Title: Learning from 'Student Evaluation of Teaching' Comments

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

- Identify what students say they really like, and dislike about the teaching they receive.
- Devise a strategy to improve their 'evaluation of teaching' scores.
- Make an informed plan to achieve the ultimate accolade from their students – 'legend'!

Session Outline

In addition to 'satisfaction scores', many students also add comments (over 26,000 at the University of Nottingham last year) to their teaching evaluation responses. These often justify and illuminate their scores, and provide a rich vein of data which is useful, interesting and often witty. This paper seeks to make use of this large amount of qualitative data to answer the question 'what do students like/dislike about the teaching at Nottingham?' The data was analysed using 'sentiment analysis software' to collate positive/neutral/negative comments, which could then be further refined by topic using word/phrase searches.

The paper will begin with an overview of the Student Evaluation of Teaching process at the University (Byrne 2018) to set the context of the investigation. It will then identify a range of key areas which students feel strongly about with regard to teaching, and illustrate these with a summary of the feedback and examples of verbatim comments (anonymised!).
Example of the issues which will be examined are:
- Success factors – what do students say about their favourite lecturers? What do they like about their lecturing style?
- Audibility – including comments around pace of speaking, accents, volume and use of microphones.
- Classroom management – policy on latecomers, finishing on time, responding to questions and a variety of opinion on the use of humour.
- Technology-enhanced teaching – what works, and why? And what doesn't?
- Pitfalls – what do students dislike?
- Eccentric behaviour by lecturers – should I sing to the students? Etc.

At each stage, it is envisaged that participants will be able to glean practical tips they can employ to improve their own evaluations – or to help colleagues do so. In this way, staff will be helped to address the challenge of achieving good evaluations – which are increasingly scrutinised by senior managers.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

The session will consist of an illustrated presentation of the findings of this project, with opportunity for participants to add their own examples and anecdotes. The presentation will lead into a discussion of the value and limitations of student evaluation of teaching, and how we can make good use of it.

About half of the time will be taken up with the presentation of results, with the remainder in discussion of topics raised. This will be interspersed into the presentation itself, enabling participants to follow-up on areas of interest and share their own ideas of good practice. Any time remaining at the end of the presentation will be used for further questions.

References

Exley, K and Dennick, R., 2009. *Giving a lecture: from presenting to teaching*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge

Nuala Byrne. 2016. *How in - class electronic collection of student evaluations is providing lecturers and managers with better information for the development of teaching.* [ONLINE] Available at: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/6._in-class_electronic_collection_of_student_evaluations_is_providing_lecturers_and_maangers_with_better_information_for_the_development_of_teaching.pdf. [Accessed 14 May 2018].