

Interpreting results from the student survey of teaching

The current student survey of teaching was created by a university task force in 2020 and used for the first time in Spring 2021. It is intended to allow the student voice to come through while reducing bias as much as possible. It eliminated the 1-5 rating scale and department comparisons, replacing them with three-point scales that focus on the frequency of use of effective and inclusive teaching practices. (A review of literature on

this page of the CTE website explains the rationale behind the changes.) This document explains the structure of the new survey and offers suggestions for using data from it. The results can also be integrated into the Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness framework, which CTE developed to help instructors and institutions gather, use and interpret evidence of teaching effectiveness.

The survey has four sections

Students complete Part 1 and Part 4 only once for a course. If a course has multiple instructors, students complete Parts 2 and 3 for each instructor.

Part 1: Course design and content. Focuses on how much the course helped with critical thinking (*a lot, some, not much*) and how useful course materials were to the student. Open-ended questions ask what aspects of a course were most helpful to learning and what areas need improvement.



Part 2: Expectations, deadline, feedback. Includes questions on clarity of expectations, grading criteria, and deadlines; perceptions of feedback an instructor provided.



Part 3: Class climate. Perceptions about learning environment, respect of instructor, and instructor's ability to encourage and promote student success.

Part 4: Time spent on course. Estimate of hours spent on coursework, comparison to time spent in other courses. This section also allows students to provide additional comments.

Part 1: Course design and content

These questions can provide good feedback about instructors who had a role in creating course goals, choosing or creating course materials, organizing the learning management system, or otherwise designing the course. They are separated from other items because many courses have more than one instructor or the instructor is teaching a course that someone else created.



Questions from student survey

- *The course helped improve my critical thinking*
- *Course materials were useful in my learning*
- *What aspects of the class were most helpful to your learning?*
- *What aspects of the class need improvement?*



Results can provide evidence of

- Effectiveness of course design
- Relevance of materials
- Connection to learning

Part 2: Expectations, deadlines and feedback

Practices such as setting clear expectations, providing timely feedback, and helping students understand the purpose of coursework have been shown to improve engagement, motivation, and learning.

Questions from student survey

- The instructor helped me understand what I was **expected to learn**
- Explained the **purpose of work** I did in the course (things like discussions, assignments, exams, class activities)
- **Made deadlines clear**
- Was **clear about how I would be graded**
- **Provided feedback** that helped me learn



Results can provide evidence of

- Transparency of expectations
- Clarity of course structure
- Effectiveness of feedback

Part 3: Class climate or environment

A class environment, whether in person or online, in which all students feel respected and encouraged to succeed is a crucial component of motivation and learning.

Questions from student survey

- The instructor helped create an environment in the class (whether in person or online) that **motivated me to learn**
- **Responded respectfully** if I had questions
- Helped me feel that **I could succeed** in the class
- **Helped me understand** different ways to apply what I learned
- Used approaches that **encouraged me to participate** in class activities (in person or online)
- Is there anything else you'd like the instructor to know about the learning environment of the class? (open-ended)



Results can provide evidence of

- Inclusivity of environment
- Level of engagement in a class
- Student-instructor interaction
- Responsiveness of instructor
- Practices that motivated students

Part 4: Time spent on course

This section includes an open-ended question for providing feedback about other aspects of a course.

Questions from student survey

- Outside of scheduled class meetings and exams, about **how much time did you spend on this course per week, on average?**
 - Compared with other classes you have taken at this level, how much time per week did you spend on this course?
 - Do you have comments or feedback on anything else related to the class? (open-ended)



The questions about time are intended to help instructors gauge students' perceptions of time spent on homework, reading, studying, and other outside-of-class assignments. This can be especially helpful when viewed over a series of semesters or after a class has undergone substantial changes.

How do I use the data?

The revised survey contains a considerable amount of data that instructors or evaluators can use to demonstrate teaching effectiveness. Below are examples of how instructors could integrate student responses into a narrative about their own teaching. Evaluators could use the data in a parallel way. [The Benchmarks project page](#) has more guidance about how to reflect on and create a narrative about teaching, and how to review evidence of someone else’s teaching.

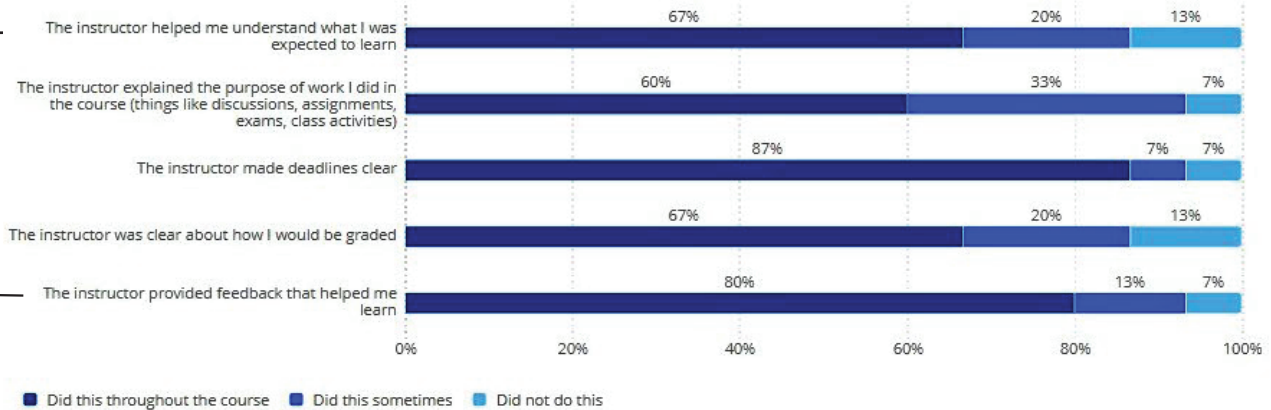
Transparency and expectations

Two-thirds of students said I consistently helped them understand what they were expected to learn, and a smaller percentage said expectations were clear. That suggests that I need to be more transparent about course goals and expectations. I plan to revise syllabus language and provide better explanations in class for each assignment next time I teach the course.

Clarity on grading

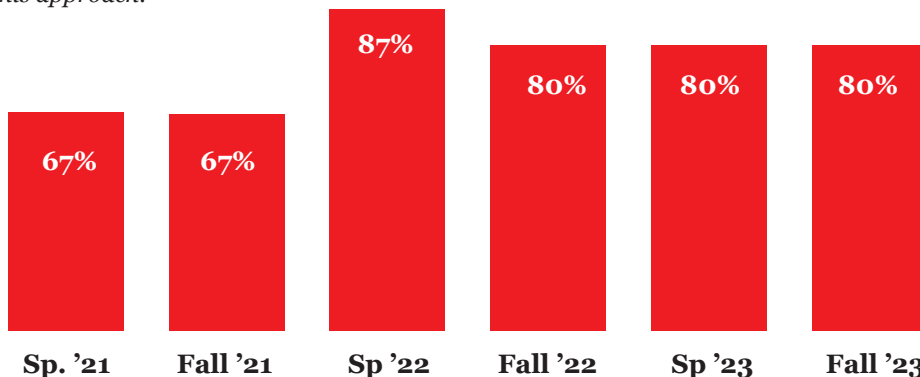
Two-thirds of students said I consistently made grading expectations clear. I’m pleased with that, but I am concerned that a third of students weren’t always clear on grading expectations. I have been experimenting with a new approach to grading that has helped reduce the time I spend with student assignments. Next time I teach the course, I will add explanatory material and spend time in class explaining the grading procedures.

Expectations, Deadlines and Feedback 15 Responses

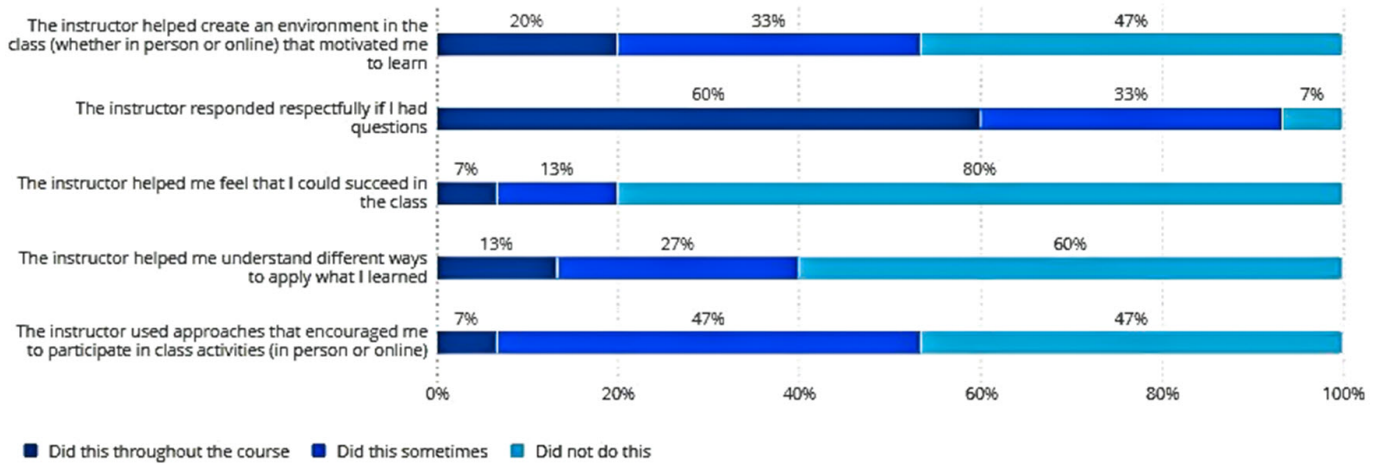


Feedback from instructor

Eighty percent of students said the feedback I provided on their work last semester consistently helped them learn. I am pleased with that. I pride myself on the feedback I give to students in writing and orally. I meet with students individually at least once a semester and I rotate among groups each week, allowing me to give on-the-spot feedback in class. For the past four semesters, I have also been experimenting with audio and video feedback on student work. This combination of approaches has increased the percentage of students who find my feedback helpful over the six semesters I have taught the class, as the graph below shows. The quality of student writing has also improved since I began using this approach.



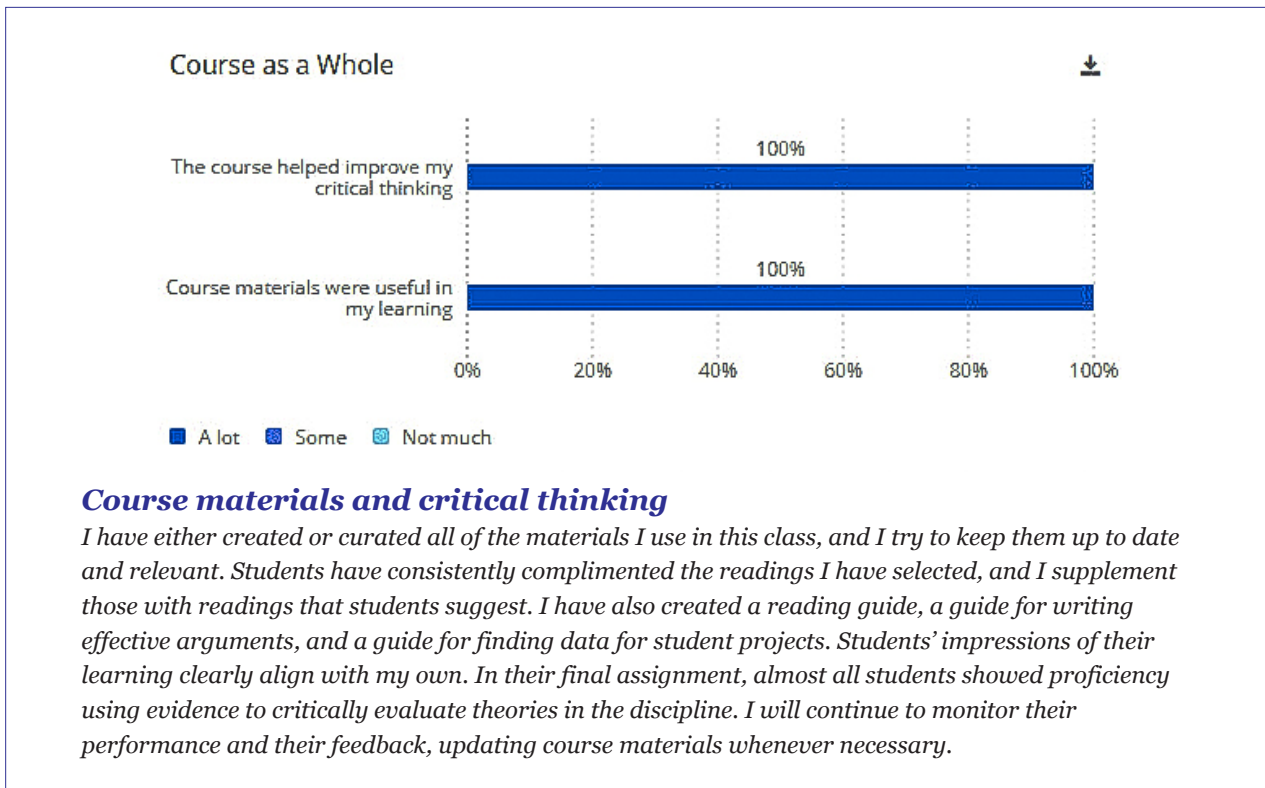
Climate 15 Responses



Class climate

I'm troubled by the responses that students provided about the climate of my class last semester. Most seem to think that I responded to questions respectfully, but their responses to the other items suggest that I was less successful in engaging and motivating them, and in making them feel like they could succeed in the course. I purposely give students difficult material to grapple with from the beginning of the course, using that to motivate them to work hard and to enable me to gauge their

incoming skills levels. But many students did poorly on this early material and disengaged from the class. Next semester, I will try providing more scaffolding in the early part of the course to help them acquire some of the skills needed to succeed on that difficult material. I also plan to gather midterm feedback from students next semester and talk with them more about how I approach teaching so that I can identify problems early enough to address them.



Course materials and critical thinking

I have either created or curated all of the materials I use in this class, and I try to keep them up to date and relevant. Students have consistently complimented the readings I have selected, and I supplement those with readings that students suggest. I have also created a reading guide, a guide for writing effective arguments, and a guide for finding data for student projects. Students' impressions of their learning clearly align with my own. In their final assignment, almost all students showed proficiency using evidence to critically evaluate theories in the discipline. I will continue to monitor their performance and their feedback, updating course materials whenever necessary.