

# Closing the loop: A holistic approach to student feedback at Curtin

Beatrice Tucker  
Curtin University, Perth, Australia  
[B.Tucker@curtin.edu.au](mailto:B.Tucker@curtin.edu.au)

Julie-Ann Pegden  
Curtin University, Perth, Australia  
[J.Pegden@curtin.edu.au](mailto:J.Pegden@curtin.edu.au)

**eVALUate** is Curtin's online system for students to give feedback about their units and teachers. **eVALUate** comprises a unit survey and a teaching survey. Teaching survey results are confidential to teachers while unit survey results are available in various formats to provide relevant information to staff, students and the general public. The unit survey comprises eleven quantitative items and 2 qualitative items. This survey asks students for their perceptions of what helps their achievement of unit learning outcomes (items 1 to 7), their engagement and motivation (items 8 to 10) and overall satisfaction (item 11). For each quantitative item, students rate their level of agreement (strongly agree, agree, disagree strongly disagree) or select 'unable to judge.' A Full Unit Report provides Unit Coordinators and their Head of School with a full breakdown of results and all student comments. A Unit Summary Report (USR) is published online for all students and staff and contains the percentage Agreement (Disagreement and Unable to Judge) with all quantitative items.

This paper will, firstly, provide an overview of the **eVALUate** system and describe the mechanisms for unit coordinators and Deans of Teaching and Learning to 'close the feedback loop' using: 1) the online tool and 2) unit outlines. A key responsibility of the Unit Coordinator is the maintenance and improvement of unit quality and includes the review, reflection and response to student feedback. Unit coordinators can close the feedback loop using the USR by acknowledging student feedback, assuring them that their feedback is valued and indicating how the feedback will be taken into account when the unit is next offered. Recent unit changes resulting from student feedback are published by the unit coordinator in unit outlines. The **eVALUate** website also contains a webpage titled 'Student Voice: What students are telling us and what we're doing about it'. Posted on the webpage is a general summary of the **eVALUate** unit survey feedback for the university overall. Deans of Teaching and Learning provide an online response to students about Faculty initiatives that are implemented and planned to improve student experiences in teaching and learning.

Students are sent an email once the webpage is updated after each semester, thanking them for their feedback and advising them how they can view Unit Summary Reports and the 'Student Voice' webpage. Web usage statistics show students are increasingly viewing Unit Summary Reports. For example, in July 2010 there were 2452 reports viewed by students compared to 1736 in July 2009, despite similarly high rates of Unit Summary Report publication in both years.

Secondly, this paper will describe the events that resulted in the automatic online publication of the USR for all coursework units delivered at Curtin. Curtin changed from opt-in to opt-out publication of USRs in 2009. This change to automatic publication has resulted in a 96%

(n=1688) publication of USRs in Semester 1 2010 (compared with 6.7% in 2008). Another motivating influence on USR publication is Curtin's Teaching Performance Index, which rewards Unit Coordinators for publishing USRs with a response. In 2006, 361 USRs included a unit coordinator response to students and in 2009 this number increased to 928.

As this paper will show, Curtin has adopted a comprehensive approach to closing the feedback loop, with many aspects incorporated into the **eVALUate** system. It is envisaged that closing the loop will become a routine part of teaching at Curtin and will contribute to ongoing improvement in response rates and survey results.