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# Midterm Evaluations of Teaching: Pilot Project Update

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## Background

This Midterm Evaluation of Teaching (MEoT) pilot project was initiated as a result of a discussion in the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SEoT) Implementation Committee. The AMS offered to take the lead in this pilot project and worked with CTLT to design, implement and evaluate the project.

The proposed project was presented to the SEoT Committee and to a sub-committee of Associate Deans in the relevant participating Faculties. The Associate Deans assisted by identifying instructors that students could approach for participation in the pilot.

In collaboration with interested undergraduate society representatives, the AMS set up the pilot. Twenty-two (22) instructors from Applied Science, Arts, Kinesiology and Science participated, evaluating thirty-two sections as follows:

**Table 1. Sections Evaluated**

Faculty/School	Sections Evaluated
Applied Science	5
Arts	18
Kinesiology	1
Science	8

Thirty-one sections evaluated a single instructor; one section evaluated two instructors.

## Process

A number of resources were made available to the interested instructors, including sample questions from other institutions. Instructors were free to ask questions of their choosing, but encouraged to ask a limited number of questions relevant for their context, to review the feedback received, and to discuss the results with their students. Most evaluations were completed on paper.



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During Celebrate Learning week, a Midterm Evaluations of Teaching Forum was held, giving both instructors and students an opportunity to engage in discussion about what constitutes meaningful formative evaluations. The discussion was wide-ranging, resulting in a shared observation that the instructor/student dialogue about midterm evaluation results was very important.

Following the completion of evaluations in all classes, both participating students and instructors received short surveys, asking for feedback about the pilot. The results of the feedback are discussed below, beginning with students.

## Student Feedback

The request for feedback was sent to 3,463 of the 3,504 students registered in the evaluated courses. One instructor requested that the feedback form not be sent to students in his class. Table 2 contains the questions students were asked.

### Table 2. Pilot Evaluation Questions for Students

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This year the AMS, in conjunction with the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, are undertaking a pilot study into using formative midterm evaluations of teaching in selected courses. This email asks for just a few minutes of your time to provide feedback through the short online survey linked below about your experience of a midterm evaluation in one of the courses you've taken this term.

Note that this is not part of the formal student evaluation of teaching (SEoT) for the course - you'll be contacted as usual closer to the end of the course about that. This feedback is sought so that we can understand from the student perspective the benefits and challenges that might be associated with using midterm evaluations more widely. It is completely anonymous.

Please take just a few minutes of your time to provide us with your feedback on this pilot project: <<link>>  
The feedback we gather will assist in planning for the continuation of this pilot beyond the first term.

- 1. Did you participate in providing feedback in the midterm evaluation of teaching for this course? If not, why not?**
- 2. Was the mid-term evaluation feedback discussed with students in class?**
- 3. Were there aspects of the course that were changed as a result of the midterm evaluation, and / or did aspects of your understanding of the rationale for the way the course is structured and delivered change?**
- 4. Identify aspects of this midterm evaluation that you think were particularly positive or negative.**
- 5. Any other comments you would like to make?**

A total of 625 students responded to the survey, distributed as follows:



**Table 3. Distribution of Responses**

Faculty / School	Enrolment	Responses	Response Rate %
Applied Science	726	117	16.1
Arts	803	129	16.1
Kinesiology	122	33	27.0
Science	1,812	346	19.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,463</b>	<b>625</b>	<b>18.0</b>

Instructors reported that there was high engagement, with estimates of 80 to 90% student participation in the midterm evaluation. This is consistent with the sample, in which 88% of students said they had participated.

**Table 4. MEoT Participation**

Faculty / School	No	Yes	Total
Applied Science	24	93	117
Arts	22	107	129
Kinesiology	3	30	33
Science	26	318	344
blank			2
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>548</b>	<b>625</b>

The two most frequent reasons for not participating were that they “didn’t know” about the evaluations (42.7%) or that they did not have time to complete them (21.3%). About ten percent of students indicated that they had either missed the class in which evaluations were completed or forgot that evaluations were happening.

Seventy-one percent of students in this sample indicated that the midterm feedback was discussed in class, distributed as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5. Feedback Discussion in Class**

Faculty / School	No	Yes	Blank	Total
Applied Science	22	93	2	117
Arts	31	98		129
Kinesiology	2	30	1	33
Science	122	222	2	346
<b>Total</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>625</b>



Students were asked whether aspects of the course changed and/or their understanding of the course changed. Twenty students indicated that changes were not necessary. One student said the instructor was “constantly changing his lectures by asking us about it”. Another said “I have a great teacher...who really wants us all to succeed and works really hard to make sure everyone understands the concepts.”

Forty-eight students indicated that their understanding of the course had changed in some way, with comments such as “we got a clearer idea of lesson pace, expectations...”, “She explained the reasons behind why we do certain things in class”. Students appreciated the greater understanding they gained with this discussion.

Almost half the students who responded to this question indicated that at least some changes had been made in class. One student said “the teacher immediately took the feedback to heart and into effect in the classroom. I was quite surprised that the feedback was actually implemented into the lectures.”

About the same number said changes were not made, or not yet made. Some indicated that the disparity of opinion limited changes that were possible, illustrated by this student comment: “There were no major changes as there was disagreement among students over which aspects of the course were positive versus negative.”

Student comments about positive and negative aspects of the midterm evaluation varied. A small number of these students understood “midterm evaluation” as “midterm examination” and thus misinterpreted the question. This feedback, together with insight from discussions at the Celebrate Learning week event, have led us to consider that, should the initiative be continued or expanded beyond this pilot year, a reconsideration of the name should be made. Our initial thoughts are presented at the end of this report.

For the most part, students thought that the opportunity to provide feedback was very positive, and felt that their opinion was acknowledged. They appreciated “having the ability to provide anonymous input to a class while it is in session so that you can benefit from the feedback, as opposed to end of term evaluations.”

## **Faculty Feedback**

The request for feedback was sent to the twenty-two faculty who participated in this research. Table 6 contains the questions that were asked.



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## Table 6. Pilot Evaluation Questions for Faculty

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This year the AMS, in conjunction with the Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, are undertaking a pilot study into using formative midterm evaluations of teaching in selected courses. This email asks for just a few minutes of your time to provide feedback through the short online survey linked below about your experience of undertaking a midterm evaluation in a course you've taught this term.

Note that this is not part of the formal evaluation of teaching (SEoT) for this course. This feedback is sought so that we can understand from the instructor perspective the benefits and challenges that might be associated with using midterm evaluations more widely. It is completely anonymous unless you choose to identify yourself or your course in the comments.

Please take just a few minutes of your time to provide us with your feedback on this pilot project: << link>>

The feedback we gather will assist in planning for the continuation of this pilot beyond the first term and we anticipate being able to provide a digested summary of the first phase of the pilot project to participating faculties before the end of the calendar year.

1. Do you believe that incorporating a midterm evaluation into your course was beneficial or not? (please explain briefly)
2. How engaged in the midterm were students, e.g. in terms of participation rates, quality / thoughtfulness of comments etc.?
3. Were you surprised by any of the feedback you received and, if so, how?
4. Identify aspects of this midterm evaluation that you think were particularly positive or negative
5. Would you advocate for midterm evaluations to be more widely adopted in your discipline?

Sixteen of the twenty-two faculty responded.

Two faculty members indicated the process was not beneficial. One said that “I have taught the same course for 17 years so was not surprised by the comments I received.” The other indicated that

*It was interesting. I am not sure I would use the word beneficial. Was there some utility? Yes. Did I benefit? I don't think so. This was not something differnt [sic] or new for my teaching practice. I normally do something like this mid way through a course. Furthermore, I am constantly evaluating and considering how the course is going, what I might change or modify for a subsequent time. In terms of changing a course mid stream I think that is not a smart thing to do. Students, despite what you may think, do not take kindly to mid term changes in the way a course is going - especially in large classes.*

The other fourteen indicated the experience was beneficial, that students had “very constructive suggestions” and that this was a good way to obtain a snapshot of the student experience thus far and gave them an opportunity to voice concerns.



All of the faculty members who responded to the survey said students were engaged, that response rates were high, and that the responses were thoughtful.

Half of the faculty members said they were not surprised by the feedback. Those who were said that they learned particular content needed reinforcement; or that there were shared perceptions among students they had an opportunity to correct; or that students commented on what they could do to improve their own learning.

The experience was positive for faculty in that it gave students an opportunity to reflect on the course, that it created an opportunity for conversation with students, and that it gave students an opportunity to see change as a result of their feedback. There were very few negative comments; one about the amount of time it took to collate feedback; several about students responding in an “entitled” manner.

With two exceptions, faculty said they would advocate for midterm evaluations to be more widely adopted, but that implementation should be at the faculty member’s discretion (i.e., they should not be mandated).

## **Moving forward**

The midterm evaluation pilot is continuing in Term 2. Both faculty members and students will be surveyed about their experience. A final report on the pilot project will be presented to the Committee in the spring.

## **Reconsidering the name “Midterm Evaluations of Teaching”**

Student feedback on the follow-up survey indicated that some respondents misunderstood the intention of the survey. Multiple student comments referred directly to the midterm examination (and their opinion of / performance on it). The potential for confusion appears to be increased by having the word 'midterm' in the title of the pilot. Furthermore, as an acronym, MeoT is positioned perhaps too close to SEoT, yet there is an intention to keep the two evaluation types quite distinct.

As a result of this, and informed by discussions at the MEoT Celebrate Learning Week event, we propose that if this is to be developed / promoted beyond the current academic session, that it be renamed **‘Course 360’**.



Stated briefly, the rationale for this name is as follows:

- It captures the essence of the enterprise, by taking a 360 degree look by all those taking part (i.e., instructors and students) at aspects of both teaching and learning.
- It could be used to remind instructors to limit the number of Qs asked - ask 3 questions, each taking 60 seconds to answer.
- It stresses the reporting back to the class on the data gathered and outcomes by closing the feedback loop (i.e., 360 degrees).