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Improving Your Teaching Over Time

*Evaluations*

* Universities stress formative as well as summative evaluations, but bear in mind that students may expect you to make changes mid-course based on formative comments. Determine how you will respond to their suggestions and complaints if you opt for formative evaluations.
* Provide students with time in class to complete the university-mandated course summative evaluation. Stress to them how important their feedback is to you, and note any incentives the university may provide (e.g., early view of final grade).
* In addition to the university-mandated course evaluation, consider creating an evaluation of your own that allows students to comment on specific topics, readings, assignments, and exercises so that you better know what material may need refinement.
* Don’t think you can fix everything that is wrong on the next iteration. Instead, identify a few of the main items that many students noted or that you think are important, and fix just those.
* If you have time, the best time to fix those items is probably right after you taught the course because they are fresh in your mind. But if you are lack the time or are unsure if you will teach the course again, simply leave yourself a clear note about what you need to change and how to do it. Consider if the change is something you can assign to a TA the next time you teach the course.

*Assignments*

* As you grade assignments, maintain a list of common problems that students had.
* Create a new version of your syllabus in preparation for the next time you teach the course, and adjust how you described the assignment, your instructions, and/or your grading criteria to prevent the most common mistakes from recurring.
* Consider incorporating examples from students’ work in your syllabus so that future students have a better sense of what a completed assignment should look like or what level of effort and quality you expect. Contact the students for permission before using their work in this manner.

*Outside Help*

* If you struggled with a particular aspect of teaching, such as leading a group discussion of a paper, identify a colleague who excels in that aspect and ask if you can observe a class session, then take that person out for coffee or lunch to glean additional tips.
* You can turn to your Center for Teaching and Learning for help: they can observe you in class, review your syllabus, and help you think through your course design, materials, exercises, and so on.
* You can ask your senior mentor to observe you teaching and direct your mentor to areas in which you would like advice.
* You can use video recording systems such as Panopto so that you can watch yourself and evaluate where your problems lie.