

Rationale for items in The Ohio State University's Student Evaluation of Instruction

Item on SEI	Correlation with student learning (Feldman)	Why is this important?: Theoretical rationale for correlation	What an instructor can do in this area
<p>Item 1 The subject matter of this course was well organized.</p> <p><i>Could subsume or be related to items from Feldman's research, such as</i></p> <p>a. Teacher pursued and/or met course objectives</p> <p>b. Clarity of course objectives and requirements</p>	<p>Feldman #1 $r=.57$ (Students do better in courses they rate as being well organized.)</p> <p>Feldman #3 $r=.49$ (Students do better in courses that they rate as having achieved the objectives.)</p> <p>Feldman #10 $r=.35$ (Students do better in courses that they rate as having clear objectives and</p>	<p>A course that is well organized includes clear specifications of expectations, well-developed interrelatedness of topics, well-thought-out activities and evaluation strategies, all of which lead to student confidence and better performance.</p> <p>First, if the course objectives are clear, students are more likely to be able to succeed in the course (see above), and success breeds satisfaction. Second, if the course objectives are being met, it is likely that the objectives, instruction, and evaluation all are consistent with one another, which makes learning easier.</p> <p>When the desired goals are clear, students can see themselves making progress, which is a strong source of motivation. This engenders confidence in themselves and in</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have clear learning goals for the course and communicate them to the students early and on a regular basis. It helps if the goals are stated in terms of observable skills and knowledge rather than generalities. 2. Have a well-organized syllabus showing major themes of the course, how they play out in the activities, and the way you will evaluate student learning. Try to stick to key dates, such as exams and paper deadlines. 3. Use evaluation methods (tests, papers, projects) that are closely tied to your overall goals for the course. 4. Use items that test what is important, not what is easy to ask about. 5. Periodically update the students on where they are in progressing toward the course goals. 6. A second type of organization is the organization of the content. Help students understand the underlying structure of the course content and how it fits together and relates to other courses.

	requirements.)	their instructor.	<p>Draw a map or chart showing the organization of the content.</p> <p>7. Prepare for each class period so that you have a clear idea of what is supposed to happen. Put an outline of the agenda on the board at the beginning of class. Keep in mind that no matter how organized you are, it does not help unless you communicate it to your students.</p>
<p>Item 2 This course was intellectually stimulating.</p>	<p>Feldman #5 $r=.38$ (Students do better in courses that they rate as being intellectually stimulating.)</p>	<p>One factor that can contribute to a stimulating course is whether the content of the course is appropriately challenging. If the course is either too hard or too easy, students will lose interest from discouragement or boredom.</p> <p>Regular active participation serves both to stimulate thinking and to reinforce learning.</p>	<p>Know your students:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. During the first class period, give students a pre-test to assess their existing knowledge about the course content. This will help the instructor choose or revise the topics and materials to be covered. This assessment can be done over many years to obtain the profiles of the students who will be enrolled and to be aware of changing trends in their profiles. 2. Encourage students to read or study materials other than textbooks or class handouts and to share this with the instructor and peers. 3. Assign homework which encourages critical thinking and some research, rather than homework for which students can easily find factual answers from the textbook.

			<p>4. Explicitly address relevance of course subject matter.</p> <p>5. Use vivid, familiar examples to help students anchor concepts in their memory.</p> <p>Engage students in active learning strategies that require them to think in more depth about the material being presented. Discussions, debates, group work, and projects are just a few ways.</p>
<p>Item 3 The instructor was genuinely interested in teaching.</p>	<p>Feldman #13 $r=.27$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel that the instructor is enthusiastic in teaching.)</p>	<p>Instructors who help students understand why they should be learning the content of the course improve student motivation and as a result improve learning. This is often manifest as the teacher's own enthusiasm, which through modeling affects students as well.</p> <p>Students also report that they learn better when they feel that the instructor cares about them and their learning.</p> <p>Teven & McCroskey (1996) state that perceived caring was highly predictive of the dependent variable scores in their study (p. 7) and that</p>	<p>1. Explicitly address relevance.</p> <p>2. Tell students that you care that they learn; remind them of your office hours, email, etc.</p> <p>For the Teven and McCroskey findings mentioned in the column to the left:</p> <p>1. Demonstrate your enthusiasm for</p>

		<p>teachers who are perceived as more caring are evaluated more positively by their students and the content of their courses are evaluated more positively (p. 6). Students also report that they are more likely to take another course from that instructor and that they learned more in the course (p. 6).</p>	<p>the subject matter.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Discuss the learning and teaching process explicitly. 3. Track student progress through the subject matter and discuss this progress in class (e.g., summarizing topics covered, pointing out skills and knowledge that students have gained so far in the course).
<p>Item 4 The instructor encouraged students to think for themselves.</p>	<p>Feldman #16 $r=.25$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel that the instructor encourages students to think for themselves.)</p>	<p>When students understand that they are active participants in the teaching/learning process, their sense of responsibility for their own learning will increase and will lead to higher motivation. This is also related to students' perception of the teacher's expectation about them. When the instructor encourages students to think for themselves, students feel that the teacher believes in their ability to think for themselves. This perception can give students confidence.</p>	<p>(See item 2)</p> <p>Active learning methods such as problem solving, writing, and explicit teaching of critical thinking reinforce these goals. [Note that Leeds (1997) disputes this finding, while Byer (1997) supports it.]</p>
<p>Item 5 The instructor was well prepared.</p>	<p>Feldman #1 $r=.57$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel that the instructor is well prepared.)</p>	<p>When students understand how the instructor has organized the material and the class activities, they will appreciate the preparation.</p> <p>Typical aspects of well-prepared</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide an outline of what you expect to cover during a session. 2. Try to use multiple modes of delivery. 3. Prepare necessary handouts. 4. Anticipate questions and be prepared for them.

		<p>class include well-prepared class materials, organization of class, time management, and effective use of classroom equipment and technology. All these can make teaching more understandable and can facilitate learning as a result.</p> <p>This factor is related to teacher enthusiasm and organization. Students believe that a teacher who is enthusiastic in teaching will prepare well for the class. The teacher's enthusiasm will affect students' motivation and performance.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Make the transition from topic to topic smooth. Use appropriate transition expressions. Check comprehension between the transitions. 6. Control time allocation for each activity.
<p>Item 6 The instructor was genuinely interested in helping students.</p> <p><i>Could subsume or be related to items from Feldman's research, such as</i></p> <p>Teacher's sensitivity to and concern with class level and progress.</p>	<p>Feldman #8 $r=.36$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel that the instructor is interested in helping students.)</p> <p>Feldman #12 $r=.30$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel</p>	<p>Interaction between students and faculty has been identified as one of the key factors in intellectual development of students. In addition, an accessible instructor is available to help students through difficulty in learning and communicates concern for students, which enhances motivation.</p> <p>This factor would be related to learning to the degree that an instructor is able to recognize student misunderstanding and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Good communication means being aware of student understanding. Ways to monitor understanding include watching student reactions and note-taking patterns, interjecting questions or activities that require students to respond using the materials being presented, inviting student questions, and acknowledging when material difficulty varies significantly. 2. Make the effort to include activities in the class session that will give you feedback on how well students are grasping what is being taught. Communicate to the

	<p>that the teacher is concerned with class level and progress.)</p>	<p>correct for them before learning goes too far. Also, students will have more trust in instructor who show concern for their progress and will be more willing to take the risks necessary for learning. Students would also be more likely to adopt an orientation toward learning rather than grades if they feel the instructor is concerned about their understanding.</p> <p>McCroskey (1992) finds that a sense of caring comes from empathy, understanding, and responsiveness (cited in Teven & McCroskey 1996, p. 2). See also the Teven & McCroskey (1996) comments in Item 3.</p>	<p>students that you are aware of that understanding by building your class sessions on their responses.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Come to class a little early or stay a little longer to interact with students and invite questions. 4. Learn your students' names and note how they are doing as you grade papers or tests. 5. When a student makes a mistake in class, don't over-react. Instead use it as an opportunity to guide some further learning by helping the students and you understand where the miscommunication came from. <p>Nurture a sense of caring by being empathetic, understanding, and responsive: come to class early to talk to students and answer questions, invite students to office hours, know their names, share relevant information about your own experiences and interests.</p>
<p>Item 7 I learned a great deal from this instructor.</p>	<p>Feldman #4 $r=.46$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel that they would learn a great deal from the instructor.)</p>	<p>Students can assess their own sense of how much they have learned. If they believe they have learned a great deal, they are more likely to feel positively about the value of the class and</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Give students assignments that can reinforce learning and help them apply the knowledge to other or real-life situations. 2. Give students regular, accurate, constructive feedback about their

		<p>the abilities of the instructor. If they haven't learned a lot, but feel they have worked hard, they are likely to feel they have wasted their time and effort.</p> <p>Teven & McCroskey (1996) state that students report that they learned more in courses in which the instructor was seen as caring (p. 6).</p>	<p>learning. Help them to see their own achievements and what they need to do to achieve more.</p> <p>Nurture a sense of caring by being empathetic, understanding, and responsive: come to class early to talk to students and answer questions, invite students to office hours, know their names, share relevant information about your own experiences and interests.</p>
<p>Item 8 The instructor created an atmosphere conducive to learning.</p>	<p>Feldman #7 $r = .36$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel that the instructor creates an atmosphere conducive to learning.)</p>	<p>There are several components of effective teaching which make up an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. One is the instructor's encouraging of students to intellectually engage in discussions and to make them feel free to critique and question (and to ask "dumb" questions). Another is the promoting of active learning. Both promote a deeper processing of the material.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be open and interested in what your students are saying and asking by making eye contact, actively responding to their comments, not interrupting them in mid-comment, and using all the other courtesies that you would accord to another adult. 2. When responding to student comments and questions, respond in a way that will not discourage future comments from this student or others. Agree to the extent you can, explore the basis for difference when you can't and build on their ideas. 3. When you don't know an answer, say so and then model how you would go about thinking about the

		<p>Teven & McCroskey (1996) state that students in classes with an atmosphere conducive to learning report that they are more likely to take another course from that instructor and that they learned more in the course (p. 6).</p>	<p>question in order to estimate or discover an answer.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Engage students in active learning strategies that require them to think in more depth about the material being presented. 5. Use activities in class as a way of preparing for exam questions. 6. If you are teaching a controversial topic, have the class discuss the guidelines for handling disagreements and discomfort that might arise during the discussion. 7. Praise the student, not necessarily the answer. <p>Nurture a sense of caring by being empathetic, understanding, and responsive: come to class early to talk to students and answer questions, invite students to office hours, know their names, share relevant information about your own experiences and interests.</p>
<p>Item 9 The instructor communicated the subject matter clearly.</p>	<p>Feldman #2 $r = .56$ (Students do better in courses in which they feel that the instructor communicates the subject</p>	<p>If a good proportion of the content is being communicated by instructor lecture, clarity is critical to understanding, since no other verification source is</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Including good, clear concrete examples with which students can identify supports communication. Inviting students to give examples is also helpful.

<p><i>Could subsume or be related to items from Feldman's research, such as</i></p> <p>Teacher's elocutionary skills</p>	<p>matter clearly.)</p> <p>Feldman #9 $r=.35$ (Students do better in courses in which they highly rate the teacher's elocutionary skills.)</p>	<p>being used. In addition, instructors with good communication skills can generally identify when students are having difficulties and compensate for them. Clarity of communication is <i>not</i> "dumbing down" content. If your subject requires a specialized vocabulary, use it, but teach it to your students as you do.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Don't avoid the important technical language of your field when appropriate. Just be sure to teach it to your students; don't assume that they know it. 3. Lectures are enhanced when the lecturer provides an outline of the presentation throughout the session so students can see where they are in the overall scheme of things. Refer to the outline as you move between topics. 4. Clearly signal the type of information you are presenting: is it a key concept or just an elaboration? Are you still in the same topic area or are you about to move on? Use relational transition words to cue student attention and understanding of relationships. 5. A key to clear communication in a lecture setting is finding the right density of information to use. Things that increase information density are technical terms, rapid presentation, abstractions with no examples, overcrowded visuals. Things that reduce density are concrete examples familiar to the students, redundant sources of information, repetition, pausing to allow for note-taking. 6. Vary your voice, position, demeanor, use of visuals, and
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			<p>other communication components to add interest.</p> <p>7. Be interested in your topic, your teaching, and your students, and let your interest come through in your voice and expression.</p>
<p>Item 10 Overall, I would rate this instructor as...</p>	<p>Feldman did not report the correlations between the overall rating of the teacher and student achievement, but those between the overall rating and specific aspects of the teacher and instruction. The four most highly related factors to the overall evaluation of an instructor are Item 1: course organization (Feldman #1, $r=.57$, Feldman #3, $r=.49$), Item 5: teacher preparation (Feldman #1, $r=.57$), Item 7: perceived learning outcome (Feldman #4, $r=.46$), and Item 9: teacher's communication skills (Feldman #2, $r=.56$).</p>	<p>If each student's overall evaluation of an instructor is made up of the student's evaluation of specific aspects of the teacher and the instruction, weighed by the student's estimation of the relative importance of these aspects to good teaching, then the overall assessment of teachers would be more highly correlated with characteristics those students consider important to good teaching than those considered less important.</p>	<p>(Among four areas [Items 1, 5, 7, 9], focus on the factor that you received the lowest score in.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Have clear learning goals for the course and a well-organized syllabus. 2. Organize the content and present the organization to students using a map or chart. 3. Put an outline of the agenda on the board at the beginning of the class. 4. Try to multiple modes of delivery of the content. 5. Prepare necessary handouts. 6. Control time allocation for each activity. 7. Design activities for which students can apply the knowledge obtained in the class to other or real-life situations. 8. Give students regular, constructive feedback about their progress. 9. Use relational transition words to cue student attention and understanding of relationships. 10. Find the right density of

			<p>information to use.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">11. Use good, clear, concrete examples.12. Vary your voice, position, demeanor, use of visuals, and other communication components.
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