

Using Student Check-in Meetings for Feedback, Assessment, and Coaching

Laura Hasselquist, Tony Durr, and Patrick Hales
South Dakota State University

Box 507 Wenona Hall 104
Brookings, SD 57007

605-688-5039

Laura.hasselquist@sdstate.edu

Introduction/Need for Innovation

Student feedback and assessment are vital for promoting student growth and learning. Timely feedback is crucial and is associated with a positive impact on learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Incorporating self-assessment and reflection into the feedback process enhances metacognitive skills and contributes to a deeper understanding. Customizing feedback to individual needs, aligning it with learning goals, and utilizing various feedback methods contribute to more effective learning outcomes (Sadler, 1989; Carless & Boud, 2018). To address these areas related to feedback and assessment, we have begun using check-in meetings to assess and provide feedback to students in our program.

How it Works

Check-in meetings are a required component in many of our courses. The instructor identifies strategic times within the course content to meet with students individually or in small groups. Students sign up for a time slot, ranging from 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the meeting objectives. Prior to the meeting, students receive a list of prompts to respond to in writing, to guide their reflection and prepare for in-depth conversation on their performance and learning. Some of the prompts used include: "How are you growing as a teacher this semester?" "What does student engagement look like in your lesson?" "What did you learn from your classmates reflective teaching lessons, what could you incorporate in future lesson of your own?" This preparation, for both students and the instructor, lends structure to the meetings and allows for more in-depth discussion.

Upon the student's arrival for the meeting, we work through the discussion prompts and ask follow-up questions to expand on or challenge students' thinking. Additionally, the instructor often provides feedback on assignments. The interaction takes on a more conversational nature, with students responding to statements or posing follow-up questions to enhance their work. This approach enables students to witness the assessment process in action, fostering a better understanding of the assignment's intended assessment criteria. There are times when students leave the meeting with additional tasks related to revisions or improvements to course assignments. This type of mastery approach to the assignments supports the development of a growth mindset (Dweck, 2008).

The final student-centered aspect of the check-in meeting involves a direct discussion about their progress toward the class's learning outcomes and their own professional development. They gain a clearer understanding of their current knowledge and skills, identify their desired goals, and develop strategies to achieve them. Additionally, students are asked for suggestions on improvements to the class, providing the instructor with real-time feedback for immediate action to enhance the student experience.

Results to Date & Implications

Various sources of data indicate successful outcomes from both the student and instructor perspectives. Students reported in end-of-course evaluations and graduation surveys that check-in meetings were crucial to their growth and development. Accreditation survey data further suggests that students identify course instructors as the most impactful element of the program. Classes that regularly incorporate check-in meetings consistently receive higher student

satisfaction scores. Additionally, students frequently express interest in implementing check-in style meetings in their future classrooms.

From the instructor's standpoint, these meetings provide an opportunity to connect with individual students on a deeper level. We can offer personalized feedback to support their ongoing development as well as the improvement of our own courses. This type of reciprocal benefit allows us to improve as instructors along with our students. It becomes easier to identify student misconceptions or dispositional concerns and guide them through any issues they may be facing. As education students enter the field, these meetings enable faculty to engage in conversations with both the student and their placement about their needs and how to maximize their growth.

Future Plans and Advice to Others

It is important to note that these meetings do require extra time, but there is a trade-off in the strength of relationships with students and reduced time spent giving feedback on assignments that students may or may not read. When deciding when and how many check-in meetings to schedule for a class, be thoughtful about the course content. These meetings should be designed to explore and reinforce key knowledge and concepts from the course. It is crucial to be selective when scheduling these meetings to balance and maximize relationship building and the assessment of student learning. Another aspect to consider is whether the meetings should be individual or in small groups. It is possible to use a combination of both in a class. While most check-in meetings are individually focused, group meetings can help students learn from each other, especially when discussing field placements and observations.

Once you have identified the points in the semester when you wish to conduct these meetings, it is essential to block off time on your calendar for them to ensure you have enough time to accommodate check-in meetings in addition to the regular tasks associated with being a faculty member. While student meetings may be weeks away, faculty calendars can fill up quickly, making it difficult to find time for student meetings amidst other responsibilities. Block off more meeting time than needed for the course size to give your students some flexibility in their schedules. Students tend to prefer meetings earlier in the allotted time.

Use some form of scheduling assistant to help manage student meetings. SignUp Genius can be set up to send students a reminder email, and Google Sheets is always available for students to update and make changes. Finally, recognize that this is a process, and it will take some time for both you and the students to become comfortable with it. Do not be afraid to make adjustments as you progress throughout the meetings and the semester. This process is focused on maximizing student growth, which might require some changes.

Costs

There is no financial cost associated with this activity. Student sign-ups can be done via Google Sheets or the free version of SignUp Genius. There is a considerable time investment in these meetings. However, if you are already providing students with feedback on course assignments, it substantially reduces the time spent assessing and providing feedback on student work during other periods.

References

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