Georgia Tech Center for Teaching and Learning

Gathering Feedback through Classroom Dialogue: SGID

What is it? When we gather feedback through classroom dialogue we use the small group instructional diagnosis– or SGID – method, which is a method of collecting feedback from students about their experience in an instructional setting.

At what point in a course should I gather this feedback? SGIDs are best when they are conducted in week 4-6 of a semester long course. This gives enough time for the students to form opinions about their experience in the class, but leaves enough time for the instructor to make changes in the course in response to student feedback.

What are the benefits of gathering early course feedback from students? Gathering and responding to feedback from students, early in the course, empowers students as partners in their learning experience, gives the instructor insight into student perceptions of their teaching, and allows the instructor to incorporate changes during the semester (instead of waiting until the next time the course is taught), and can even positively affect the ratings students give to instructors on end-of-semester course evaluations.

Who should request this process? The SGID is best for use in classes where (a) you have taught the course fewer than three times in the past, (b) you have implemented new features into the course, (c) you have not used the SGID process in the course for several years, or (d) you have specific questions about your current students’ experience in your course.

How much class time does this process take? The SGID process requires 20-25 minutes of class time.

What are some alternatives to the SGID? We recommend that you collect early course feedback from your students in every class, every semester. However, in classes where the SGID is not the preferred format, we recommend an early course feedback survey, distributed at the beginning of class in week 4-6.

Who should facilitate my SGID? Anyone with experience talking to students can be trained to conduct SGIDs, but we recommend consulting with a teaching and learning expert for assistance interpreting and responding to the collected data. CTL specialists are available to conduct your SGID and to work with you at any stage in the process.

What is the facilitator’s role in the SGID process? The facilitator’s job is (a) to be the voice of the students to the instructor, (b) to synthesize the collected data for the instructor, and (c) to help the instructor interpret and respond to the data that has been collected.

What are the steps in facilitating SGIDs? The process begins with a short conversation between the facilitator and instructor to coordinate logistics and share information about the instructor’s experience in the class so far. After the classroom visit (where the SGID itself is conducted), the facilitator engages in data analysis in order to provide the instructor with synthesized data for their report. Next the instructor and facilitator meet to discuss the feedback and strategize student responses to the feedback. Finally, the instructor closes the feedback loop by communicating their responses to students.

What are some academic sources about the SGID process?

Cohen, P.A. (1980). Effectiveness of Student-Rating Feedback for Improving College Instruction: A Meta-Analysis of Findings. *Research in Higher Education*. 13(4): 321-341.

Hurney, Carol A., Nancy L. Harris, Samantha C. Bates Prins, and S.E. Kruck (2014). The Impact of a Learner-Centered, Mid-Semester Course Evaluation on Students. *Journal of Faculty Development*. 28(3): 55-62.

Keutzer, Carolin (1993). Midterm Evaluation of Teaching Provides Helpful Feedback to Instructors. *Teaching of Psychology*. 20(4): 238-240.

McGowan, Whitney Ransom and Osgathorpe, Russell T. (2011). Student and Faculty Perception of Midcourse Evaluation. *To Improve the Academy*. 29: 160-172.

Pre-Meeting Checklist

The aim of this conversation is to share logistical and procedural information, and to gather information from the instructor, about their experience in the course so far.

- □ Describe the process
- □ Explain the confidential nature of the process
- □ Foreshadow the continuum of how an instructor might respond to students' feedback (i.e. from "I will not change this because…" to "Here is the change I am making (and why)…").
- □ Collect information on the course, students, and context (e.g., number of students enrolled, student demographics, course structure/format, learning objectives, recent assessments, lesson plan for upcoming class, etc.).
- □ Ask the instructor about what is going well in the course, what concerns/questions they have about their course, and any specific items about which they hope to receive feedback.
- □ Schedule debrief meeting
- □ Record class meeting information (date, time, location)

Classroom Visit Overview

Ideally, focus groups take 25 minutes of class time, at either the beginning or the end of the class. It is also useful to observe some portion of the class ahead of time, so you have some context for understanding student comments, and it is important that the instructor and TAs leave the room.

Introduction (5 minutes)	introduce yourself and the process, form small groups, and distribute worksheets
Small Group Discussion (8 minutes)	Students record discussion points on worksheets, in groups of 3-5. If there were specific items the instructor hoped to receive feedback on, ask students to think about those alongside any other feedback they have.
Large Group Debrief (12 minutes)	Whole-class discussion of the most important points students came up with in their small groups. This provides you with an opportunity to clarify student comments and to determine the extent of consensus among groups.[1]
Wrap-Up (1 minute)	Collect worksheets, thank the students, and remind students that you will be discussing the feedback with their instructor anonymously, so s/he can respond.

[1] In large classes (>150), or classes where you have not been given the full 25 minutes, you may need to skip the large group debrief and base your report on an analysis of the worksheets.

Introduction
(5 minutes)

- voluntary for instructors
- anonymous for students
- confidential to the instructor
- process overview
- looking for specific, descriptive feedback that's focused on learning
- respectful disagreement is fine

Small Groups
(8 minutes)

- 3-5 students per group
- write number of students in group on your sheet
- mark with an asterisk when disagreement

Large Group
(12 minutes)

- If you could offer one piece of feedback to your instructor, what would it be?
- What is it about X that is helping you learn?
- Can you point to a particular example?
- How many others agree with this point?

Data Analysis & Report-Writing Procedure

Your aim is to organize and present the collected data in a way that will be easily digested by the instructor, bringing key points to their attention while not omitting points that received less attention. You should aim to complete your analysis and report in time to send it to the instructor at least a few hours before your debrief meeting. However, if the instructor's class meets again before your debrief meeting, do not send them the report until after that class.

1. Lump worksheet comments together into topics (tracking the number of students connected to each comment, as you go), and see what themes emerge. Include a "miscellaneous" space for comments that do not fit anywhere.
2. Add information from the large group discussion as it fits into each theme, and in the form of additional theme areas.
3. For each theme or topic, write 1-3 sentences explaining the nature of the feedback, providing quotes and extra information as useful. Where possible, identify specifically how many students made or agreed to the comments feeding into that theme. You do not need to list every comment explicitly, but each comment provided through the SGID should be captured in your report, for the instructor to see.

Debrief Meeting

The goals of this meeting are to help the faculty member understand their students' feedback, and to help them decide how they would like to respond to the data. Your role is to help the instructor understand the feedback from their students, address the feedback they have received, and to come up with effective strategies for addressing any issues that have arisen. Also, you may need to prompt them to turn their attention from one or two specific items, and to pay attention to some of the additional items in the report.

If the instructor has not read your report before your meeting, begin by walking through the report point-by-point. A good next-step is to ask a question like, "Was there anything that surprised you about the feedback you received?"

Instructor Response

By the end of your debrief meeting, the instructor should be able to communicate three things to her class:

1. "Based on your feedback it seems that <these things> are generally going well, which is great to hear."
2. "You have identified <these issues> for me, and here is how I am going to adjust things in response…"
3. "You have identified <these other issues> for me. I am not going to make any changes to the course at this time, but here's why things are set up the way they are, and here's what you can do (or what resources are available to you, to help you cope/etc…"