Engaging students and teachers as partners in eVALUating learning

Cassandra Saunders & Tracey McHugh

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

AAIR FORUM 2017
THE CENTRE OF AUSTRALIA
CENTRE OF DECISION MAKING
31 OCTOBER – 2 NOVEMBER 2017 • ALICE SPRINGS, NT

Wednesday 1st November 2017

Introduction

❑ Student feedback long used as evidence to enhance student experience

❑ Renewed focus on QA has ↑ use of student voice to measure educational quality:

→ Student feedback a vital component of QA processes:
- Monitoring
- Reviewing
- Enhancing

Teaching, learning and the student experience

❑ Surveys are a valuable tool to collect stakeholder views to support QA and improvement

University of Tasmania Context

❑ Strategic Plan for Learning and Teaching:

'Assurance of learning and assessment will be delivered by the use and evaluation of processes that seek and evaluate student feedback …Programs, courses and units will be continually improved using this evaluation data.'

❑ Transitioned away from paper-based surveys to online evaluations:
→ ↑ functional proficiency

❑ UTAS transitioned to online evaluation system in 2012:
→ Unit and Teaching *e*VALUate surveys

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Benefits of Online Surveys

❑ **Benefits:**

→ ↓ operational costs

→ Flexibility

→ Efficient analysis and reporting

→ Environmental sustainability

→ ↓ staff influence

→ ↑ anonymity and confidentiality

→ ↓ transcription errors

→ Automatic data distribution

BUT….

Data validity

Significant reduction in response rates

Biased results

Response Rates and Student Engagement

❑ Response rate not solely dependent on mode of delivery:
→ Student engagement in evaluation process

❑ Factors affecting student engagement:
→ Survey design
→ Timing
→ Privacy and confidentiality concerns
→ Communication methods   Addressed by a top-down approach
→ Types of incentives
→ Policy
→ Technical support

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Students as Partners

❑ Student perspective is an integral element in supporting the "institution-student relationship" to engage students in university culture (Jill Lawrence, 2005)

❑ Importance of engaging students and staff as partners in L&T
→ Reciprocal learning
→ Raises awareness of implicit assumptions
→ Encourages critical reflection
→ Opens up new ways of thinking, learning and working

❑ 'Students as Partners Framework' (Mick Healey et al., 2014)

Engaging students as partners to eVALUate learning

❑ Student Experience Strategy (2016-2020):

→ Build capacity of students to engage in their university experience

- o Individually transformative
- o Social capital of the institution

→ Strengthen student-staff partnership through conversations, co-creation and celebration

❑ This project engages students and staff as partners to:

❑ Co-design and conduct an investigation into student perceptions about, and motivations for completing internal student evaluations

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Project Objectives

❑ Aim: <u>To improve response rates to internal student evaluations</u>

❑ Key objectives:
→ Investigate the blockers/enablers of student participation
→ Analyse the practices of Unit Coordinators who achieve ↑ response rates
→ Develop resources and recommendations to enhance student engagement
   o Toolkit for staff
      o Good Practice Principles/Tips
      o Case studies
      o Vignettes
   o Revised marketing and communication strategy

Methodological Approach

❑ Mixed methods sequential design:

→ Phase 1:
  - ○ Recruitment of student partners
  - ○ Student focus group

  Completed

→ Phase 2:
  - ○ University-wide student survey

  Completed

→ Phase 3:
  - ○ Staff focus groups
  - ○ Student interviews

  In Progress

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Recruitment of Student Partners

❑ Application process through CareerHub Portal

❑ 62 applicants
→ Diverse range of student cohorts and disciplines

❑ Applications stratified prior to purposive sampling

❑ Criteria:
→ Enthusiasm for enhancing the student experience
→ Interest in research
→ Teamwork skills

❑ 7 student partners recruited

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Student Partner: Perspective

❑ What a summer research project taught me about perspectives:
→ Teachers and students see teaching and subject matter differently
→ Teachers want to listen and improve
→ Communication is the key

Student Partner: Perspective

❑ My expectations as a student at university, to:
→ Learn
→ Be kept informed
→ Receive feedback
→ Be respected

❑ What I would like this research to achieve:
→ Find out why students do not complete eValuate surveys and to use this information to help encourage participation
→ Engage with teachers in order to increase their advocacy of the surveys

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Phase 1

❑ Initial 'get to know you' meeting and project overview

❑ Ethics approved [H16802]

❑ Student focus group:
→ Qualitative data from representative student sample
→ Semi-structured:
  o Planned questions to prompt discussion
  o Flexibility to adapt conversation
  o Allowed priorities to emerge from students' point of view

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Phase 2: Student Survey

❏ Developed from focus group data:
→ Co-created with student partners
→ Composed of quantitative and qualitative items
→ Combination of:
  o Factual information → e.g. Demographics, knowledge, behaviour
  o Attitudes/perceptions → e.g. Incentives, strategies to increase engagement

❏ Online → SurveyMonkey

❏ 1,270 responses

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Respondent Demographics

Demographic Group	% Respondents
Female	71%
Domestic	85%
≥ 41 years of age	49%
Part-time	53%
Distance	50%
Commencing	49%
Undergraduate	45%
College of Arts, Law & Education	33%

Promotion and Completion

❑ Most effective way to promote:
- → Email (81%)
- → MyLO announcement (69%)
- → Lecturers/tutors (37%)

❑ 1-4 surveys received each semester

❑ 64% complete all surveys:
- → Recognise that feedback is valued by teaching staff
- → Think it is important to give feedback
- → Want to provide suggestions about how unit could be improved
- → Care about seeing the unit improved for the next cohort of students

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Survey Completion

❑ 7% don't complete surveys:

→ Too busy

→ Feedback not valued

→ Nothing needs to be changed in the unit

→ Don't have any direct benefit from providing feedback

❑ Initiatives to ↑ completion rate:

→ Better understanding of how student feedback from previous year was used to improve unit

→ Incentives e.g. prizes

→ Explanation from teaching staff about why they value student feedback

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Incentives and Staff Engagement

❑ 40% respondents support incentivisation:
- → Pre-paid VISA gift card (67%)
- → Coles/Myer gift card (56%)
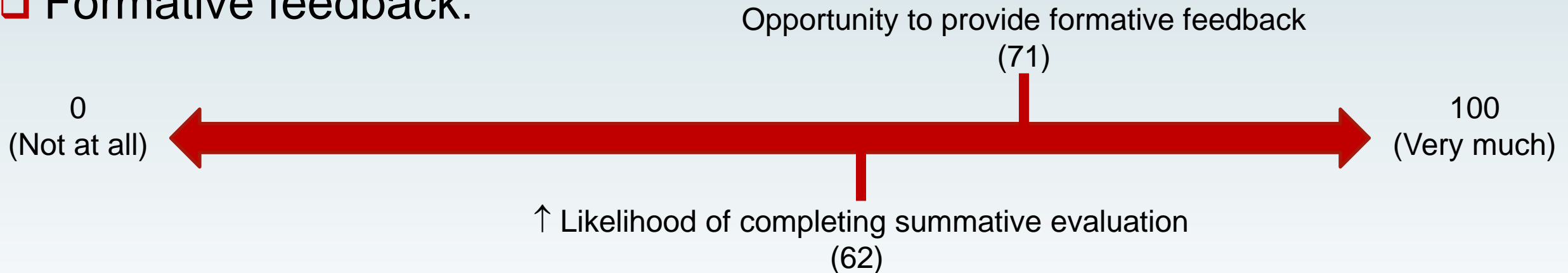- → Charitable donation by University (40%)

❑ Lecturer/tutor engagement:
- → 31% do not talk to students about eVALUate
- → MyLO and class discussion
- → Providing more examples of how they have used previous student feedback would ↑ student engagement

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Timing and Formative Feedback

❑ Preferred timing:
→ After exams/final assessments have been completed (72%)
→ 57% would **not prefer** to complete survey in class

❑ Formative feedback:

Opportunity to provide formative feedback
(71)

0
(Not at all)

100
(Very much)

↑ Likelihood of completing summative evaluation
(62)

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA

Accessibility & Functionality of Survey Portal

❑ Fine as it is, nothing needs to be changed (90%)

❑ Suggestions for improvement:
→ Review of questions
→ Option to provide contextual comment for each quantitative item
→ Reduced no. email reminders
→ Ensure confidentiality

What's Next?

❑ Comprehensive analysis of the student survey responses:
→ Thematic analysis of qualitative data
→ Analysis of responses by demographic group

❑ Follow-up student interviews

❑ Staff focus groups
→Identify areas of best practice

❑ Workshopping key findings to identify interventions and recommendations

UNIVERSITY of TASMANIA

Acknowledgements

❏ **Staff:**
→ Wendy Green (Tasmanian Institute for Learning and Teaching)
→ Steven Collette (Business Intelligence, Survey and Analytics)
→ Nazlee Siddiqui (Tasmanian School of Business and Economics)
→ Jane Skalicky (Student Retention and Success)

❏ **Students:**
❏ CarolAnn Fletcher (Education)
❏ Calvin Hong (Australian Maritime College)
❏ Le Xi K'ng (Science, Engineering & Technology)
❏ Costa Papas (Health)
❏ Melanie Ross (Arts)
❏ Dongqin Ruan (Arts)

UNIVERSITY *of* TASMANIA