

Making Sense of Course Evaluations

Reacting to Student Ratings and Comments in a Positive and Intentional Way



Course evaluations can be analyzed on multiple planes. We can simultaneously consider our control over the focus of a comment (like time of class) and whether the comment is positive or negative (I LOVE these 8 am classes!!).

Comments that we have no control over may leave us feeling mired in the mud (or elated) but ultimately, we need to focus on what we can control.

PROCESS

1. Using a dark marker, draw a line through any portion of a comment that you cannot control (e.g., time of class, room selection, frequency of course, course content in a multi-section lower level prerequisite course, I love this instructor, this course was a waste of time, etc.)
2. Highlight all **positive comments** or portions of comments with one color of highlighter (e.g., green). May include: lectures were organized, Canvas site was clear, assignment expectations were clearly shared, instructor was responsive to questions, etc.
3. Highlight all **negative comments** or portions of comments with one color of highlighter (e.g., yellow). Might include: couldn't follow lectures with a divining rod, instructor's research was clearly more important than his teaching of this course, Blackboard site was created by a rabid squirrel, this instructor was the nicest hard-ass I've ever met, etc.
4. Return to positive comments. Look for themes (perhaps 3-5) – and mark the themes with a code you develop (code example):

Classroom Presentation	CP
Access to Information	AI
Instructor Support	IS
Clarity of Assessments	CA

5. Repeat coding with negative comments. You may be able to use some of the same codes, but often you'll develop at least one or two new codes. Also, put a "✓" next to themes you want to change and a "–" next to themes you want to explain.
6. Write a narrative that describes your reaction and potential changes based on themes identified. Quote one or two comments when appropriate. Describe what you'll continue, what you'll change (start or stop), and your rationale for those decisions. Don't hesitate to repeat something you told them on day 1 – they've probably forgotten!