

# Student engagement in reviewing formal course feedback: Expectations and realities

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## Introduction

Within the contemporary higher education literature, increasing value is placed on involving and empowering students as active partners in learning (Cook-Sather, 2014; Carey, 2013). Course and programme feedback is frequently collected from students, but is most often used to inform academic led curricula design rather than reporting back to or engaging students (Carey, 2013). This research explored student engagement in formal course review and feedback to support course design and delivery.

## Methods

A qualitative design was used to explore students' opinions and perspectives of the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Courses (SETAC) feedback obtained for an illustrative course. A convenience sample of Bachelor of Nursing Science students from a regional Australian University took part in a group interview to explore SETAC questions and results (USC HREC approval S14620).

## Findings

Faculty and student perspectives on the meaning and use of SETAC results were not always aligned.

### Do students believe they have a role in reviewing course feedback?

*Give them a reason why they would want to do it... I think a lot of people forget what they've studied after they've left it, because that's your file, that's your book and you move on to the next semester.*

### What do students believe would be an enabler or a barrier to their involvement in reviewing course feedback?

*They won't want to annoy you (the course coordinator) or get you off-side, because you keep coming up in our future...*

*What's in it for me? Everyone is selfish. They need something for doing it.*

### How could students contribute to the improvement of a course?

*I don't know. I never really go back and reflect and say did I meet these outcomes? I never reflect on that.*

*I really hated that I didn't feel confident enough to give you my opinion....I wish I could go back and do it again because I didn't realise that my opinion was valid or that it was warranted.*

*So, what you want to know is how can you get more people like us coming to say what they thought about the course at the end?.....I think students can convince students a lot easier, because they don't think this is more work.*



## Conclusions

It is recognised that students need to be treated as partners in the process of ensuring and enhancing the quality of their learning experience (QAA, 2013). Such empowerment challenges the norms of how student course feedback is processed.

Engaging students to partner with faculty to evaluate course feedback transparently may close the quality improvement loop and meaningfully contribute to students' ongoing learning; however, strategies for engaging students in these activities needs further research.

Two questions raised by the research are:

- Do we expect too much from students in asking them to be partners in the review of feedback?
- How can we think more creatively about including the student voice?

## Literature cited

Carey, P. (2013). Student as co-producer in a marketised higher education system: a case study of students' experience of participation in curriculum design, *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 50(3), 250-260.

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**Acknowledgements:** This project was funded by a USC Emerging Leaders Learning Initiative grant. The project team would like to thank the students who participated in the project for their valuable contributions. For further information about this project please contact Amanda Henderson [ahender1@usc.edu.au](mailto:ahender1@usc.edu.au) or visit [www.usc.edu.au](http://www.usc.edu.au)