Student Evaluation of Courses and Teaching Procedures and Guidelines

Contents

1. Purpose

This document outlines the university-wide procedures and guidelines for administering course level surveys to students, including reporting outcomes and feedback loops.

Surveying students is one of the main ways feedback is sought on their perceptions of their experiences of a course. As primary stakeholders in the learning and teaching process, student feedback is crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of individual courses (including teaching).

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Student Surveying and Feedback Policy.

2. Definitions

Student Paper Experience Questionnaire (SPEQ) - SPEQ is the University's online survey for student feedback on their course(s).

For the purposes of SPEQ, feedback on courses is divided into two subcomponents: feedback on the course and feedback on the teacher.

Student evaluation of a **course** refers to student respondent feedback on their experience of the curriculum and organisation of a course (goals, objectives, assessment, content, organisation, delivery and resources).

Student evaluation of **teaching** of a course refers to student feedback on their experience of a teacher's delivery.

The **Annual Programme Survey (APS)** - the APS is the University's annual online survey for student feedback on programmes of 60 points or more. Feedback on courses undertaken as part of a student's programme is collected through responses to a single question repeated for each course in the programme: "Overall, I was satisfied with the quality of this course".

3. Scope

This document contains information on the obligations and procedures related to the collection of student feedback on courses via survey methods including: privacy; frequency; accountability; the existing tools for collecting student feedback; and, information on how these tools are intended to be used.

Detailed information on questionnaire questions and internal faculty processes used are not covered in this document. Information about the questionnaire can be found on the SPEQ intranet page. Course and teaching staff should consult relevant staff for guidance on any faculty/school/department/unit specific processes and/or requirements.

Information on some appropriate additional sources of data for the purposes of course and teaching evaluations can be found in Section 9 of this document. Course and teaching staff should also consult relevant staff for guidance on any faculty/school/department/unit specific requirements.

4. Role of SPEQs

Students' most significant academic experiences are received as a result of the courses they are enrolled in. Student feedback is therefore a key facet of the University's enhancement and quality management system. The overall purpose of SPEQs is to ensure that the University has a systematic process in place that enables student feedback on individual courses undertaken, usually as part of a qualification. As a positive student experience is key to the success of

students and the University, it is appropriate to seek feedback to monitor and enhance the courses and the experience of students in them. The SPEQ contains both course and individual teacher feedback.

In relation to <u>courses</u> SPEQs will:

- Enable course co-ordinators and staff teaching on a course to monitor the different core aspects of the course as well as the overall experience of students by identifying areas working well and areas that need improvement in relation to the curriculum (including its organisation and delivery).
- Enable boards of studies or delegated committees to monitor the curriculum and its quality.
- Enable programme leaders, associate deans, HOS or other staff to:

  – Identify courses that have received consistently high ratings. This could involve sharing with colleagues aspects that are consistently identified by students as being highly valued as well as academically effective.

  – Investigate and review courses that receive low ratings, low response rates, or commentary from students that suggests the need for improvement.

  – Identify courses that are considered to be 'at risk', as indicated by low course ratings by different groups of students over more than one semester, in order to instigate an appropriate internal review process.

- Enable the dean, in consultation with relevant staff, to ensure the quality assurance of the component courses of the awards of the faculty.

In relation to <u>teachers</u> SPEQs will:

- Enable teaching staff to identify specific areas of strength and areas that need improvement in relation to their teaching practices.
- Enable teaching staff to identify areas to focus on in their annual individual development plan and to seek assistance for further development.
- Provide teaching staff with formal student feedback data that supports promotion/teaching award applications.

Student ratings on a course or teaching survey should **never** be the only source of information about the quality of a course. While students are well placed to comment on their perceptions of quality, and of teaching and course effectiveness, student feedback is **one** necessary part of what should be **multiple** lines of evidence that enable holistic judgments about course or teaching quality.

5. Principles

5.1. Ethical data collection

All data gathered during the evaluations covered in this document is collected expressly for the purpose of quality assurance and improvement. Staff who wish to use data from any of the sources described here for research purposes must do so in accordance with the AUTEC guidelines. All data collected is held confidentially within the relevant survey system. Respondent data is anonymised in all reports generated. In addition to this, report data is aggregated, preventing the response profile of an individual student from being identified in the quantitative questions.

5.2.   Privacy

The University will comply with all necessary privacy legislation. Where students choose to identify themselves in qualitative responses, this information will not be removed. Students are notified of confidentiality exemptions in cases where AUT may owe a duty of care to individuals that cannot be discharged unless the University takes action on information provided in student survey comments**.** The University must weigh the duty of confidentiality against the potential harm. Information may be shared without consent in cases where comments suggest there is a threat to the safety of students, staff or the public.

5.3.   Data interpretation

All survey-based evaluation techniques described in these guidelines utilise self-selected sampling and must be interpreted in light of this limitation. Data may be less reliable when the number of responses is small, and are not necessarily comparable across disciplines. The University values both qualitative and quantitative evaluation data, and recommends that quantitative data is read in conjunction with qualitative comments.

5.4.   Data access

The University's policies and guidelines determine the responsibilities, processes, and access rights related to survey data. Relevant policies and guidelines are listed in the Policy Base and Associated Documents sections.

6. Course and teaching evaluations – the student paper experience questionnaire (SPEQs)

The SPEQ is the official formal student feedback mechanism for courses at the University. Each SPEQ has two components:

- evaluation of the course at the occurrence level; and,
- evaluation of each individual teacher on the course at the occurrence level.

Course and teaching questionnaires include a set of core university questions. Additional questions about the course can be added by the course coordinator as agreed to by the faculty, school and/or programme leader. Additional questions about a teacher can be added by the teacher themselves. The core questions and information about how questions can be added can be found on the SPEQ intranet page.

The content of the following sections is summarised in a flow diagram available from the SPEQ intranet page.

6.1.   SPEQ eligibility

To be eligible for SPEQ -

o   The course must be an AUT course and include students who are enrolled by AUT through the Arion system.

o   The occurrence's start and end date must meet the start and end date criteria for the current SPEQ round. Date criteria can be found on the SPEQ intranet page.

o   The occurrences requiring a SPEQ must be represented in the timetabling system. *or*

The Academic Quality Office (AQO) must be notified of course occurrences requiring a SPEQ but not represented in the timetabling system.

Where courses that are required to conduct a student evaluation and are not eligible for SPEQ, staff should consult their faculty representatives for advice on alternative ways to collect student feedback. If SPEQ is still preferred, contact the SPEQ team in the AQO (speq@aut.ac.nz) to discuss how this can be achieved.

6.2.   Timing and required frequency of evaluations

SPEQs should be conducted towards the end of a course's offering. Specific dates for survey cycles can be found on the SPEQ intranet page. **SPEQs can be conducted for any offering of an eligible course**. However, there are certain instances where a SPEQ or other evaluation **must** be performed. As outlined in the Monitoring and Review of Programmes Policy, courses meeting any of the criteria below **must** collect student feedback. Where possible, this feedback should be collected via SPEQ.

o   **The course is new (i.e. being offered for the first time)**

o   **Every third offering of the course (at minimum)**

o   **Concerns raised by staff or students (including low ratings from previous surveys via SPEQ or the APS) have been deemed to require a SPEQ**

It is also worth noting that reports are only generated where 5 or more students have been invited to provide feedback. This is designed to reduce the risk of students being identified. In cases where fewer than 5 students will be invited to provide feedback, faculties may choose to consider alternate feedback mechanisms (see Section 8 of this document) and/or request that feedback be combined over multiple SPEQ rounds of the course until the threshold is met.

Faculties are responsible for ensuring that all courses eligible for SPEQ and meeting the criteria above have a SPEQ conducted.

7. SPEQ procedures

7.1.   Phase One - identifying a course for a SPEQ

It is advised that the course coordinator or a nominated staff member checks the information below before requesting a SPEQ.

o   *Is the relevant student and teacher information about your occurrences up to date?*

At present, any course that requests a SPEQ is assumed to have accurate data held in the source systems for all occurrences. Specifically:

-   teacher name information used by Outlook is assumed to be correct;

-   relationships between course occurrences and teacher names held in the timetabling system are assumed to be correct;

-   course date information held in the timetabling system is assumed to be correct; and,

-   student enrolment information held in Arion is assumed to be correct and is assumed to match how courses are delivered to students.

If these data are incorrect, related teacher and/or student information will also be incorrect.

For course occurrences delivered on campus, relevant administrative staff within your faculty should be contacted for assistance in correcting any errors before requesting a SPEQ. For course occurrences delivered online/offsite, please contact the SPEQ team speq@aut.ac.nz

o   *Does the course have enough students to generate a report?*

To protect respondent anonymity, reports are not generated for courses with less than 5 students invited to provide feedback[1]. If you suspect you may have fewer than 5 students invited to provide feedback, you may like to consider alternative feedback mechanisms. See Section 8 of this document or a relevant staff member in your faculty for advice on alternatives to SPEQ.

7.2.   Phase Two – requesting and running a SPEQ

An outline of the SPEQ process is provided below. An illustrated diagram of a typical timeline, as well as a more detailed user guide and FAQ document, are available on the SPEQ intranet page.

7.2.1.   Requesting a SPEQ (weeks 5-9 in a typical semester)

Course coordinators and/or nominated staff within a faculty are able to request a SPEQ for their eligible course(s) **via the** SPEQ request site during the SPEQ request period in each semester. This period is advertised on the University's intranet**,** including the SPEQ intranet page and through general announcements, as well as through representatives in each of the faculties.

7.2.2.   Adding Custom Questions to a SPEQ (weeks 8-9 in a typical semester)

Coordinators and teachers for courses that have requested a SPEQ are able to customise their respective course and teacher evaluations by adding questions during the customisation period. Questions can be added via the 'add custom questions to my SPEQ' link in the AUT Surveys (Staff) block in Blackboard or via the personalised link sent to staff via e-mail.

7.2.3.   Monitoring and boosting response rates (weeks 11-15 in a typical semester)

During the survey period, students are invited to complete the survey. Students can access their SPEQs via the SPEQ block in Blackboard or via the personalised link sent to their preferred e-mail address as listed in Arion. Course coordinators and teachers are able to monitor their response rates via the 'check my SPEQ response rates' link in the AUT Surveys (Staff) block in Blackboard or via the personalised link sent to them via e-mail.

Course coordinators and teachers are encouraged to provide class time for students to complete their SPEQs to help increase response rates.

When providing class time, best practice is to:

-   provide time at the start of class;

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[1] Prior to S2 2016, this threshold was 5 responses received.

- explain the importance of feedback for the development/maintenance of the quality of the course;
- provide examples of how feedback has been used in the past;
- explain how students can access their SPEQs (via Blackboard and/or via the e-mail invitation sent to their preferred e-mail address as listed in ARION); and,
- leave the room with another staff member in charge of the class.

7.3. Phase Three - accessing and using reports

7.3.1. Access to and content of reports

At the end of the survey period, reports are generated and made available to relevant staff via Blackboard for all courses and occurrences that received 5 or more responses. A summary of the report content and access rights is available in Appendix A. Staff will be notified via e-mail when their reports are available.

Reports at the course and occurrence level contain quantitative data for the core and custom questions as well as any qualitative comments produced in response to open-ended questions.

When data is aggregated up to the school, faculty and university level, only the core questions are included for the quantitative and qualitative results. Raw comments are not supplied in standard aggregated reports. Instead, automated summaries produced by text analysis software are provided. Additional information can be found in the FAQs and user guide available on the SPEQ intranet page.

7.3.2. Use of reports

Reports related to the course

The primary purpose of SPEQs is to provide a student voice in quality assurance. Relevant SPEQ results, and any related actions, must be included in the Programme Annual Report prepared by faculties. Courses with exceptionally high course satisfaction scores in SPEQ may be contacted to discuss how course delivery at AUT might be improved.

SPEQs that do not meet course student satisfaction thresholds that have been set in consultation with faculty representatives will be flagged for action within faculties.

Reports related to teachers

The teaching evaluations performed as part of SPEQ can be used by teaching staff in combination with other information as evidence of:

- gathering feedback on teaching for their Individual Development Plan (IDP);
- teaching feedback when applying for promotion; and,
- teaching excellence when applying for teaching awards.

As shown in Appendix A, teaching reports are only supplied to the teacher that they relate to.

Closing the Feedback Loop to Students

Staff are encouraged to provide a summary of previous SPEQ course feedback to students at the start of their course. This summary should refer to areas of concern expressed by students and the course's response to these concerns. Summaries should also highlight

areas where the course was well received by students. As covered in the section on running and requesting SPEQs, staff may also like to provide a summary of past feedback to students before allowing class time for the completion of SPEQs for the current course offering.

8. Alternatives to SPEQ

In cases where courses are not suitable for SPEQ, feedback should still be collected from students.

If SPEQ is not suitable for your course or class size, we recommend you contact the SPEQ team to request that your course's feedback be aggregated across semesters, or adopt a more qualitative approach to seek student feedback. Additional information is also provided in the following section on complementary data sources.

If your course is not eligible for SPEQ for other reasons, you should contact your faculty's student evaluation representative for advice in the first instance.

9. Complementary data sources

While SPEQs are an important evaluative tool for course staff, student ratings in a course or teacher evaluation should **never be the only source of information about classroom teaching**. Faculties, schools, departments, units, and individuals are encouraged to develop a comprehensive, flexible approach to course and teaching evaluation, where several types of evidence can be collected, presented and evaluated as a portfolio or part of an IDP as appropriate.

9.1. Other Formal Survey Data

Student feedback is also formally collected at the programme level in the APS. A single question is asked about each course included in this survey. In years where a SPEQ has not been required to run, and data is available from the APS, the response to this overall rating question should be included in reviews of courses at a minimum.

9.2. Other sources of student feedback

Feedback can be collected from students as appropriate throughout the semester. This can be as simple as asking students for a show of hands, or can involve a more structured process such as asking students to respond to a simple online/pen and paper survey asking for feedback on what staff should keep doing, stop doing, and start doing. Feedback collected in this way allows staff to act on the feedback with the current student group, providing the opportunity to rapidly improve the student experience and demonstrate that feedback is taken seriously.

9.3. Non-student sources of feedback

In addition to students, peers and others can offer useful insights about a lecturer's teaching performance. Additional sources of feedback to consider include:

- student grades;
- moderator comments; and,
- peer evaluation (from inside and outside the specific field).

Peer evaluation, defined as a critical review by colleagues knowledgeable of the entire range of teaching activities, can be an important component of the University's course

and teaching evaluation since peers are often in the best position to interpret and understand the evidence and place it in its proper academic context. Evaluation from peers inside and outside the specific field is advised, as each bring unique value. Peers from the same field are qualified to comment on whether the range of topics covered is likely to be appropriate, but may not be able to comment on whether information provided is understandable to a non-expert audience. Peers from a different field may bring new insights to how teaching may be performed and can also provide feedback on whether the information conveyed is accessible to a non-expert audience.

A broader summary of alternatives is provided in a figure from Smith (2008) in Appendix B.

10. Policy Base

Monitoring and Review of Programmes Policy
AUT Student Surveying and Feedback Policy

11. Associated Documents

AUTEC guidelines
Guidelines on Staff Development
Academic Progression Procedures
Programme Review Procedures
Graduating Year Review Guidelines
Periodic Review Guidelines
SPEQ FAQs
SPEQ User Guide
SPEQ Report Distribution Matrix
SPEQ Questionnaire
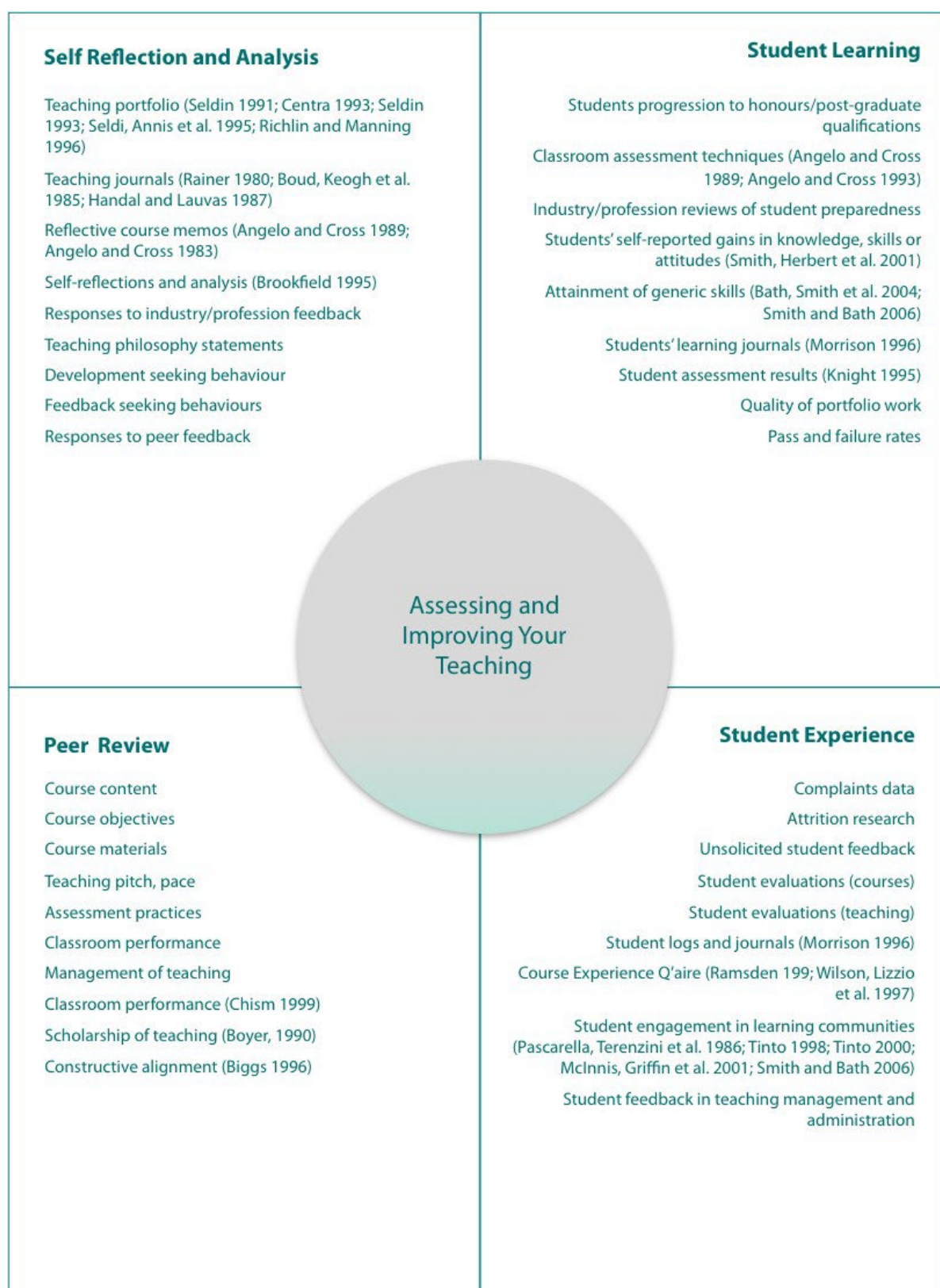
APPENDIX A: SPEQ reports and distribution

Report Title & Description	Distribution				
	Teachers (from Syllabus+)	Course Coordinators/ Leaders (from SPEQ request)	Head of School/Dept./ Chairs of BOS (or nominee) * (authorised faculty members)	Deans/Associate Deans/Academic Directars* (authorised faculty members)	SPEQ Administrators/ Requestors**
Course Occurrence Report for Teachers Full individual report. Includes feedback for course items at the occurrence level (i.e., same results for all teachers in a course occurrence). Includes feedback for individual teacher.	Yes	No	No	No	No
Individual Teacher Report Includes all teaching-specific feedback received for one teacher across all course occurrences taught.	Yes	No	No	No	No
Course Occurrence Report for Course Coordinators Report at the course occurrence level. Excludes all teaching-specific feedback.	Yes***	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Course Level Report for Faculty Members Report at the course level Excludes all teaching-specific feedback.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
School Report Feedback received is aggregated up at the school/department level. Excludes all teaching-specific feedback.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Faculty Report Feedback received is aggregated up at the faculty level. Excludes all teaching-specific feedback.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
University-wide Report Feedback received is aggregated up at the University level. Excludes all teaching-specific feedback.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

* Heads of School/Department, Deans, Associate Deans and Chair of Board of Studies (or nominee) authorised by the faculty. Other staff members i.e. Academic Registrars can also be authorised by the faculty. It is essential that the list of authorised staff is maintained, up-to-date and communicated to the SPEQ team - contact us on speq@aut.ac.nz

** On the SPEQ request form, the requestor can request access to the report. This option is relevant only when the requestor is <u>not</u> the course coordinator, a teacher in the course or one of the authorised faculty members. When requestors choose this option on the SPEQ request form, the course coordinators will be informed via email.

*** Already included in the Course Occurrence Report for Teachers

APPENDIX B: Additional sources of course/teacher evaluation

Self Reflection and Analysis

Teaching portfolio (Seldin 1991; Centra 1993; Seldin 1993; Seldi, Annis et al. 1995; Richlin and Manning 1996)

Teaching journals (Rainer 1980; Boud, Keogh et al. 1985; Handal and Lauvas 1987)

Reflective course memos (Angelo and Cross 1989; Angelo and Cross 1983)

Self-reflections and analysis (Brookfield 1995)

Responses to industry/profession feedback

Teaching philosophy statements

Development seeking behaviour

Feedback seeking behaviours

Responses to peer feedback

Student Learning

Students progression to honours/post-graduate qualifications

Classroom assessment techniques (Angelo and Cross 1989; Angelo and Cross 1993)

Industry/profession reviews of student preparedness

Students' self-reported gains in knowledge, skills or attitudes (Smith, Herbert et al. 2001)

Attainment of generic skills (Bath, Smith et al. 2004; Smith and Bath 2006)

Students' learning journals (Morrison 1996)

Student assessment results (Knight 1995)

Quality of portfolio work

Pass and failure rates

Assessing and Improving Your Teaching

Peer Review

Course content

Course objectives

Course materials

Teaching pitch, pace

Assessment practices

Classroom performance

Management of teaching

Classroom performance (Chism 1999)

Scholarship of teaching (Boyer, 1990)

Constructive alignment (Biggs 1996)

Student Experience

Complaints data

Attrition research

Unsolicited student feedback

Student evaluations (courses)

Student evaluations (teaching)

Student logs and journals (Morrison 1996)

Course Experience Q'aire (Ramsden 199; Wilson, Lizzio et al. 1997)

Student engagement in learning communities (Pascarella, Terenzini et al. 1986; Tinto 1998; Tinto 2000; McInnis, Griffin et al. 2001; Smith and Bath 2006)

Student feedback in teaching management and administration

From: Smith, C. (2008). Building effectiveness in teaching through targeted evaluation and response: Connecting evaluation to teaching improvement in higher education. Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education, 33(5), 517—533.