

Providing Unbiased and Helpful Feedback on Student Evaluations of Teaching

Your feedback matters. The information collected from UCR students about their learning experiences is used by instructors and TAs to improve their teaching effectiveness. It is also used in the performance appraisal process for instructors and TAs. For these reasons, it is imperative that you provide fair and thoughtful feedback, similar to how you would like your own work to be evaluated.

Keep in mind that we are all prone to bias. Biased preconceptions may cause a person to be prejudiced for or against another person based on any number of personal characteristics, such as race, gender identity, age, and sexual orientation. You should make a conscious effort to overcome this tendency for bias and to focus your feedback on your learning experience in the course. The questions in the Student Evaluation of Teaching form have been deliberately designed to help reduce the potential impact of bias.

Not all feedback is equally helpful. Try to give feedback that describes specific behaviors by your instructor or TA, rather than your own inferences about the instructor or TA as an individual. Provide specific examples about what worked well, what didn't work well, why, and how it might be improved. Avoid emotionally-charged language which tends to undermine the effectiveness of your feedback. Also avoid evaluating personal traits which are not relevant to learning outcomes and the quality of instruction. Consider these examples:

Less helpful: The Instructor was awesome.

More helpful: This instructor gave us lots of activities to do in the classroom, which helped me really understand the material rather than only memorizing stuff for a quiz.

Less helpful: The professor gave terrible lectures.

More helpful: I had trouble understanding all the jargon in many of the lectures. It would have helped me if the professor spoke in more accessible language.

Less helpful: The TA really cared about the students.

More helpful: I appreciated the way this TA stayed after class to answer questions, responded to my emails in a timely manner, and held productive group office hours.

Less helpful: The TA sections weren't very helpful.

More helpful: It would have helped my learning if the TA had incorporated a few of the homework problems into the section so that we could have worked on problem-solving and clarified any points where we didn't understand the problem.