via surveys struggle to achieve a meaningful response from students. Student representatives have indicated that students are not effectively engaged in the feedback process and, for some, providing feedback can even be intimidating. Universities need to work harder at feeding back to students the actions they will be taking as a result of input provided for course and lecturer evaluation surveys.
End-of-module evaluation is a particular stumbling block in the provision of feedback to students - and feedback can be slow *- but moving to mid-module evaluation can help to improve the process*.
- Ideally students want the opportunity to express their views on course improvements at a time that their feedback benefits them directly
- Universities need to embrace new technologies to improve turnaround time - but effective feedback can be gained via a combination of paper and online surveys.
- Universities should establish a more consistent (centralised) approach to survey administration - including a standard set of survey questions - to enable effective benchmarking at course and institutional level.
- In-class student involvement in survey administration can increase commitment as they are stakeholders in the process.

As a potential model of best practice, Professor Marshall said that Coventry University had managed to increase its response rates by using paper and moving to mid-module surveys.

> "Historically universities conduct end-of-course, or end-of-module surveys, but by the time the feedback has been analysed and results published the students have gone away. We moved to online surveys, but the response was dreadful, so last year

> we introduced mid-module surveys and went back to paper. The response was super,
> and we are now able to turn around feedback in two weeks maximum".

At Coventry University mid-module surveys are handed out in class by 120 senior student representatives who are interviewed and selected by the University's Students' Union, and Professor Marshall said that if a module was perceived to be underperforming "we will focus on those". He added: "Students are more interested in outcomes - so it's important for universities to be very clear on what they are able to do, and equally be honest on what they are not able to."
See: http://www.coventry.ac.uk/primary-news/coventry-university-best-practice-highlighted-in-report-on-effective-course-evaluation-/

HEA Article

In one 2010 study, students were given the opportunity to evaluate their modules in Weeks 2, 6 and 12. This was seen to have considerable benefits:

> "The main benefit of the approach for the module tutors was that they were able to monitor the effectiveness of the module organisation and administration on an on-going basis. Students also commented that they were aware that their voice was being heard and that the module tutor cared about their opinion".

> "This experience might lead staff to feel that immediate changes or changes 'on demand' are not appropriate but is it important that when changes can be justified action is taken".

Claire Mills, *To Review the Module Evaluation Process and Manage Students' Expectations*, University of Gloucestershire. Published on HEA website, 2010
See: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/module_evaluation_process.pdf