

PLUS/DELTA Classroom Assessment Technique A Mid-term Formative Evaluation

"Faculty should also know that professors who do mid-term evaluations can achieve higher end-of-term evaluations."

Tomorrow's Professor Msg.#313 Using Mid-Term Evaluations and other Sources of Student Feedback on Teaching

As instructors we often want to know how things are going in our course from the students' perspective. The Plus/Delta feedback tool (sometimes called Plus/Change) is a means of identifying what is going well and what needs to be changed. It is a quick and easy tool that is typically used at the end of a class period to gather information. The beauty of this tool is that it asks students to focus on what is working to advance their learning in the course and what could be improved by the teacher and the student. It helps students to think about their responsibility to the course and what they should continue doing to learn (PLUS) and what they need to change for the course to improve for them (DELTA) (Helminski & Koberna, 1995).

Here's how it works. Students divide a sheet of paper or index card into quadrants. On the top left quadrant the student identifies what is working to enhance learning in the course. In the lower left quadrant the student writes what the student is doing to enhance his/her learning in the course. In the upper right quadrant the student identifies what needs to change or improve in the course or teaching to enhance learning. In the lower right quadrant the student identifies what he/she needs to change or improve in order to enhance his or her own learning.

These responses may be collected, summarized, and reported back to the students at the next class session, or a four-quadrant chart can be drawn on the board and students can verbally offer responses. Or you may want to combine these two response methods. In either case, it is important to close the feedback loop and share the data with students.

You can learn a great deal about how your students are learning in a course, and what adjustments both you and your students might make, by asking your students to give your course a mid-term evaluation. Dr. Michael Martin, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, explains how and why to do midterm evaluations, and how a "formative" evaluation differs from a "summative", or end-of-term, evaluation.

| PLUS | DELTA |
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| What is helping me to learn in this class? | What changes are needed in this course to improve learning? |
| What am I doing to improve my learning in the course? | What do I need to do to improve my learning in this course? |

Mary E. Huba, ISU Assistant Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, discussed this tool in her workshop series, "Using Assessment Effectively" sponsored by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. You can find the tool presented on p. 133 of Dr. Huba's book, "Learner-Centered

Assessment on College Campuses," Allyn and Bacon, 2000. Another book that presents this tool is Angelo and Cross's book, Classroom Assessment Techniques," Jossey-Bass, 1993. These books are available at the CELT Library in 3024 Morrill Hall.

(Material adapted from Helminski, L. & Koberna, S. (1995). Total quality in instruction: A systems approach. In H. V. Roberts (Ed.), Academic initiatives in total quality for higher education (pp309-362). Milwaukee, WI: ASQC Quality Press.)