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From end-of-module evaluation towards 'Continuous Module Dialogue'

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Continuous Module Dialogue (CMD) in brief

- CMD is a way for students and staff to work in partnership, with regular opportunities to share perspectives and reflect on the learning experience.
- Its aim is to make modules more responsive and inclusive by addressing issues and barriers early and recognising what is working well.
- Previously UCL utilised end-of-module evaluations, which made it difficult for students to see the impact of their feedback, and teaching staff potentially unaware of simple fixes that could improve the teaching and learning experience throughout their module.

The issue with end-of-module evaluations

- ‘[n]o study could be found after 1990 that showed a positive significant relationship between learning and the SET.’ (Clayson, 2009, p. 26)
- MEQs seem to relate more to:
 - Perceived gender of the instructor
 - Grade expectation created by the staff member
 - Accent
 - Age
 - Whether staff belong to a minoritised group
- (Boring et al., 2016; Heffernan, 2022; Merritt, 2008; Stroebe, 2020)

The issue with end-of-module evaluations

- 'Women and marginalised groups are losing jobs, failing to achieve promotion, and are being negatively impacted at every step where SETs are concerned, and will continue to be discriminated against every time SET data is collected until the practice is stopped. These practices not only harm the sector's women and most underrepresented and vulnerable, it cannot be denied that SETs also actively contribute to further marginalising the groups universities declare to protect and value in their workforces.' (Heffernan, 2021, p. 152)

CMD is:

- **Continuous** in that it takes place on several occasions over the course of a module.
- **Modular** in that it promotes dialogue between the students and the module lead and/or other teaching staff.
- **Dialogic** in that the module lead engages with the students to address their feedback and, where possible, to take action to improve the student experience.

CMD Evaluation Project

CMD has been in place at UCL for three years now. In the spring term of 2025 we were asked to carry out an evaluation.

- Conducted over the summer 2025.
- Carried out by 4 students and 2 members of staff.
- Interviews with 24 staff across 22 departments (all leading on CMD in their respective departments) covering all UCL Schools.
- Focus groups with 29 students.
- Outputs: Refreshed CMD guidance (published) and Evaluation Report, pilot with large faculties to synthesise data with AI tool.

What counts as CMD?

Anything within a module that allows students to feed back on their module and get a timely response can count as CMD.

Modules that include a way for students to ask questions and receive answers from their lecturer on a continuous basis can count this as one of their CMDs. Examples of this are Moodle forums, Microsoft Forms or similar paper-based options dedicated not just to questions about the disciplinary content.

Introducing CMD to students

Staff and student feedback

'I remember the last time we talked about it in a staff meeting and the response was basically: look, we all know that this is something that we just have to do to tick the boxes, let's not spend too much time talking about this because it's kind of a waste of time' (12A)

'Sometimes it feels like they're doing it for the sake of it rather than actually using the feedback.' (2606P3i)

Introducing CMD to students

Updated guidance

- If students feel that their lecturer wants to know what they think about the module and are confident that staff will be making immediate adjustments that will benefit them, they are more likely to engage constructively.
- For some students, the idea of giving feedback on their university modules may be a new experience, and they might be unsure of what they can say or how to phrase feedback constructively.
 - 'the other course Rep that was working with me ... she was saying back home they would never really challenge the lecturer ever. And whenever they ask for feedback, they always give positive feedback.' (2606P1)

How frequent should CMD be?

Staff and student feedback

- Many felt that 3 formal CMDs per module were too many.
- However, most colleagues actually did 3 CMDs:
 - 2 formal CMDs and a less formal one
 - 1 in-class CMDs + open Form or Moodle forum
- '[I]t tends not to be continuous and that most of these questionnaires happen at the very end of the module, and so there isn't really any opportunity for this feedback to be taken up, you know, kind of midway through the term and then acted on and it just ends up being a very sort of altruistic act where students... have to go and write very extensive feedback as to how they felt about the module, but there's no real opportunity for them to see the benefits.' (2706P5)

How frequent should CMD be?

Updated guidance

For 10-week modules, the expectation is that students have at least three opportunities to feed back to the lecturer who can then outline what actions they will be taking as a result. The three instances do not have to look the same and they can differ in terms of their formality.

Anonymity

Staff and student feedback

- 'the Menti survey thing, sort of, a slightly poor substitute for actually talking to people, which is, the only difference then is that it's not anonymous, right? I'm not sure what the right way to go is, but I think anonymity can be problematic in this space for the sorts of things that I think CMD is trying to foster, right? On the other hand, if you don't have anonymity anywhere, then you create these other issues, right?' (6)
- 'Having a chat with students is not exactly the same thing, of course, because you can have a chat, but this should be, I think, as complementary to the CMD, for the simple reason that is not anonymous. So there is this power imbalance' (11)

Anonymity

Updated guidance

- Students may feel more confident contributing honest feedback when it is anonymous. Therefore, CMD should always include at least one instance (and preferably more) where this is the case.
- In some modules it might be appropriate to have one CMD which is more informal ... This should be complemented by anonymous CMD too.
- 'I will say personally and from my experience as a Rep, anonymity is one of the highest priorities for CMD that students need to feel comfortable giving feedback... without fear of repercussions.' (2706P4)

Synchronous vs asynchronous approaches

Staff and student feedback

- Agreement that in-class CMD gives more responses.
- Some feel that in-class surveys lead to superficial data
 - 'some of the key takeaways we have noticed is that if we do it in class on Mentimeter the responses, and we don't get as much depth of feedback as we would do outside, we just get more of it.' (5)
- Some found that a mixture worked well (in-class + Moodle)

Synchronous vs asynchronous approaches

Updated guidance

- We recommend doing CMD live during teaching sessions where possible as this increases participation.
- If you choose an asynchronous option, make sure students know where to find it.
- We advise against showing results live on screen, so you can review the appropriateness of responses first.
- Some colleagues have found that blending the two works well: giving students some time to finish CMD in class, and then also leaving the survey open for some days on Moodle for students who were unable to attend the session, or if they think of something they would like to add.

Platforms

Staff and student feedback

- 'ensuring that colleagues feel confident that CMD takes many forms ... and I know this is kind of there already, the Mentimeter as a template, but it is more that kind of fundamental principle of talk to your students and make sure that it's a dialogue.' (4)

Updated guidance

- CMD is not tied to any platforms, and you can choose whatever you and your students prefer.
- You should always use a platform that is supported by UCL, as they will have been checked for accessibility and data protection issues.

How do you plan to respond to student feedback?

Staff and student feedback

- 'One of my module[s] in the first term [it] happened in this year.... I don't think I have heard any response from the feedback.' (0207P1)
- 'in an ideal world, I'd love to have a little bit on every Moodle page that says, you know, previous student feedback told us to do, you know, said that they liked A, B and C and didn't like, you know, this is what we've done, to sort of have a 'you said we did' type thing on every Moodle page' (10)

How do you plan to respond to student feedback?

Updated guidance

- The way you plan to respond will often determine how you ask questions.
- It is a good idea to think about questions that will elicit responses that can benefit the current students (particularly for the early CMDs). If you then want a more holistic picture of how the students have found your module, we suggest dedicating the last CMD to that.

Student representatives and CMD

Staff and student feedback

- ‘they get the student Rep to organise doing feedback from the whole group in a discussion while the tutor's out of the room, and then they feed it back to the tutor, which works really really well.’
(20)
- '[W]e found that it was people were more likely to open up and tell us what the problem was if it was a student reps asking versus the professor is asking' (2606P1i)

Student representatives and CMD

Updated guidance

- In some modules, student reps play an active part in CMD. This allows students to take more ownership of the evaluative process, making it more comfortable for some students to participate.
- This is not something the lecturer can require of the reps (it's not officially part of their role), but they can be invited to contribute.
- Examples:
 - reps and lecturer discuss which questions to include in CMD;
 - reps conduct one of the three CMDs and discuss the outcome with the lecturer;
 - once the lecturer has checked that there is no sensitive data in the CMD, the reps get access to it. Reps and lecturer meet up to discuss it and feed back to the module cohort.

Example questions and templates

Staff and student feedback

- 'the majority of staff actually are using the templates and they are implementing CMD. So we found generally the template as useful way of capturing feedback.' (3)
- 'But it's just making sure that they're talking to students and that it's meaningful that this is one of the problems with the kind of generic templates potentially is that it can all too often lead to this just being a kind of bureaucratic exercise.' (4)

Example questions and templates

Updated guidance

- Question grid (ordered by topic).
- Mentimeter templates (with a range of suggestions).
- 'Many of these questions are yes/no or free-text questions, but they can be adapted to work in many other ways' 'Is the content clear so far' (yes/no).
 - 'For each of the following topics, rate how clear they are to you from 1 (very unclear) to 5 (very clear)' (likert scale / sliders).
 - 'What areas, if any, are unclear to you?' (free-text).

Example questions and templates

Updated guidance

- 3 examples of how CMD can be structured (not meant to be prescriptive):
- Three synchronous CMDs using Mentimeter and Microsoft Forms
- Q&A forum - Mentimeter - departmentally shared Microsoft Forms
- Informal discussion - paper-based CMD - rep-led discussion

Student partner reflection

During my time as a CMD Student Partner, I worked closely with students and teaching staff to explore how course feedback systems were experienced in practice. Throughout the project, I had the opportunity to co-lead student focus groups, creating a space where participants felt comfortable to share honest views about inclusivity, accessibility, and teaching quality.

What I found most valuable was listening to my peers explain not just what they thought about feedback, but why certain processes did or did not work for them. This experience helped me better understand student voices and the importance of communication and involving students as part of the decision-making process.

This project has improved my confidence in qualitative research, facilitation, and collaborative working, I am really honoured and grateful to be part of such a great team in which my line managers and colleagues were all super supportive and make this project meaningful and that the conversation around CMD will be ongoing to make it even more meaningful. Thank you!



Ruoqi Sun – student partner

Our considerations - and questions for you!

- Does your institution have a similar approach?
- How can we ensure consistent implementation across UCL?
- How to consistently close feedback loops and communicating changes to students ?
- Ways to support new staff to understand the ethos of CMD.
- Finding ways for various student voice mechanisms to work together.

Resources and key contacts

- View the updated [CMD guidance](#)
- Questions about CMD: contact Dr Jesper Hansen (j.hansen@ucl.ac.uk)
- Boring, A., Ottoboni, K., & Stark, P. B. (2016). Student Evaluations of Teaching (Mostly) Do Not Measure Teaching Effectiveness. *ScienceOpen Research*. <https://doi.org/10.14293/S2199-1006.1.SOR-EDU.AETBZC.v1>
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- Merritt, D. J. (2008). Bias, the Brain, and Student Evaluations of Teaching. *St. John's Law Review*, 82(1), 235–287.
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