

## Motivation: managing the spiral of apathy

Student feedback is valuable for individual teachers to enable ongoing improvements to courses. This is particularly important in Economics where we are revamping what and how we teach.

In recent years we have experienced:

- Decline in response rates (to as low as 12%)
- Staff sceptical of value of feedback, partly due to low response rates
- Wider student apathy (“how does this help me?”)

This project focused on improving response rates both through how module evaluation was carried out and with broader measures to improve engagement.

## Pilot for end of term module evaluations in Term 1 2015/16

In order to test the effects of different evaluation setups on response rates, we carried out a pilot involving 7 undergraduate modules (including a mix of core and optional modules, and those with low and high enrollment), which included all first year students and nearly 70% of the third year students.

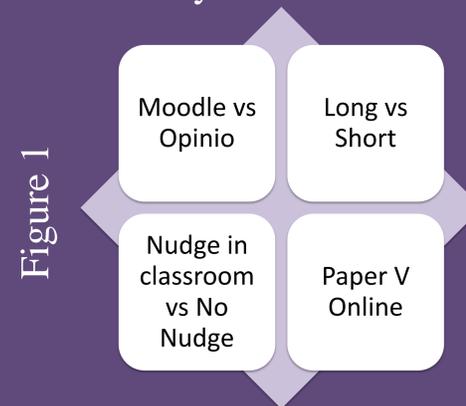


Figure 1 shows the variations in setup that were trialled. The “nudge” option involved PGAs giving students 5 minutes at the end of the last tutorial to start completing the (online) evaluation. All lecturers involved were asked to follow the same steps in terms of having a mid-term evaluation, informing students of the process of module evaluation, and reminding students to complete them where appropriate.

# Optimizing the Student Evaluation Process

Parama Chaudhury and Cloda Jenkins

Department of Economics, UCL and Centre for Teaching and Learning Economics

Contact Information: p.chaudhury@ucl.ac.uk and cloda.jenkins@ucl.ac.uk ; Web: <https://ctale.org/>



## Results from the pilot (response rates in %)

Module	Opini o	Moodle	Enrollment
1001	56%	39%	356
3014	42%	10%	159
3021	19%	19%	41

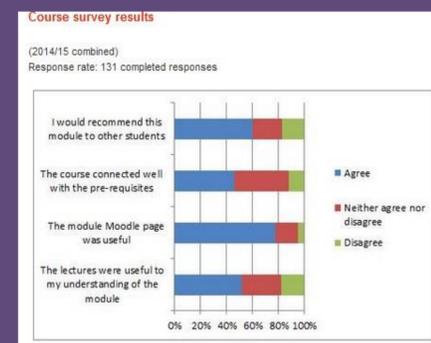
Module	Nudge	No nudge	Enrollment
3004	78%	4%	145
7001	44%	20%	69

Module	Paper	Moodle	Enrollment
7006	83%	29%	56
3022	61%	39%	77

As these tables show, the main result of the pilot is that an in-class start to the evaluation at least doubles response rates. While the biggest effect resulted from the switch to paper evaluations, an in-class nudge has a similar effect for online evaluations.

## Convincing students that it matters – what else do we do?

- ✓ Mid-term evaluations introduced, with staff responses to student feedback during term
- ✓ ‘You Said, We Did’ for all courses and NSS on Moodle pages



- ✓ Summary statistics from previous years’ evaluations on websites and Moodle pages to inform module choices

### You said, We did – June 2015

The table below highlights how the economics Department teaching staff consider and respond to feedback obtained from students during term time and in end of term module evaluations. Feedback from students is a really valuable resource to aid our understanding of how to improve learning in all courses. **Please continue to take the time to provide us with your feedback. It does make a difference!**

You said	We did
Provide more detailed feedback on how to improve essay writing	Writing Guide provided to students, guide answers for homework essays uploaded onto Moodle and students encouraged to sign-up to Skills Lab for more focused support. Students are always welcome to seek further feedback on marked homework in office hours.
Improve structure of debate in tutorial	Under review for 2015/16 to make sure all students have equal opportunity to participate.
There are too many readings	This is a subject where there is no ‘right answer’ and many different views. The lecturer explains that students need to read a mix of articles and textbook chapters to appreciate the debates and evidence in the areas being discussed but there is no compulsory readings on the list so students can pick and choose which ones to do. This will be made clearer at the start of the course in future years. Each year attempts are made to reduce the length of the reading list without losing the value of students having choice about what to read. In 2015/16 the lecturer will point out more connections between lecture discussion and readings each week. More generally students are encouraged to develop effective Reading and Note Taking Skills, taking advantage of Skills Lab.

## A nudge can make a difference – Conclusions

- The pilot clearly shows that in-person “nudges” raise response rates - the Economics department is incorporating this finding in designing the process for 2016/17
- Highlighting the value of evaluations to students is essential – this has already been implemented through “You Said, We Did” and user-friendly reports of summary statistics