



Center for Teaching and Learning

Vice Provost for Teaching, Learning, Academic Planning and Facilities

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

Formative Evaluations

Formative Evaluations are evaluations FOR learning. They are often ungraded and informal. Their aim is to provide both the students and instructor with a gauge of where their level of understanding is at the current moment, and enable the instructor to adjust accordingly to meet the emerging needs of the class. Do I need to re-explain that concept differently? Do I need to backtrack two steps and catch everyone up to where we are now? Do I need to change my pedagogical approach to engage this group of students?

Formative evaluations are particularly important because they allow you to make changes that affect the current students, while the end of term forms only affect future classes. In addition, formative evaluations signal your class that you are indeed interested in what and how they're learning, and in their responses to your teaching.

Some examples of Formative Evaluations:

One-Minute Paper

Check student understanding in a lesson by asking them to take out a sheet of paper and take one minute to, for example, write down an explanation of a concept, solve an equation, or draw a main point from a reading.

Muddiest Point Paper

Check student understanding in a lesson by asking them to take out a sheet of paper and take one minute to write down a single question about, or the most confusing aspect of, the topic of/for the day.

Directed Paraphrase

After working through a topic, ask students to explain the content to a lay audience in their own words.

Mid-Semester Evaluation

In order to conduct a mid-semester evaluation, you might want to use the generic [Standard mid-semester evaluation \(/sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/midtermeval.doc\)](https://sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/midtermeval.doc), or modify it in any way; there may be particular additional questions you would like to ask, for instance. If you do use some form of mid-term evaluation, we encourage you to discuss the results with your class, explaining for instance, why you can't cut down on some topic, or why, based on the suggestions of the class, you will add a discussion of a particular topic.

How to present a mid-semester evaluation to your class:

"Today, I'd like you to fill out a short mid-semester evaluation. The information you provide is just for me, and your input is extremely valuable. It helps me gauge how the course is progressing at the moment, that is, what is going well from your standpoint and whether you have any suggestions for how we might proceed for the rest of the semester. It also lets me know whether you are learning what I hope you are. I will report back to you about the results of this evaluation."

[Sample mid-semester evaluations from around campus](https://sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/Sample_midterm_evals.pdf)

[\(/sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/Sample_midterm_evals.pdf\)](https://sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/Sample_midterm_evals.pdf)

[Responding to mid-semester evaluations \(/sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/respond.pdf\)](https://sites/teaching.berkeley.edu/files/respond.pdf)