# Connecting through feedback

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# Overview

- Teaching context

- Problem: How do I get the feedback that I need?

- My personal feedback elicitation process

# Teaching context

**Focus**

- First Year teaching
    - Bachelor of Information Technology (BIT)
    - Bachelor of Applied Information Technology (BAIT)

- Masters level teaching
    - Master of Information Technology

**Courses I teach**

- Software development
- Computer architecture
- Information Systems

# Teaching context

**Teaching modes**

- Small and large classes (25 – 300+ students)
- On-campus in person mode
- On-campus intensive mode (3 weeks)

**My students**

- OP cut off for BIT is currently 14 but has been as low as 17
- Large number of students in 13+ range
- Many students are first in family university students (typically > 60%)

**Continuous improvement**

- I am constantly learning new ways to improve my teaching and implementing what I learn

# What I want to achieve

**My aim**

- I want to empower students to participate in their learning process
- I use feedback to do this

**Improve my teaching**

- I want to know whether changes I make are effective
- I want to know this as I make the changes (or soon afterwards)
- I need regular high quality, targeted, and timely feedback

**Encourage student engagement**

- I want to acknowledge and welcome students as active participants in their learning process
- I want students to feel empowered to give feedback on any aspect of the course
- I want to acknowledge feedback and act on it in a timely manner

## Problem

**How do I get the feedback that I need?**

- **Existing formal university wide feedback processes**
  - Comprised of 5 point Likert Style questions and open ended text

  - **Student Evaluation of Course (SEC)**
    - All students are invited to complete an online course evaluation
    - Completed towards the end of the course

  - **Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET)**
    - All students are invited to complete an online teaching evaluation for the teaching staff
    - Completed towards the end of the course

Both of these formal processes provide detailed and useful feedback

# Issues with existing feedback processes

**Some Issues with formal end of semester feedback (SEC and SET)**

- Both the SEC and SET feedback processes are very useful
- However, <span style="color:red">they are not timely</span> (I'm impatient and I want it now : )
- Students may choose to not participate
  - Their feedback will not benefit them, it can only benefit future cohorts

**What are some other options available to me to get timely feedback?**

- Some commonly used activities for gathering feedback are:

  - Harvard Minute Paper
  - Stop Start Continue Change (SSCC) Change Management process
  - Plus / Minus / Interesting (PMI) brainstorming

# Alternative feedback approaches

**Harvard Minute Paper**

- Anonymous paper-based way to collect information on two questions:

    1. *What is the most important thing you learned during this session?*
    2. *What important question remains unanswered?*

- Students take 1 minute to write down their thoughts on the questions

- Allows students time to give a considered response to a current learning activity

# Alternative feedback approaches

**Stop Start Continue Change**

- Anonymous paper-based way to collect information on:
  - What is not working and should be **stopped**
  - What should be **started** to improve an aspect of the course
  - What is working well and should be **continued**
  - What is working to some extend but should be **changed**

**Plus Minus Interesting**

- Anonymous paper-based way to collect information on:
  - What are the **positive** aspects of the course
  - What are the **negative** aspects of the course
  - What aspects of the course are **interesting**

# Alternative feedback approaches

**Problems with Harvard Minute Paper, SSCC, and PMI**

- Can take up to 10 minutes to hand-out forms, wait for students to complete, and collect responses
- Can be time consuming to process responses
- Requires more time at a later date to respond to student feedback
- Running regularly may result in a feeling of over-surveying

# Acknowledging feedback

**How do I acknowledge the feedback and engage students?**

- Feedback in end of semester SEC and SET feedback surveys is too late to foster engagement
  - There is **no effective way to acknowledge feedback** as The course has finished
  - There is no **effective way to implement changes** based on feedback in this offering of the course
  - Feedback from the previous cohort can be disseminated to the next cohort (**does not close feedback loop** for current students)

- Harvard Minute Paper, SSCC, and PMI also all have a delay in responding to feedback
  - The data needs to be collated and analysed which **requires time**
  - However, it is possible to both **close the feedback loop** and **implement changes** for the current cohort

# Weekly feedback elicitation process

**Aims of my feedback elicitation process**

- Obtain timely feedback
- Immediately close the feedback loop
- Create a culture where feedback is a normal part of teaching

**The feedback elicitation process**

- I use a modified Harvard Minute Paper process
- At the end of each lecture I ask 3 feedback questions
- Answers to questions are typed into a word document that is projected onto the screen
  - Students can see what I type and that their feedback has been received
- I confirm that what I write accurately reflects the feedback by asking students to confirm my understanding
- The electronic nature of the process greatly reduces the setup and analysis time

# Weekly feedback elicitation process

**Feedback Questions**

- Questions can vary from course to course, but currently they include:

  1. What aspect of the lecture do you feel is the *least useful*?
  2. What aspect of the lecture do you feel is the *most useful* ?
  3. What aspect of the lecture do you feel is the *least clear*?

- Follow-up questions are asked to:

  - Find out why the student feels this way
  - Find out how many students feel the same way
  - Enable students to take ownership on how it can be improved

  "What do you think would be most effective in addressing this issue?"

# Benefits

**Benefits for me**

- I get immediate feedback on the effectiveness of a teaching strategy
- I can address any content issues immediately or give a time frame
- The feedback strategy takes very little time to administer
- Students become increasingly willing to participate
- I am able to **enhance student engagement** by selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies in order to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum

**Sample student comment**

"Sven asked for feedback on every lecture/tutorial to see if there was anything that could be done better. I think if there is something to be improved upon, he's probably already working on it."
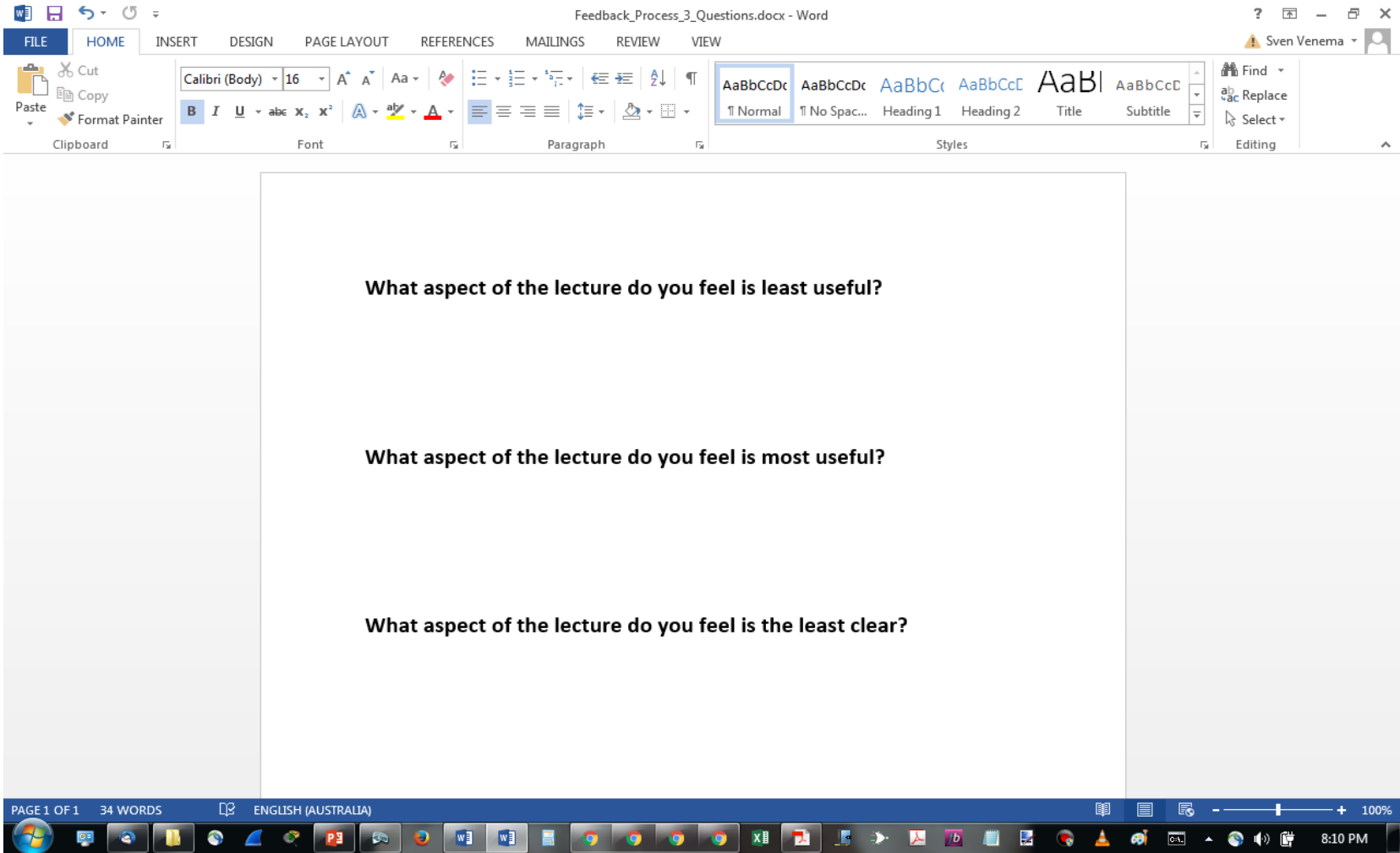
# Benefits

**Benefits for students:**

- Empowers students to provide regular direct feedback
- Allows students to influence how the course is delivered
- Feedback is acknowledged by the lecturer
- Does not feel like a formal survey (no over-surveying)
- Engenders in students a sense of ownership of the learning process and **empowers students to take control of their own learning**

**Sample student comment**

"I liked how the course was somewhat adaptive in the sense that, as feedback from students was provided, the course was altered slightly."

# Demonstration

# Evidence of success

**Outcomes**

- I have taught 30 courses using this feedback elicitation process
- End of semester SEC and SET surveys have had 843 and 840 respondents, and a mean response rate of 44.4% and 43.9%

| Question | %positive response* %negative response* | Mean SEC for 30 courses |
|---|---|---|
| SEC Q6 | +94.2 -0.9 | 4.5 (out of 5) |

**Table 1: SEC Question 6 "Overall I am satisfied with the quality of this course"**

| Question | %positive response* %negative response* | Mean SET for 30 courses |
|---|---|---|
| SET Q5 | +97.2 -0.4 | 4.7 (out of 5) |

**Table 2: SET Question 5 "Overall I am satisfied with the teaching of this staff member"**

\* %positive response = agree/strongly agree,   %negative response = disagree/strongly disagree

# Student comment

*"The lecturer made it fun and interesting, asked us what we found difficult and wanted consistent feedback about the course.*

*It really shows that Mr. Venema cares about his course, and also that he wants to see the students succeed from it.*

*I personally felt like I had my say, being the only colour-blind person in the class.*

*Mr. Venema took my feedback about colours on the slides and has made it easier for me to see.*

*Being the only student with this problem, I didn't expect any changes, but there were. It really made me feel valued."*