

The Power of Their Words Handout (GTAs)

Guidance

The new Student Experience Survey (SES) creates greater opportunity for GTAs to receive actionable feedback for the purposes of evaluation and self-reflection. In this document, we will focus on how you can use the responses from the SES to reflect on your own teaching practice. But it is only one tool for you to use in evaluating your teaching. We encourage you to utilize the SES results in addition to harnessing responses from [classroom observations](#) from your peers and your own [self-reflection](#).

Self-Reflection

Prior to reading or focusing on your SES results, spend time reflecting on your own perception of the course.

- Do you believe that your students achieved the learning outcomes for the course?
- What aspects of your teaching are you proud of?
- What are opportunities for growth in your course delivery, course content, and interaction with students?
- In what ways were you responsive to student feedback throughout the semester?

Key Considerations

- Focus on areas within your control rather than practices and course materials standardized by your unit's instructional procedures (though feedback may support a larger conversation within your unit).
- Look for themes across the SES – repeated or similar suggestions or problems.
- Don't focus on one or two negative comments, or rely on responses to a single question.
- Look for specific and actionable suggestions but skip over vague, generic comments.
- Focus on 1-3 specific action items that you can work on / develop / seek training in / change based on the feedback.
- Consider if an example is helpful or not before internalizing it:
 - An example of a helpful comment: "I think the biggest concern I had was not knowing my grade throughout the course. We really didn't receive a lot of our grades, like quizzes, until the Sunday of the last week of class." If you receive feedback like this, consider how you may be able to provide timely feedback in a way that will help students prior to their next assignment.
 - An example of an unhelpful comment: "You were the worst professor I ever had" is not a helpful comment to focus on. There's nothing constructive here to implement that could benefit the students. Ignore unhelpful comments or remarks that are intentionally harmful (comments on physical appearance, identity, etc.). Some comments may be retribution for not getting the grade they thought they deserved.

Reflective Questions following the SES

As you consider feedback from the SES, reflect on areas that are within your control as you answer the following questions:

- What about the SES feedback resonates with your experiences as the instructor?

- When there's a mismatch between your experience and feedback from the SES, how can we understand/empathize with the student perspective?
- What can these differences teach us about our communication or organization style?
- What SES suggestions would you prioritize addressing because of the impact it could have on student learning?
- What SES suggestions seem most achievable and necessary?
- How may the SES feedback help expand your understanding of different cultural expectations within the classroom?

Action Plan

Even small changes in our teaching can have a large and positive impact on our students. Consider what you can improve about your course before next semester starts and the semester following.

1. Before next semester, I will commit to:
 - a. Goal:
 - b. What concrete steps can you take to achieve this goal?
 - c. What resources can support you in achieving your goal?
2. Before next year, I will commit to:
 - a. Goal:
 - b. What concrete steps can you take to achieve this goal?
 - c. What resources can support you in achieving your goal?
3. What potentially helpful feedback did you receive that you are not ready to implement yet? When will you revisit this feedback?
4. Identify peers who you can talk with about your proposed changes to receive additional feedback.

Resources

We invite you to participate in the many instructional opportunities OU provides for faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants committed to improving their instructional practice. GTAs are encouraged to participate in the new [GTA orientation](#) and Graduate College GTA-focused workshops. Both faculty and GTAs are also welcomed to visit the [Center for Faculty Excellence \(CFE\) website](#) to peruse their pedagogical resources, schedule a consultation, or view a calendar of upcoming teaching workshops.