**Relative strengths and weaknesses of common evaluations**

Reproduced from Light, Cox and Calkins (2009)

|  | **Questionnaires** | **Interactive Teaching** | **Group Discussion** | **Informal Feedback** | **Focus Groups** | **Peer Observation** | **Students Work** |
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| ***Relative strengths*** | Broad coverage of opinionQuantifiable for comparisonEasy to administerClose link to particular teaching – immediateEasily confidential or anonymousSystematic coverage of themesLonger time perspectiveOpportunity to explore links between different aspects of course | Integration of teaching and evaluationFrequent, immediate link with remedial actionSpecific learning problems identified, linked to specific teachingNot explicit teaching evaluation so less inhibitionStudents learn about own learning in concrete situationStudents share problems | Flexible, explore issues as they arise\Can set tone to encourage criticismMore time and encouragement to think, less ‘off-the-cuff’ responsesMore responsive to students’ perceptions and perspectiveCan focus on really important themesCan discuss faculty views more easilyDevelop a dialogue | Explore issues at a personal levelExplore significance of the course as a while for individual studentsGet to know students betterHelp students to understand their own response to the courseCheck on data from other sources | Students identify aspects of personal interestIndividuals feel they can contribute without being influenced (silent majority have their say)Letting off steam, without raising emotional temperatureProvides teachers with rich information with minimal time, effortIdentifies the group’s prioritiesCan identify progress towards ability to adapt to and engage in change | Faculty perspective may complement or clarify students’ perspectiveMay be less inhibited in certain respectsCan be reciprocal learning experienceGeneral opportunity to share ideas about teaching | Close integration of work with evaluationLinks with areas of high concernEnables students to learn self-evaluationEnables students to critique their own learningEnables students to explore own interests and motivations |
| ***Relative weaknesses*** | Frequency (*sic*) use may alienate studentsMay be too simple or too complexAmbiguity difficult to eliminateEncourages ‘off-the-cuff’ responses rather than serious reflectionCan encourage complacencyTime limitedEven with open questions teacher perspective dominantNeeds skill in questionnaire design and analysis | Students may feel over-controlledExclusively concerned with teacher’s learning objectives\Too specific, not linked with general reviewTendency to avoid teaching process | Dominant personalities can be over-influential Initial tone of discussion can make it difficult to change to a different point of viewCoverage of issues may be limited by time availableDifficult to assess distribution of opinionLack of anonymity may be inhibitingSkill in group discussion may be needed | Can be biased by personal impactCoverage of students poor or very time-consuming, biased sample unless careful | Aspects of interest to teachers may be omittedMay not provide causative informationMore time-consuming for students | May be intimidating especially if status differenceMay lead to under-emphasis of student viewpointMay be mutual support for undesirable or restricted view of teaching | Can encourage too much introspectionMay emphasize work as learning exercise ‘rather than real-life production’ |
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Light, G., Cox, R., & Calkins, S. (2009). Evaluating: teaching and course evaluation. In *Learning and teaching in higher education: the reflective professional* (2nd ed., pp. 237–269). Los Angeles, [Calif]; London: SAGE Publications Inc.