

Lessons Learned from a Qualitative Analysis of Student Evaluations of Teaching

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OBJECTIVE

To describe both positive and critical themes elicited from open-response items in student evaluations of teaching (SETs)

BACKGROUND

- SETs are among the most common methods of instructor evaluations used by colleges of pharmacy.¹
- SETs have been described as effective means to provide this feedback, and students have reported they feel equipped to provide it.^{1,2}
- Faculty generally view SETs as a useful and trustworthy method of reporting teacher performance.^{3,4}

METHODS

We retrospectively analyzed SETs for instructors in required didactic courses from the 2018-2019 academic year. The analysis included student responses to the following questions: "Describe the strongest aspect of the instructor's teaching." and "What could the instructor do to improve his/her teaching effectiveness?" An initial codebook was designed and refined using an inductive approach. Each document was analyzed by two coders and a constant comparison approach was used to resolve discrepancies.

After coding was complete, coded segments were reviewed, and codes were organized into themes based on similarity or relationship. Relationships between particular themes, categories, or codes were also explored.

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RESULTS

All instructors who received SETs in required didactic courses for the 18-19 academic year (N=58) were included. 114 documents were analyzed. 111 codes (and sub-codes) were applied to 2,396 student comments in SETs, resulting in 4,683 coded segments.

Five themes were identified:

1. **Clarity** of instruction and learning activities
2. **Alignment** of learning and assessment activities
3. **Examples** that offer practice or demonstrate relevance
4. **Engaging** learning environment
5. **Concern** for student learning and success

CONCLUSIONS

The themes represented in these data reinforce similar ideas that are present throughout teaching and learning literature. Because they were generated from open-response questions in SETs, our results demonstrate that these themes matter to students at our institution.

These themes may provide guidance for specific domains of faculty development in teaching, which could include topics such as educational design and interpersonal communication.

