



Analyzing and Debriefing Students' Open-ended Feedback

SKIM

- Skim through the feedback and identify the 3 to 5 most frequently mentioned ideas. Look for both positive and negative comments. Jot down these ideas—they are the “bins” or main themes from the feedback.

IDENTIFY MEANINGFUL OUTLIERS

- In general, do not fixate on isolated comments (whether negative or positive). Focus on comments that reflect the views of multiple students.
- Student comments about feeling unwelcome or marginalized in the course because of their identity are exceptions to the general rule of multiple comments for each theme.
 - Pay close attention to this feedback, even if it is small in number.
 - Research has shown that being marginalized or unwelcome hinders student learning and success.

QUANTIFY

- Read through the feedback again and count the number of comments that fall under each theme. Note: It is okay to break up complex comments into smaller items if they touch on multiple themes.

CONSIDER CHANGES

- Once you have identified the main themes, sort the themes from those with the most comments to those with the fewest and decide what you are able/willing to change to improve the learning experience for students. Note: There may be things you are not able/willing to change.

DEBRIEF

- Plan how you will tell students what was learned from their feedback. This can be brief (5 minutes). We suggest:
 - 1) thanking the students for the feedback
 - 2) debriefing the feedback in a matter-of-fact, non-defensive way
 - 3) letting students know of any major changes you are making to the course in response to their feedback (and why you believe the change might improve the learning environment)
 - 4) communicating any frequent suggestions received for which changes will not be made (and why)