

# Improving AMU Placement Evaluation: Optimizing the traditional student survey form

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## Background

Penultimate year medical students at St George's hospital spend one week in the Acute Medical Unit (AMU) in small groups of 3-5 students during their Medical Placement.

The dedicated team of clinical teaching fellows in AMU aspires to deliver the placement's teaching programme to the highest quality standard. Students' perception of their learning experience and feedback is essential and provides important insight for evaluation and improvement.

We currently use a traditional online plain evaluation form, completed by the students at the end of the one-week placement. The form used is anonymously collected, quick to prepare, easily reproducible, and requires a short time to complete (Nicolaou and Atkinson, 2019). In the process for continuous improvement, we became inspired to investigate the best way to upgrade and optimize our evaluation form. This would mean that our evaluation form has a clear objective that would add value to our ongoing practice (Lovato and Wall 2013; Tekian et al., 2017).

## Method and approach

The steps we used to complete our evaluation:

1. Revised the placement's learning outcomes and our goals for improvement in delivery of bedside and small-group teaching,
2. Analysing analysis of student feedback (Aug 2022-May 2023),
3. Reflection of strengths and weakness of our current evaluation form,
4. Design of new, upgraded student evaluation form for the placement, with insight from up-to-date literature.

## Results

We received 92 (84%) completed forms from the 110 surveyed students over 10 months. From a thorough analysis of 10 months of continuously collected feedback. Recurring themes reflecting students' evaluation of the placement and attributes to quality are summarised in Table 1. We further reviewed quality standards for effective use of student evaluation surveys and identified the strengths and weaknesses of our model (Graph 1).

Table 1: Recurring themes from data analysis with examples

Good content, selected cases & relevance	"Went through examinations very thoroughly", "corrected technique when performing examinations", "fun quiz, allowing me to find gaps in my knowledge", "good difficulty level"
Features of a good teacher	<b>Delivery:</b> "excellent explanation of clinical signs"; <b>Use of time:</b> "well paced"; <b>Preparedness:</b> "very knowledgeable about.."; <b>Opportunities for discussions, questions, and feedback:</b> "happy to answer questions", "clear in technique instruction and feedback on presentation of exam"
Reflections on own learnings through teaching session	"I feel more confident with my knowledge and clinical skills", "I walked out having learnt something each time"
Areas for improvement	<b>Setting expectations:</b> "good to have more warning what it entails", <b>Fair opportunities:</b> "some students received more feedback than others", <b>Relevance:</b> "would have liked a patient case that covered more of the priority list"; <b>Organisation:</b> "if we could sit down and discussed the case for a bit longer", "quite a lot of information in a short space, maybe just throw in another break between cases"

Graph 1: Current Evaluation form: lessons learnt

### Strengths:

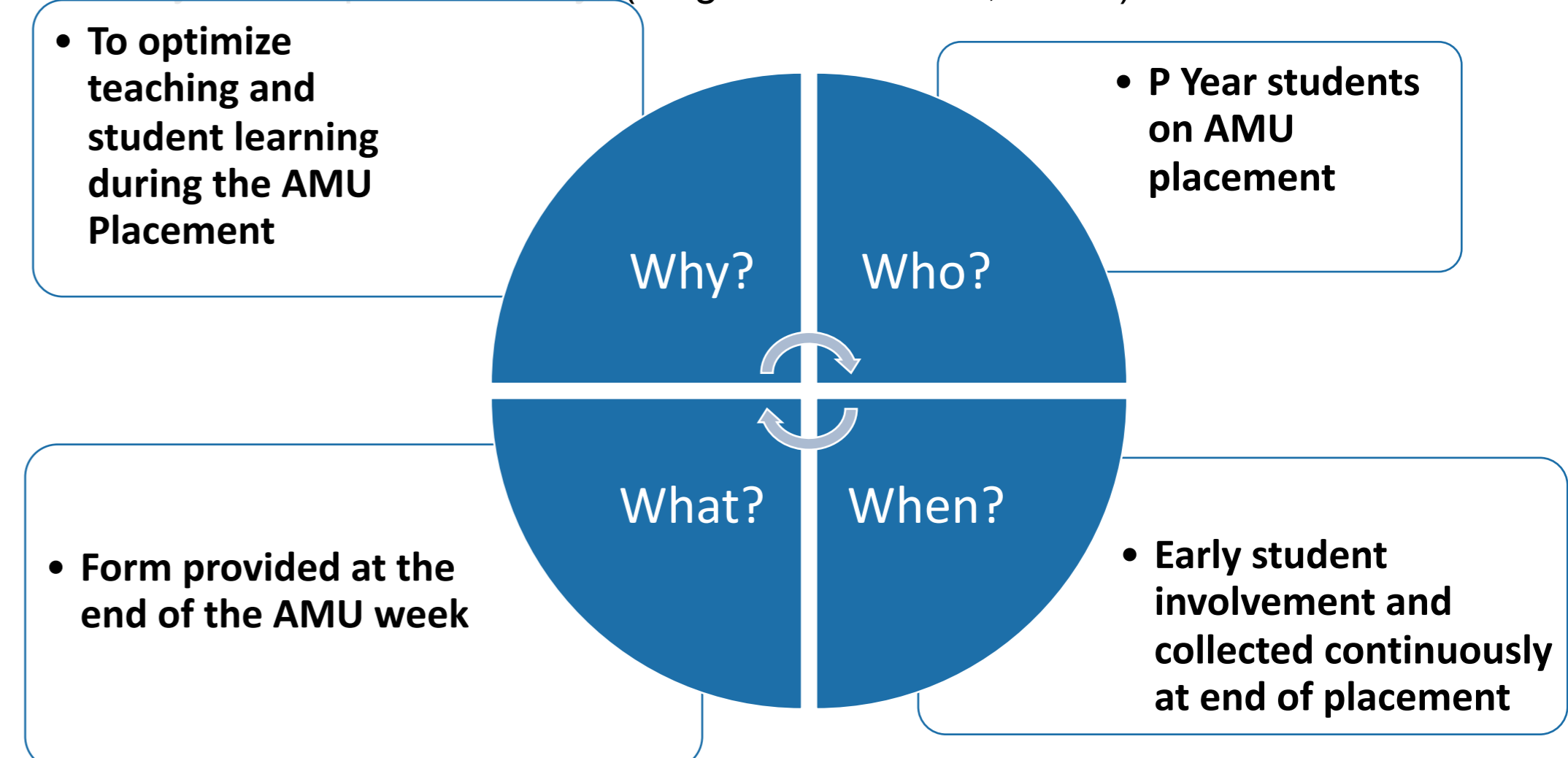
- ▲ Inclusive to most students as it is anonymous and voluntary<sup>1</sup>
- ▲ Provides a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data with open-ended and closed questions to assess students' attitudes to their teaching methods (Likert numerical scale rating 1 to 10)<sup>2</sup>
- ▲ Circulated to the students in a timely manner (end of week)

### Weaknesses:

- ▼ Purpose of evaluation and instructions to use is not clearly stated.
- ▼ Collection of general questions that failed to address specific educational learning points
- ▼ Likert scale using numbers maybe less objective as the choice of a number may have various different interpretations<sup>3,6</sup>.

## Discussion

We identified characteristics of effective evaluations to help us develop our programme and team of educators. Therefore, we will aim to incorporate questions to elicit these in the new evaluation form. Planning and evaluation are integral to the enduring process of continuous development, and defining the content of evaluation is a critical step (Kogan and Shea, 2007; Lovato and Wall, 2013). Formulating an optimised evaluation form originates from providing clear answers to Kogan's four questions (Graph 2), as it will make our data more measurable and improve validity, reliability and reproducibility, (Kogan and Shea, 2007).



Graph 2: A new framework for improved evaluation.

## Future directives: Steps for an improved student evaluation form

1. Introduce students to the evaluation early in placement. Provide clear Introduction, Instructions on how to use the form and thank you note at the end.
2. Replace less clear and general questions with specific ones: "how would you rate the teaching" -> "how much do you agree with each of the following statements: delivery was effective and clear, session was well prepared, feedback was useful"
3. Updated questions address both the curriculum evaluation but also the individual tutor's teaching methods and course material and will avoid personally characterization of the teacher
4. Replace number Likert-scales by word Likert-scales and describe each option clearly. This will make it more flexible to analyse data and reach to conclusions about our teaching methods.
5. Involvement of 'Neutral' option and open-ended questions for variety to encourage students to express their honest opinion and not just check boxes.
6. Add a self-assessment question to improve the validity of our study by comparing the students' scores on self-assessment and the rest of the evaluation form.



Original form



Revised form

## Limitations

Despite being feasible and informative, the use of student-completed surveys may still have disadvantages if it is used as the only method of assessment (Tekian et al., 2017). Feedback is collected at the end of the week students when students may have forgotten relevant information.

## Takeaway messages

- ▶ We would eventually like to create a culture where feedback is viewed as a 'meaningful conversation' between teachers and learners (Tekian et al., 2017).
- ▶ We hope to optimize the template and combine it with verbal feedback from the students. We wish to incorporate our form to other departments to assist in the faculty's teaching and eventually benefit more students to meet their learning needs.
- ▶ Future steps should focus on improving the reliability of our evaluation form by collecting more responses and analyse our data.

## References

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