

Background

ECSA ran its 2nd round of Class Rep Conferences in late November & early December, focussing on 'Feedback and Self-Evaluation'. These meetings had the following purposes:

1. To inform & engage students in their role in the college's self-evaluation process, primarily occurring at course level in semester 2.
2. To gather feedback on students' experience of Learning & Teaching through a focussed workshop
3. To use that feedback to paint a picture of Learning & Teaching at Edinburgh College, share best practice, and provide data & evidence for ECSA's Annual Learning & Teaching report
4. Help inform the work ECSA does in supporting the college with 'How Good Is Our College?'

Workshop

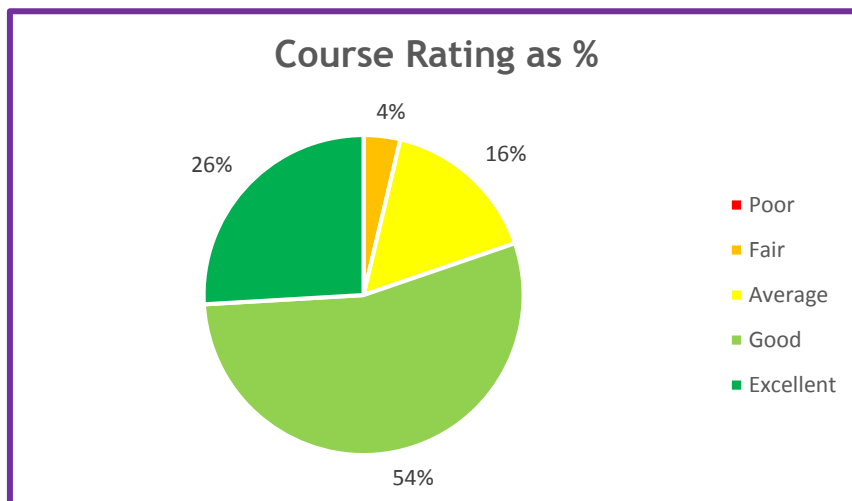
The workshop took students through the key steps of self-evaluation and where they, as Class Reps, fit in, covering the 'A.B.C.D of Effective feedback' which is a core part of the sparqs Class Rep Training, and ensuring reps are equipped with the skills to effectively take part. Further to this, ECSA talked Class Reps through why it is so important they get involved in shaping their learning. Class Reps were incredibly receptive to this, and the workshop.

The workshop itself focussed on rating their learning experiences on a scale between "Excellent" and "Poor", with a section to provide comment on why they choose that answer.

80% of respondents rated their course as Good or Excellent with the key takeaway across the board that students enjoy their courses and their learning is excellent and staff are knowledgeable, experts within the subject area they teach in.

However there is always room to improve and across all responses students highlighted areas that could be better including possible solutions.

Class Reps were then asked to discuss what is good about their course, what could be improved, and how it could be improved. Class Reps were encouraged to use the 'Student Learning Experience' diagram which covers all the components of a student's learning experience whilst at College. In total 81 reps took part across the 4 campuses in the workshops, from a broad range of courses and departments.



Learning & Teaching Themes

Overall, there were 4 key themes that emerged as areas for improvement within the college. If worked upon, these key areas could improve the student learning experience, increasing the likelihood students would rate their learning experience as 'excellent'.

<p>1. Flexible and varied learning styles</p> <p>Courses that implemented a range of different teaching methods received much more positive feedback from students. Taking a flexible approach to learning ensured content was delivered in a variety of ways that enhanced learning. Students appreciated the extra effort to create engaging learning experiences for example by providing physical and virtual handouts.</p> <p>Courses where teaching is relying on use of PowerPoint presentations were more likely to receive a 'good' rating than those with examples of varied learning styles.</p>	<p>2. Workspace</p> <p>Students repeatedly across all ratings mentioned workspace and equipment to support their learning. Specifically in Creative Industries the size and number of available studios was highlighted. Students suggested that access to studios in the evenings would accommodate more students as well as more flexible learning.</p> <p>Students at Milton Rd commented on the sport and fitness facilities and equipment being outdated and lacking.</p> <p>Courses where students rely on specific software and IT equipment such as Macs were less likely to respond with an 'excellent' rating due to lack of access, some equipment being slow and some programmes not being up to date.</p>
<p>3. Course Organisation</p> <p>Excellent examples of course organisation included 'Course descriptors and schedules of work are easy to follow' - including the use of assessment timetables given out at the start of the year. Well-structured lessons plans, clear use of Moodle for the uploading of learning resources in a timely manner for revision purposes & consistent communication with students when issues arose. This also included having the correct resources, class rooms fit for purpose, minimal rescheduling & equipment to facilitate a great learning experience.</p> <p>Students who felt any of these areas were not being delivered on, seemed far more likely to mark their course as 'good' or worse, regardless of quality of teaching or their enjoyment of the subject area.</p>	<p>4. Feedback</p> <p>The courses rated the best were consistently praised for having great feedback that was constructive and timely. Whether it was summative, formative, informal, or formal feedback, it was all appreciated by students, who said it helped them understand how to improve.</p> <p>Generally students praised lecturers who took the time to talk to students individually or gave custom feedback.</p> <p>Courses where students felt they got little communication regarding their feedback or simply a 'pass or fail' were more likely to rate their course 'average'. Some Class reps suggested a standard expectation should be set regarding time of feedback.</p>

Thematic feedback

Excellent

Students rated courses 'excellent' for a variety of reasons on a course by course basis and **this represented 26% of the responses**. What was apparent was how many of these courses students cited multiple examples of 'positive aspects' which made this course stand out as an excellent learning experience. For example:

- Teachers have been fantastic and imaginative with the curriculum which made the learning very interesting for students.
- Courses where different types of learning were used, were also highly rated in terms of understanding and inclusion
- Many comments for Excellent rated courses included comments about clear organisation and communication about expectations and feedback
- A lot of positive feedback focussed on materials and equipment being up to date and readily available. Moodle was frequently mentioned as being clearly structured and regularly updated and easy to use. Additionally, some students highlighted that extra workshops on equipment and software were made available to students who didn't yet feel comfortable using it

Good

The vast majority of courses received a **rating of 'Good' (44)** accounting for **54%** of all evaluations ECSA received. Students rated these courses citing mostly the learning and teaching being good, and having supportive lecturers. However, they highlighted areas for improvement that make up the whole student experience, and, if implemented, could have possibly raised these courses to an Excellent:

- 'Course was going at a good pace but then seemed as if lecturers had remembered we needed to do assessments and a sudden rush of assessments put pressure on before Christmas break'
- Using mainly PowerPoints in teaching 'becomes boring after a while'. Students highlighted that if handouts were not provided the lecturers would not always allow time for taking notes
- There were a lot of comments about Moodle being unclear and outdated, that documents were hard to find in historic folders and could do with a 'tidy'
- One cohort of students described a lot of disorganisation at the start of their course and still feeling the after effects especially around assessments all happening at the same time.
- Teaching staff need more cover - Classes are often not covered properly if a tutor is ill or unavailable
- LDT hasn't really been available and has cancelled a number of 1 to 1s which is a shame because it took weeks for students to be assigned an LDT in first place

Average

13 courses received a rating of average or **16 % of respondents**. While, on the whole, students who rated their courses as average highlighted enjoying their course, they had poorer satisfaction in different aspects of the course:

- Noise levels and disruption from other students affected their learning experience
- Students felt their course often was too repetitive, going over the same things because some students missed classes.
- Lack of clarity on assessment dates and submission as well as inconsistencies in timescales of feedback and remediation led to confusion and frustration for some class reps
- Little detailed feedback provided

Fair	<p>Students who rated their courses below average cited a less-than-stellar learning experience and highlighted an inconsistent experience across their subjects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students highlighted some learning/teaching methods as being ineffective • Moodle being poorly organised and complicated to use as well as software necessary for assessments being out of date • General feeling across the feedback that there is not enough resources to support extra needs students, especially in class • Students feel unsafe using changing rooms that are not lockable and have been ‘kicked in’ • Feels there is not quite enough support for extra needs in class
Poor	<p>No students rated their learning experience as ‘poor’</p>

What Happens Next

A massive thank you to Class Reps for taking part and giving us their incredibly useful and constructive feedback. It is clear Learning & Teaching at Edinburgh College, overall, is a positive experience. This now gives ECSA & the College more baseline information and a real sense of what students value within their learning experience. Class Reps, and more broadly speaking, students, have lots of thoughts on their learning and are keen to share that feedback with us, we just need to make sure the college and ECSA are providing those engagement opportunities and having those all-important two-way conversations.

This work will tie in with our end of year teaching report & will go hand in hand with the ECSA-Illence Awards, launching later on in the academic year, both of which will ensure ECSA’s continued commitment to aid the College in engaging with Education Scotland’s ‘How Good Is Our College?’ ECSA hopes this data is useful for curriculum teams, and would encourage all teaching staff to engage with class reps throughout the Self Evaluation meetings that will be happening shortly.

This report will be made available to students & staff with the hope that it aids and influences more conversation around providing the very best Learning & Teaching and promotes sharing of best practice.