

Reflecting on your teaching

With all the logistics that go into wrapping up the semester, it's hard to think about almost anything else – painful to think about the whole semester that you're just trying to move beyond. But of course, as teachers we know that there's great value in reflection: that it aids in critical thinking, that it cements learning, that it can be the seed of innovative ideas. On top of that, students have spent time filling out course evaluations, reflecting for themselves on the semester and on your course specifically. Rather than leave students as the sole arbiters of the course that you experienced together, why not do some evaluation of your own?

A guided reflection on your course need not take more than ten minutes. In fact, University of Oregon recently piloted a "Ten-Minute Instructor Reflection" that can be filed along with student evaluations at the end of each semester. You can check out that tool [here](#) or select from the question bank below to help prompt your own reflection.

REFLECTION PROMPTS:

I tend to think about successes and failures at the end of the semester, focusing on the moments when everything was working and connections were being made or on the cringe-worthy flops, when everything was a miscommunication. It's natural to focus on the highs and the lows; it's helpful to think beyond them, too. Use the prompts below to help push your reflections beyond the basic "What worked? What didn't?" framework (but feel free to go there too, if it helps you!).

- Write down 3 specific moments in this class stick out to you. What was happening? Who was there? What additional context can you provide? Why do you think it's stuck with you? Do you see any patterns between the three?
- What would you say to your January self if you could go back in time?
- Were you able to meet your own deadlines for things like posting assignments, responding with feedback, returning grades? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- What didn't happen in this class that you hoped for?
- What surprised you?

- What or who did you lean on / go to during the semester when you needed help? Was that person/place/thing able to support you as much and when you needed it?
- How did you communicate with students throughout the semester (list the ways)? Which methods were most effective? Least?
- What did you learn from this class this semester?
- What would you *like* to learn before you teach this class again?
- Imagine you're asked to shorten the course by 3 weeks. What do you drop and why?

MORE TIPS:

While "reflection" might seem like a solo activity – best done in a quiet space with a notebook and tea – you might find the process easier and more productive if you do it with a friend. Invite a colleague out to coffee and interview each other about your courses using a couple of the questions above. A colleague might notice things in your reflection that you don't. You know who else would love to be an ear to your reflections? UAF eCampus instructional designers. Bring your thoughts to an [Open Lab](#) and get a two-for-one: reflection and problem-solving.

Once you've done all the reflecting, what next? Take notes for yourself – they may come in handy when you're ready to revisit and revise the course for its next offering. If your reflecting uncovers any large-scale opportunities to change, consider setting some milestones toward making those changes this summer, and feel free to come down to UAF eCampus for help.

RESOURCES:

["Reflective Teaching"](#) Yale Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning

["Reflective Teaching Three Ways"](#) *Inside Higher Ed* by Anne Guarnera

[Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher](#) by Stephen Brookfield