

Critical Incident Questionnaire

Notes for tutors on how to use this tool

The questionnaire can be used to discover how students are experiencing your teaching sessions. Its usefulness is underlined by the experience that student responses often differ markedly from what teachers have expected on the basis of their own feelings in the classroom (*Brookfield, pp95-96*).

The CIQ asks students in five questions to describe details of their response to aspects of teaching sessions, prompting them to think about what is helping or hindering their learning so far. Responses are anonymous and students are encouraged to keep a copy for themselves for review at the end of the course. The questions are asked at the end of each class and are the same every week. You may prefer to select just one or two of the questions which would make the exercise even more manageable for you and the students.

Brookfield began giving students a voice, in this particular way, in the era of carbon paper! But nowadays the facilities available to us include electronic mail and virtual learning environments: you may be able to adapt the CIQ for use with email or WebLearn, for example.

Asking students to submit responses to the questions by email would make it easy for them to retain a copy of their own submission each week which they could use to build up a reflective log of their participation in the class. This, however, would not permit the anonymity of submissions which Brookfield and Preskill see as fundamental to success.

See over for Brookfield's five questions and an example of how you could present the questionnaire.

Critical Incident Questionnaire

Please take about five minutes to respond to each of the questions below about today's class. Don't put your name on the form – your responses are anonymous. When you have finished writing, put one copy of the questionnaire on the table by the door and keep the other copy for yourself. At the start of next week's class, I will be sharing the responses with the group. Thanks for taking the time to do this. What you write will help me make the seminars responsive to your concerns.

1. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most engaged with what was happening?
2. At what moment in the class this week did you feel most distanced from what was happening?
3. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most affirming and helpful?
4. What action that anyone (teacher or student) took in class this week did you find most puzzling or confusing?
5. What about the class this week surprised you the most? (This could be something about your own reactions to what went on, or something that someone did, or anything else that occurs to you.)

Adapted from:
Stephen D. Brookfield. (1995) *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.