

Online Reaction Surveys

Students in online courses do not have the opportunity to raise their hands to ask for clarification and at times may be hesitant to reach out directly to you for clarification. It is also difficult to gauge understanding, because online classes lack visual cues that indicate students may be confused. Therefore, you may want to consider using a short online reaction survey to gauge students' understanding of important instructions or key material before they move forward with the module content and activities.

Some learning management systems (LMSs) have a survey function that you can use to create a reaction survey. You can also use [Google Forms](#), [Qualtrics](#), [SurveyMonkey](#), or other online software, each of which offers templates and step-by-step instructions. If none of these options are available to you, simply email or post the survey (see examples below). Ask students to fill out the survey and post their responses to an anonymous discussion board.

Instructions to Students

Please complete this set of survey questions about this week's module activity or assignment. I will use your responses to answer any questions and clarify misunderstandings.

Scale: Please use the following scale to rank each of the statements below.

1 = *Agree* 2 = *Somewhat Agree** 3 = *Disagree**

*If you select "2" or "3" for any of the items, please offer an explanation or question related to the area of confusion. This will allow me to provide clarity to our class and adjust my instruction for future classes.

Below are three examples of online reaction surveys on directions for activities and assignments, video lectures, and supplemental resources.

Directions for Activities and Assignments:

To what extent do you agree with these statements?	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Explanation/Question
The purpose of the activity or assignment is clear.	1	2	3	
The connection between the activity or assignment and course learning outcomes is clear.	1	2	3	
I understand each step and feel prepared to complete this activity or assignment.	1	2	3	

Video Lectures:

To what extent do you agree with these statements?	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Explanation/Question
I understood the key concept(s) explained during the online lecture.	1	2	3	
The online lecture was divided into manageable chunks of information that were easy to follow.	1	2	3	
I understood all of the vocabulary the instructor used and defined.	1	2	3	

Supplemental Resources (Articles, Books, Examples):

To what extent do you agree with these statements?	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Explanation/Question
I understand the connection between the supplemental resource and the lecture, activity, or assignment.	1	2	3	
The supplemental resource material is easy to follow and understand.	1	2	3	

Results and Action

If one third or more of your students selected “2” or “3” for any of the survey items, you should address the concerns as soon as possible. Also, think about how to improve those areas in future classes. As you read through the explanations and questions that students shared, identify key areas of confusion. Below are some suggestions to help you respond to students’ needs.

Student Feedback on Directions for Activities and Assignments:

Survey Responses	Suggestions for the Current Class	Suggestions for Future Classes
The purpose of the activity or assignment is not clear.	<p>Send a follow-up email or video explaining the intention of the assignment. Invite questions for further clarification via email or a virtual meeting.</p> <p>Hold virtual office hours open to all students to review the assignment and clarify the purpose.</p>	<p>Explain the purpose of the activity or assignment both verbally (in a recorded video) and in writing.</p> <p>Create a discussion forum or send a group email, text, or chat and ask students to reply to the question: “In your own words, what is the goal of this activity or assignment?”</p>

<p>The connection between the activity or assignment and course learning outcomes is not clear.</p>	<p>Send a follow-up email or video explaining how the assignment or activity is connected to the course learning outcomes. Invite questions for further clarification via email or a virtual meeting.</p> <p>Hold virtual office hours (using videoconferencing software such as Skype or Zoom) open to all students to review the assignment and the course learning outcomes.</p>	<p>List the course learning outcomes aligned to the activity or assignment on your activity or assignment guidelines.</p> <p>Create a discussion forum or send a group email, text, or chat and ask students to reply to the question: “How do you think this assignment or activity helps you to achieve the course outcomes?”</p>
<p>I do not understand each step and do not feel prepared to complete the activity or assignment.</p>	<p>Send a follow-up email with written directions and a video recording explaining the directions verbally.</p>	<p>Provide detailed directions, one step at a time, in writing.</p> <p>Post a video explanation of each step in the instructions in a discussion forum, and ask students to post responses to questions to check for understanding.</p> <p>Model the steps via a live online session and record it for students who are unable to attend.</p> <p>Provide an example of the completed activity or assignment.</p>

Student Feedback on Video Lectures:

Survey Responses	Suggestions for Current Class	Suggestions for Future Classes
<p>I did not understand the key concept(s) explained during the online lecture.</p>	<p>Create a discussion board forum and ask students to post questions or identify the parts of the lecture that were not clear. Let them know that all students will benefit from their questions and your responses, so you will offer three bonus points for posting questions.</p> <p>Hold a virtual question-and-answer forum (using videoconferencing software such as Skype or Zoom) to clarify key concepts.</p>	<p>Provide organizational cues when explaining difficult concepts: forecast (“Today’s lesson will cover . . .”), highlight key points (“Write this down.”), signal transitions to a different focus (“Now that we’ve covered X, let’s discuss Y.”), and repeat main points or difficult information.</p> <p>Provide multiple examples, and scaffold from simple to more complex topics.</p> <p>Integrate appropriate visuals (e.g., diagrams, videos, or pictures).</p>
<p>The online lecture was not divided into manageable chunks that were easy to follow and understand.</p>	<p>Follow up with an outline of your lecture to make sure that students understand the main points. Invite questions for further clarification via email or a virtual meeting.</p>	<p>Create microlectures (5 to 6 minutes long) that only address one topic in each microlecture.</p> <p>Speak at a slower pace when the information is complex.</p> <p>Consider providing captions, a script, or a skeletal outline for your lecture.</p>

<p>I did not understand some of the vocabulary the instructor used and defined.</p>	<p>Provide a list of newly introduced words or terms from your lecture. Create an online bonus quiz to check for understanding of new vocabulary. Allow the quiz to be taken more than once, and offer bonus points for correct responses.</p>	<p>In a PowerPoint presentation, draw attention to the new word by highlighting it or writing in a color different than other text. Show the new word or term followed by a written definition, and then give an oral explanation with examples, if applicable.</p> <p>Create an online vocabulary sheet with the new words listed. Instruct students to listen for the new words during the lecture and fill in their definitions.</p> <p>When you are not introducing new terminology, use vocabulary or language that students generally understand rather than language you might use with colleagues in your discipline.</p>
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Student Feedback on Supplemental Resources (Articles, Books, Examples):

Survey Responses	Suggestions for Current Class	Suggestions for Future Classes
<p>I do not understand the connection between the supplemental resource and the lecture, activity, or assignment.</p>	<p>In a follow-up message, explain your rationale for each resource in connection to the module.</p>	<p>In the area of your course where you offer the additional resources, organize them by providing headings based on the topic or learning objective and listing the relevant resources underneath. Provide a brief description of each resource with an explanation of how it connects to the module learning objective(s).</p>
<p>The supplemental resource material was not easy to follow and understand.</p>	<p>In a follow-up message, recognize that the resource material was complex and might need extra time and attention. Provide that by creating an extra credit discussion board forum. Offer extra credit for thoughtful questions, comments, and responses that demonstrate students are engaging and working together to meet this academic challenge. Follow up with any clarification needed.</p>	<p>Provide a list of main points under each resource to help students identify what they should be looking for while reading.</p> <p>Review the resource to determine if it is fully aligned with your learning goals.</p>

Class–Reaction Survey

Purpose: This survey is designed for you to provide feedback on key information presented during today’s class. It offers me an opportunity to respond to questions or clarify misunderstandings and offers you the opportunity to self-reflect on your own learning.

Scale: Please use the following scale to rank each of the statements below.

- 1 = Agree
- 2 = Somewhat agree*
- 3 = Disagree

*If you select “2” or “3” for any of the items, please offer an explanation or question related to the area of confusion. This will allow me to provide clarity and adjust my instruction for future classes.

Directions:

Statement				Explanation/Question
1. The purpose of the activity or assignment is clear.	1	2	3	
2. The connection between the activity or assignment and course learning outcomes is clear.	1	2	3	
3. I understand each step and can work to complete the activity or assignment.	1	2	3	

Explanations:

Statement				Explanation/Question
1. I understand the key concept(s) explained during today’s class.	1	2	3	
2. The instructor presented the material at a good pace.	1	2	3	
3. I understand all vocabulary the instructor used and defined.	1	2	3	

Class–Reaction Survey

A Guide for Instructors

Your students have completed the class-reaction survey. What’s next? This guide will help you use the surveys to adjust how you give directions and explanations and provide your students with greater clarity.

Survey Results and Action

If at least one third of your students selected “2” or “3” for any of the survey items, read through the explanations and questions students shared to identify key areas of confusion.

To assist you in effectively responding to meet student needs, we have offered several suggestions in each category.

For Directions:

Survey Responses	Suggestions
1. The purpose of the activity or assignment is not clear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain the purpose of the activity or assignment both verbally and on written guidelines.• Ask students, “What is the goal of this activity/assignment?” and have them repeat it to you in their own words.
2. The connection between the activity or assignment and course learning outcomes is not clear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• List the course learning outcomes aligned to the activity or assignment on your written guidelines.• Ask students, “How does this assignment/activity help you achieve the course outcomes?” and engage them in a discussion.
3. I do not understand each step and do not feel prepared to complete the activity or assignment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide detailed directions, one step at a time, in writing.• When explaining the steps, stop after each step to check for understanding and answer questions.• Model the steps in class with a student volunteer.• Provide a sample of the product you want students to produce.

For Explanations:

Survey Responses	Suggestions
1. I do not understand the key concept(s) explained during today's class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide organizational cues when explaining difficult concepts: Forecast ("Today's lesson will cover..."), highlight key points ("Write this down."), signal transitions to a different focus ("Now that we've covered X, let's discuss Y."), and repeat main points or difficult information.• Provide multiple examples and scaffold them from simple to more complex.• Integrate visuals—diagrams, videos, pictures—when they are relevant to your explanations.
2. The instructor did not present the material at a good pace.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speak at a slower pace when the information is new or complex or when students are taking notes.• Cover a small amount of content and pause to check for understanding or to apply the information before explaining the next idea.
3. I do not understand all vocabulary the instructor used and defined.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce new terms one at a time and provide a clear definition of each term.• Write the terms and definitions on the board or provide a handout and refer to the handout as you start using the new terminology.• Choose vocabulary/language that students generally understand rather than language you would use with colleagues in your discipline.

Create a Video to Explain Complex Content

Explanatory videos are helpful to students in face-to-face, hybrid, and online classes, because students can engage with the video at their own pace and reengage as needed. Below are guidelines for creating videos that will help students understand complex content.

Scaffold and chunk information. Be sure to scaffold from simpler to more complex content. It may be helpful to present simple content first and then more complex ideas separately in sequenced microlectures.

Provide organizational cues when explaining difficult concepts.

- Forecast: “Today’s lesson will cover . . .”
- Highlight key points: “Write this down.”
- Signal transitions to a different focus: “Now that we’ve covered X, let’s discuss Y.”
- Repeat main points or difficult information: “Just to review what we’ve covered so far.”

Slow down. Speak at a slower pace when the information is complex.

Draw attention to new terms. If using PowerPoint, highlight new words and provide a written definition, followed by an oral explanation with examples. If there is a significant amount of new terminology, provide students with a list of words or terms, definitions, and examples of usage.

Integrate explanatory visuals. Include diagrams, videos, and pictures. These are very helpful if you need students to process complex relationships and ideas.

Check for understanding. At appropriate stopping points or after each microlecture, have students complete a short practice quiz to make sure they grasp the key points. The practice quiz can be developed so that it provides feedback about why answers are either correct or incorrect.

Provide a Q & A forum. Encourage students to ask questions and remind them that any question they ask is likely helping other students who have the same or similar questions.

Solicit and respond to feedback. To assess if your presentation of the complex concept was effective, ask students to fill out a reaction survey.

Provide Effective Directions With a Video

In addition to providing written directions for an assignment, it can be very helpful to provide a video recording of you offering a detailed explanation of both the purpose of the assignment or activity and the steps required to complete it.

1. Choose the appropriate approach to deliver the assignment or activity directions.
 - a. **Verbal directions:** If you only need to talk the students through the purpose and directions, use your computer's webcam to record yourself restating the purpose and elaborating on the written directions.
 - b. **Illustrated directions:** If you think it would be helpful to illustrate the steps students need to use to solve a problem or address an issue, you can either (a) record yourself verbally reviewing the steps while writing out the key steps or processes on a chalkboard or whiteboard; or (b) use a digital smart pen to write the key steps or processes, convert your notes into a digital format, and then record a voice-over offering additional information about each step in the process.
 - c. **Illustrate separate steps:** Use PowerPoint to map out the step-by-step directions. Allow one step on each slide with explanatory text and visuals as appropriate. Then use the PowerPoint voice-recording function to narrate each slide. You can also use video software, such as [Panopto](#), to record yourself and your PowerPoint presentation side-by-side.
 - d. **Synchronous Q & A Session:** If you anticipate that students will have questions as you review each step, hold a live session using virtual meeting software such as Zoom or Skype. Review the directions one step at a time, addressing student questions as you proceed. Record the session and post it on the course site for those who could not attend to watch and for those who were present to watch again as needed.
2. Remember to start by explaining the purpose of the assignment.
3. Be sure to tell students to have a printed copy of the directions available as they watch the video or attend the live session so they can take notes and write down questions.
4. Create a discussion forum for students to post questions about the assignment after they watch the video.
5. It can also be helpful to provide examples of successful assignments with explanations about why they were successful.