Feedback Questionnaires
Guidance on format and implementation

The format of a questionnaire is important, particularly when the possibility of ‘questionnaire fatigue’ exists. Below is a checklist to help make the questionnaire as easy as possible to complete:

- **Ensure any background information that you need is included or sought.** E.g. Name of course, college, department, tutor, term when feedback is obtained, etc. Equally, don’t collect any data you don’t need.

- **Provide clear, concise instructions.** Minimise the likelihood that the questionnaire is completed incorrectly.

- **Motivate recipients to complete promptly.** Help respondents realise the importance of collecting this information. Explain how it will be used to benefit them. The promise of anonymity will encourage candour on controversial items.

- **Use professional production methods.** An aesthetically attractive layout invites engagement and completion. The clearer the layout and presentation, the more likely you will get a high response rate.

- **Sequence logically.** Number questions sequentially, and cluster them by theme. Start with questions that require a straightforward response. Standardise the format and be consistent in the format of the answers (for instance, word all questions so they fit a “strongly agree through strongly disagree” format).

- **Leave space for student comments appropriate for the amount of detail you are seeking.** If you leave a large amount of open area and ask the students to comment, they will write something. It may be useful to ask students to give a number of responses. E.g. List three activities you engaged in during this course that helped your learning.

- **Leave enough time for students to complete your questionnaire.** Asking students to complete feedback questionnaires during class is one way to achieve a healthy completion rate. Budget for the time required: ensure students do not feel rushed.

- **Ask students to complete your questionnaire at an appropriate time** (e.g. at the end of the course). Make sure the timing is such that they are not worrying about wasting time before exams, or that they have not just received feedback from you on a major assignment, as this could bias their evaluation. Consider alerting students that you will be asking for feedback, and you would be grateful if they could give some thought to the comments they wish to make.

- **Consider piloting a new questionnaire.** Seeking just 2 or 3 responses on a first draft of your questionnaire can make all the difference. Determine the most important questions you need to ask participants during piloting, and be prepared to address any issues that arise, e.g.
  - How long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?
  - Were the instructions clear?
  - Were any of the questions unclear or ambiguous? If so, which and why?
  - Did you object to answering any of the questions? If so, which and why?
  - In your opinion, has any major topic been omitted? If so, which and why?
- Was the layout of the questionnaire clear/attractive?
- Any other comments or suggestions for improvement?

Finally, relevant contextual and ethical issues will also be taken into account in a good course evaluation. Ensuring that responses are anonymous, and that any comments which might enable an individual to be identified are removed as part of the data aggregation and analysis, and offering reassurance to that effect, is adequate for most routine evaluations. However, in some situations it may be important to seek formal ethics approval; in other cases informal consultation with those immediately affected may be all that is required.