Developing Student Feedback and Engagement for the Maynooth University Music Department

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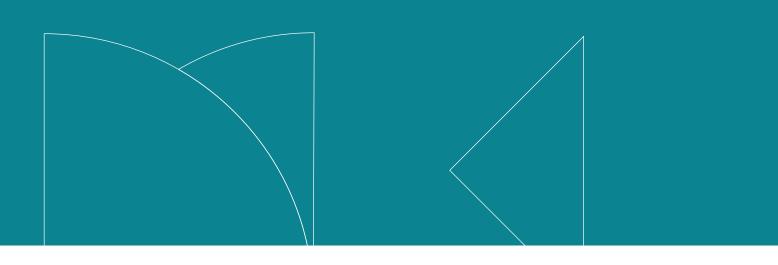Maynooth University Department of Music

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Contents

▶Overview

Maynooth University's Music Department faces unique challenges in obtaining student feedback due to the diverse teaching approaches we employ. While many of our modules are in traditional lecture-style formats, we also teach one-to-one lessons in applied performance, host masterclass-type performance seminars, lead ensemble activities, and engage in extensive team teaching. We currently do not have a centralised, discipline-specific student feedback approach to inform ongoing module, programme, or Departmental-level evaluation. Individual staff members have until now, been encouraged to develop their own methods of obtaining student input to replace the standardised Maynooth University Student Experience of Learning Evaluation (SELE) questionnaire. Finally, our department has been faced with the immediate and pressing need to obtain student feedback during the Covid-19 pandemic. As this sudden and sustained move to remote teaching has forced major adjustments in course structure, teaching approaches and engagement, student input and feedback on our modules and programmes is more essential than ever.

To tackle these challenges and to seek student feedback approaches that we could recommend to all colleagues across our diverse Department, we undertook three pilot initiatives to enable us to identify robust and flexible methods for obtaining student feedback on modules and programmes:

(i) Departmental end of semester focus group with students.

(ii) Mid- and end-of-module evaluations using an in-class response system.

(iii) Feedback Forum with staff and Departmental Student Representatives.

A fundamental guiding principle of our pilots has been to create systems for soliciting student feedback that would not simply serve as a response or solution to the current challenges presented by remote and blended learning. Rather, we aimed to build and familiarise ourselves with systems and means of gaining student feedback that would serve us well into the future, while reflecting the unique dynamics of our Department. In so doing these pilots aimed to set patterns and precedents that could be developed into a sustained, long-term culture of teaching evaluation and active student engagement within the Department.

Our End of Semester Focus Group was a targeted event designed to provide feedback on teaching at a Department-level by providing students from all programmes and year groups with a dedicated space to share their experience of the move to remote teaching due to Covid-19. The mid- and end-of-module evaluations were designed to enhance the culture of feedback within the Department on the micro level, by centring on individual instructors and their modules and providing a single platform that they can use in class and adapt to fit their specific needs. Finally, our broadest pilot approach has been engaging with Departmental Student Representatives, who provide the first, second-, and third-year student classes with a means for formally communicating with teaching staff about general matters of concern across the Department on an ongoing basis through a semester. The Student Representatives meet as a group on a semesterly basis with the Head of Department and one other member of staff, bringing to our attention the views of students from each class.

Throughout the initiative we have been eager to ensure that the student feedback activities piloted would allow us to reflect on our own teaching and to shape future teaching practice in the Department. The ways in which we connected student feedback and our own examinations of teaching can be seen in the 'Impact on Teaching' sections below. Our interaction with ideas about teaching evaluation also encouraged us to adopt a group reflection process to explore the success of our feedback activities themselves, and consider the potential value of group reflection for colleagues who would like to further analyse their own teaching (see 'Overall Reflections').

▶Approaches and Outcomes

(i)   Departmental End of Semester/Year Focus Group

An online Departmental Focus Group was implemented in July 2020, with the aim of better understanding the student experience of online teaching and learning. There was particular focus on how students encountered the forced switch to remote teaching in the wake of Covid-19 restrictions in March 2020. The design was heavily influenced by Cochran et al. (2006), in which focus groups were used to consider the online experience of business students. In this model, discussion proceeds from the open-ended to the specific, and responses are analysed via an open-coding process. A key difference in our approach was the role that students played in categorising responses. We adopted a partnership approach in which students were involved in both giving feedback and in the analysis of that feedback.

Music Department students were invited to take part on a voluntary basis. Student volunteers were randomly assigned the role of either focus group participant or focus group coder. All student volunteers participated in a preliminary session ahead of the focus group which was aimed at introducing the process to be used for the coding of narrative material. The role of the coders was to identify, and generate a compendium of the main themes and sub-themes arising in participants' answers to each focus group question. Coders drew up this compendium in an online session that followed the focus group. The idea here was to foster significant student partnership: students had a meaningful role in shaping the feedback process itself by playing a substantial part in analysis of feedback – deciding upon and presenting the main themes identified to staff members before staff members themselves analysed the focus group data.

The focus group and subsequent coding session were facilitated by colleagues from the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), who also produced an anonymised transcript of the focus group discussion. This transcript complemented the list of codes drawn up by the student coders. The codes were useful in terms of understanding the overriding themes that characterised the students' experience of the emergency switch to remote learning. The focus group featured a range of questions migrating from general to specific – broader questions at the beginning invited free association about large topics

such as online teaching and perceptions about the online environment, and then the questions gradually became more tightly focused to consider issues such as the specific aspects of online learning that students would like to see retained in the future (see appendix for outline of focus group process).

The focus group's targeted emphasis on a particular theme yielded valuable data for staff, justifying the future development of ad hoc focus groups to tackle specific issues likely to have major student impacts (see appendix for preliminary observations which were shared with colleagues). Students emphasised that there were real benefits to the increased flexibility, convenience, and access associated with online learning. At the same time, such issues as poor internet connections, lack of social outlets, an overabundance of written material, and a fundamental loss of interaction with peers on academic matters, were common concerns. Most alarmingly, some participants in the focus group suggested that practical aspects of the programme had been "ruined" by the switch to online learning. This was an especially troubling yet illuminating finding that had major implications for a module like MU327 (see below), which is as much about academic writing and research as it is about fostering creative collaboration and producing creative work. Overall, the students have emphasised a "nostalgia" for the social implications of group work and the ability to interact face-to-face within and beyond the module's scheduled activities.

Impacts on Teaching

The Project Team presented their Focus Group findings in a report to their Departmental colleagues in October 2020. Through this report, insights gained from the Department-based End of Year/End of Semester Focus Group offered ideas for adjusting teaching and learning in semester one of the 2020–21 academic year. For example, we learned that many students had gained additional commitments and responsibilities during the pandemic, which meant that more fluid deadlines should be incorporated into module design. Students suffering from poor internet connections in various parts of the country highlighted the potential issues presented by offering only live, bandwidth-heavy lectures on Microsoft Teams. This knowledge resulted in a greater use of Panopto during the 2020–21 academic year, providing students with a way of accessing the information at a time and place of their choosing. In addition, it was suggested by students in the Focus Group that, when used for non-lecture classes, Microsoft Teams did much to ameliorate both the sense of isolation and the loss of opportunities for social learning. As a result, steps were taken in the 2020–21 academic year to make greater use of Teams to mimic a live classroom as much as possible, while also making use of pre-recorded lectures through Panopto.

Reflections and Recommendations for Future Use

The knowledge that staff have developed in running focus groups will help to ensure their future use, but it is also important to consider how frequently they should be employed as they are time intensive. Students with particular characteristics might self-select for involvement in a Focus Group, which could mean that the perspectives of a significant portion of students go unheard. Given these challenges we would recommend the use of Focus Groups, involving student coders, to tackle specific issues on an ad hoc basis rather than at the end of every semester or academic year.

(ii) Mid- and End-of-Module Evaluation Using In-Class Polling

In-class module evaluations were piloted with the aim of enhancing the culture of feedback within the Department at the module-level centring on individual instructors, and recognising their need to adapt evaluation methods to their specific teaching contexts. Following consideration of potential interactive audience response apps, we selected TurningPoint because it allowed anonymous polling, provided immediate report options, and complied with University data usage policies.

We used a two-part approach to gaining student feedback: a mid-module and an end-of-module evaluation. MU327: Music as Creative Practice was selected for this pilot because it was a newly designed year-long module launched in 2020-21 and the instructor was eager to glean insights into how students felt about the content and teaching methods. More specifically, since the module design emphasises creative output and collaboration amongst final-year students from such areas as composition, performance, music technology, and musicology, it had the potential to obtain feedback on a wide range of issues that would benefit the Department more generally. The module was attended by fifteen students.

The instructor developed a set of questions for the mid-module evaluation, and added these to TurningPoint. The questions focused on four main strands: Lectures (content, materials, teaching approaches); Feedback and Assessment (strategies for assessment, effectiveness of communication with students); Attitude (reasons for registering to the module, interest in its core components); and Expectations (reasons for fulfilled or unfulfilled expectations, suggestions for improvement) (see Appendix for full question list). TurningPoint's flexibility allowed us to draw on both quantitative and qualitative data inputs: the evaluations included multiple choice questions, to which students would respond on a Likert scale indicating agreement or disagreement with a given question, as well as qualitative narrative questions that allowed students to critically reflect on elements that would improve lecture experiences and engagement with the module content.

How it worked in Class

Mid-module Evaluation

- The instructor used the TurningPoint 'Self-paced polling' option so that students' answers would not be displayed to the rest of the class as they answered the questions.

- The TurningPoint session ID was shared with students allowing them to answer the questions either by accessing ttpol.eu on a browser or by downloading and using the TurningPoint app on their smart phones.

- Eleven enrolled students took the mid-semester evaluation, with eight using the desktop link and three opting to download and use the TurningPoint app. Students appear to have been able to access the poll without technical problems. The mid-module evaluation took approximately twenty minutes for students to complete.

Mid-module – closing the feedback loop

- After the lecture, the instructor identified the most salient responses obtained from the students, and, decided on priorities to address based on the feedback.

- In the next lecture, the instructor gave a short PowerPoint presentation responding to the student feedback. This was communicated as a "Closing the feedback loop" session during scheduled lecture time, and the lecturer started the session by asking students whether they wanted to voice further concerns, or insights, or clarify any of the comments they had input in their answers. Use of audience response platforms such as Menti.com would have provided a further level of anonymity here and perhaps proved more effective in this process, as students remained mostly silent.

- The PowerPoint presentation emphasised the anonymity of the operation, and described the results obtained using impactful visual devices, such as charts, diagrams and, where possible, word clouds based on the keywords emerging from the students' replies. Entire narrative answers were also shown, so that the class could appreciate the level of engagement and the type of responses provided by their peers, as well as see their answers represented on the screen. The instructor felt that this type of response was particularly important for motivating students to engage with the 'feed-forward' process, and such interaction would only be best achieved in the class time context.

End-of-module evaluation

- The mid-module evaluation took approximately twenty minutes for students to complete – a substantial amount of class time. In response a more streamlined list of questions was produced for the end-of-module evaluation (see question list in appendix). This second set of questions built on the first by including a question that respondents to the mid-module evaluation had recommended they be asked in future evaluations. This helped to highlight to students that the process of gathering feedback itself was responsive to student ideas.

- The end-of-module evaluation was held during a recap session, in which the lecturer summarised salient events of the module, and invited students to voice their views about activities, assessment, and feedback. They were then invited to participate in the TurningPoint evaluation. It took approx. fifteen minutes for students to complete the poll.

- In their answers to the end-of-module evaluation questions, students acknowledged that the concerns about engagement they expressed in the mid-module evaluation had been taken on board by the lecturer, and that there was increased clarity in relation to module objectives.

- The lecturer closed the feedback loop by making a short podcast responding to the feedback received and sharing this with students on Moodle.

Impacts on Teaching

The mid-module feedback session in MU327, yielded crucial student feedback that suggested adjustments in teaching centred on a desire for more interaction in class discussions and for the provision of more interactive material in general. In response the instructor considered these issues and further discussed them with students and also clarified to the students that other engagement strategies, such as group sessions, one-to-one tutorials and workshops with guest speakers were about to take place in the second half of the semester and in semester two. Since the latter was a significant component of a module designed to facilitate creative practice, the instructor drew on the student feedback to communicate with invited speakers in advance about ways in which they could frame their activities engagingly across both semesters within the context of the aims and goals of the module overall. As a result, in end-of-module evaluation, students deemed the activities undertaken with guest speakers to be very constructive and illuminating for their career development.

The evaluation activities also encouraged the instructor to consider and develop her teaching more generally. In response to the mid-module evaluation, she examined all aspects of the course layout on Moodle and the overall organisation of the module itself, taking care to find ways in which more interactive material could be included both on Moodle and during lectures. In addition, she opted to begin providing weblinks to musical examples during live lectures to avoid sound quality issues, as well as investing in a better microphone for speaking.

She also engaged in self-reflection on her lecturing style and the ways she presented module content, and decided to include additional group discussion times during live lectures to enable greater engagement with students, these took place during the second half of semester one and in semester two, after the academic bulk of the module content was delivered. She introduced lecture summaries and recap. activities in order to communicate module objectives more clearly, while maintaining aspects of the module with which students seemed to be already at ease. These changes helped to increase student engagement in class and, in later discussion sessions the students highlighted their appreciation of the engagement strategies applied by guest speakers during their workshops.
The feedback sessions also highlighted the need to emphasise the supports available to students. The instructor, for example, made clear that students could freely access her or her colleagues' help when needed, and that they should feel comfortable supporting one another as a group, even in the digital environment. She emphasised the opportunities offered by Teams, Moodle, and other social media platforms for students to interact as a group beyond class times and away from her own involvement. Through group meetings, it became clear that these mechanisms of communication were not only implemented independently by the students, but also became a vital aspect of their group work. This was emphasised by students in the end-of-module evaluation, where the majority concluded that the module descriptor's promise of opportunities to work creatively with colleagues from other strands had proven particularly fertile, and suggested ways to implement that aspect for future cohorts and provided ideas for alternative forms of collaborative assessments. Overall student input into the new third-year module (MU327) has resulted in significant curricular adjustments.

Reflections and Recommendations for Future Use

We found that in-class self-paced polling evaluations are highly flexible and would work well for instructors involved in the coordination and teaching of the different types of modules that we provide in the Music Department. The ability to obtain immediate feedback responses from students, enables teaching staff to reflect on their teaching during the life-time of a module and greatly assists in their ability to close the feedback loop. Holding the evaluations in-class and hosting 'closing the feedback loop' sessions also indicates to students that the Department recognises that providing feedback is a central academic activity, not an optional extra. It also emphasises to students their feedback enables staff to reflect on and enhance their teaching.

A major benefit of administering mid- and end-of-semester evaluations via an audience response system like TurningPoint Self-Paced Polling, is the reduction of potential social desirability bias through the complete anonymity and comfort that comes from using personal devices (tablet, laptop, desktop, or smartphone). Such a circumstance should allow for more complete pictures of how students are responding to the instructor, the module content, and teaching more generally. The TurningPoint application also presents the feedback data obtained very clearly, with word clouds for narrative responses and bar graphs offering succinct and clear outlines of major trends that can inform an instructor of salient features in the student responses. While students with particular characteristics might self-select for involvement in Focus Groups or volunteer as Student Representatives, our pilot suggested that this is less of a problem for in-class polling, indicating that it has significant potential for long-term impact on how the Music Department streamlines and standardises the approaches used for collecting student feedback across modules and programmes.

TurningPoint's most significant drawback, is the slight learning curve it presents for staff unfamiliar with the platform. The added time and energy needed to learn the basics of another program is certainly a problem for staff members working under significant time constraints. However, once an evaluation has been created, it is highly flexible, easily accommodating edits and can be shared with colleagues who might teach the module in the future, or who are seeking models to create their own in-class polling evaluations.   Based on our experiences using the TurningPoint audience response system for our feedback pilot during the first semester of the 2020-2021 academic year, we would highly recommend use of this program/similar audience response system to other departments at Maynooth University for mid- and end-of-module evaluations.

(iii) Student Representatives

We engaged with the Students' Union representative system, and hoped that drawing on a pre-existing system would allow us to tap into and enhance the existing culture of feedback in the Department. Student Representatives (one for each programme year group) serve as a liaison between their class and teaching staff in the Music Department. We chose to use a streamlined system of communication with representatives which involved one 'student rep-staff meeting' to be held each semester. This provided Student Representatives with an ongoing opportunity to voice concerns and discuss teaching and learning issues with the Head of Department and teaching staff. The first meeting took place in November 2020, and the second in February 2021.

The Meeting Process

- One meeting was held each semester.

- The meetings were attend by the Students' Union Representatives for each Music programme year group and the Head of Department, accompanied by the Deputy Head of Department.

- Both Representatives and staff were informed well in advance of the meeting date and time.

- Minutes were taken by the Deputy Head of Department and salient issues that stood out to the Head of Department and Deputy Head of Department were discussed at the next upcoming faculty board meeting.

- Minutes published as a digest that was provided to Student Representatives who would then disseminate the document to their individual year classes as a means to close the feedback loop by allowing them to directly share feedback and departmental responses with the students they represent.

Impacts on Teaching

The Departmental Student Representatives provide a way for each year group, to know that they have a formalised voice at meetings with teaching staff, and that their concerns are taken seriously. Like pilots (I) and (II), this provided valuable immediate data in the short term, while firmly establishing an ongoing process for encouraging a culture of open dialogue and exchange within the Department, and enabling staff and students to work together over the longer term.

As with (I) and (II), Student Representatives this year have noted that online teaching and assessment presents distinctive challenges and problems: performers struggling to coordinate, record, and perform in ensembles; music technology students with no studio access; and the major difficulty of needing to potentially purchase expensive music notation programs and other software for composers and for students working through music theory and analysis modules. Fundamentally, the lack of face-to-face contact, whether in performance or in class, has had severe negative consequences on students' artistic development. One especially positive and unexpected insight revealed through the discussions with Student Representatives, however, has been the proliferation of student study groups taking place through social media apps. Indeed this suggests that the Department could consider establishing its own online groups to facilitate a culture of open communication.

As well as highlighting issues with online teaching and learning, the meeting in November 2020, indicated that greater communication with students in these semesterly Representative forum sessions can both lower their general stress levels and emphasise that the Department takes their perspectives seriously. The most pressing consensus among the student representatives during this meeting were concerns about performance assessments being administered by video, as opposed to in-person. The Head of Department explained that the continuing uncertainty engendered by the Covid-19 pandemic meant that the usual assessment methods had to be suspended while also stressing the latitude the Department is attempting to provide to students in submitting performance-based assessments. Music technology students also noted accessibility issues presented by the pandemic, especially regarding a lack of studio time and the problems of obtaining expensive software necessary for their work. In this case, the Head of Department received valuable and targeted input that could be brought to colleagues in the music technology area to determine workarounds and solutions.

Reflections and Recommendations for Future Use

Crucially, the November meeting strongly suggested that highly engaged students who serve as Representatives can often solicit input from the entire student body more easily than we can as staff members. In addition, these Student Representatives can pick up on particular issues and challenges that may not come to staff members' attention. In short, Student Representatives serve to counter our blind spots and foster greater transparency within the Department. Minutes from these Student Representative meetings are published for the entire Music Department student body as a digest, emphasising the importance of maintaining open communication.

As engaging with Student Representatives makes use of pre-existing Departmental infrastructure and knowledge, we feel its continued use into the future in some form is assured, though further thought should be put into how often Student Representatives should meet with staff members in each semester and how Representatives' responsibilities might shift and change. The possibility that students with particular characteristics might self-select for involvement as Student Representatives must also be borne in mind. However, combining Representatives' input with the other methods piloted, may produce complementary forms of feedback.

▶Overall Reflections

Group reflection activity and evaluating pilots

As well as examining the effects of our feedback pilots as they progressed, our discipline team employed a group evaluation process to look back and examine the feedback methods that we used, after they were completed. This reflection exercise was organised into a one-hour discussion divided into twenty-minute periods dedicated to examining the three main focuses in our case study: focus groups, mid- and end-of-module TurningPoint evaluations, and Student Representatives. For each section of the group exercise, we used a basic prompt that would initiate conversation and allow us to speak as a team about our thoughts and views, both positive and negative (see appendix for outline of group reflection process).

Engaging in this exercise added to our final reflections on our feedback pilots as detailed below, but it also allowed us to consider the value of group reflection as an evaluation activity more generally. For example, the substantial length of our study resulted in individual members of the project team adjusting and changing their views on various aspects of the tools we developed as time passed. Having a final meeting exercise to examine such changes in outlook provided a way to make more refined recommendations about future use of these tools for effectively fostering a culture of active student feedback. This suggests that, by providing a way of looking back and considering change over time, group reflection might be more generally useful as an evaluation method for thinking about teaching and learning issues that evolve over a semester or academic year.

The method also allowed us to explore issues and make collective decisions, for example while acknowledging the value of focus groups, the discussion revealed that setting up and proctoring such events is logistically difficult and would be challenging to turn into a semesterly or even annual event, since they are expensive in terms of time required. We reached the consensus that the best role for focus groups in the future would be as special tools for use when the Music Department want to investigate particularly weighty issues. Agreement was unanimous about the value of using audience participation software to solicit, manage, and analyse student feedback data. The main concern that arose in our discussions was encouraging other staff to use the software while providing technical guidance to minimise the learning curve. Finally, we critically assessed the efficacy of student input through the channel of official Representatives. The discussion suggested to us that many substantive student feedback concerns are raised through more anonymous settings that are also less formal. Crucially, social desirability bias in such a setting as when meeting with staff, could possibly lead students to feel uncomfortable relaying major or more controversial issues raised by their fellow students. These challenges must be borne in mind alongside the clear advantages of the Representative system, and we concluded that they are best remedied by ensuring we also always have anonymous channels for students to provide feedback on teaching and learning issues to complement feedback via Student Reps. Taking part in the group discussion also highlighted the potential future value of group reflection for aiding decision making when the Department is considering changes in teaching practice.

Final Reflections and Recommendations from a Departmental Perspective

Overall, our pilots achieved many of our desired outcomes, demonstrating both the feasibility of these student feedback approaches and their potential long-term efficacy in the Department. Indeed, we believe the complementary nature of the different processes piloted will work together well in this context and this is a valuable finding for a Department characterised by such diverse teaching and learning approaches. The use of the in-class response system for mid- and end-of-module evaluation, provided a way of embedding feedback processes, and student input, into teaching and learning. The method underlying the focus group, with a targeted emphasis on a particular theme yielded valuable data for staff, and highlighted possibilities for the future development of ad hoc focus groups with student coders, to tackle specific issues with major student impacts. Finally, the Departmental Student Representatives provide a way for each class of the student body (first, second, and third years), to feel they have a formalised voice with teaching staff at meetings, and that their concerns are taken seriously. In total, all these feedback pilots provide valuable immediate data in the short term while firmly establishing a long-term precedent for, and culture of open dialogue and exchange within the Department.

While we are pleased with the piloted projects and their positive outcomes, we are eager to not simply use them in the short-term as a stopgap for tackling Covid-19 issues. In fact, one of the primary challenges we faced, whether in piloting these projects, validating student feedback with our own reflections on teaching, or in instituting the necessary changes, came from the virtual setting itself. In addition, the content of the student feedback we received was, to varying degrees, almost always returning to complications from the pandemic. However, at every stage of development, we have endeavoured to conceive of these projects in a manner that would make them effective when the public health situation allows face-to-face instruction to resume.

Overall we found the in-class polling module evaluations offer especially exciting possibilities, as they provide an instructor with a clear, quick, and uniform way in which to gather and analyse student feedback. One notable caveat for this pilot was that we were working within the confines of a small module. It will be advantageous to also trial this approach in one of our modules with a high volume of students. More generally, we found that offering students the option of providing narrative or qualitative responses, whether through module evaluations, focus groups, or Student Representatives' discussions with staff, highlighted to students that they were actively contributing to and leaving their mark on a module, programme, or broader Departmental matters. We also found that reflecting together as a group on our feedback activities provided us with new perspectives on the issues considered and enabled us to make collective decisions about future recommendations. The result of running these pilot programmes in our Department has been a deepening culture of student partnership, while also providing new opportunities for staff to reflect on and develop their teaching.

▶Appendix

Process for Establishing and Running Focus Group with Student Coders

- Design Focus Group Question Schedule (seek ethical approval if required e.g. if publishing results).

- Invite students volunteers to be coders for or participants in Focus Group (and gain their written consent if ethical approval is required).

- Train all student volunteers as coders at dedicated training session.

- Randomly assign student volunteers to be either coders or participants.

- Inform CTL that student volunteers are ready to be contacted in order to participate in the Focus Group.

- CTL contact student volunteers to inform them about the Focus Group format and invite them to participate.

- CTL facilitate and record Focus Group, all participants and coders attend.

- CTL facilitate and record Focus Group coding session immediately after the Focus Group at which all coders attend.

- CTL transcribe and anonymise Focus Group transcript, CTL write up list of codes as agreed by coders.

- Participants and volunteers review transcript and list of codes.

- Participants and volunteers sign off on final transcript and list of codes.

- Transcript and list of codes sent to Department Team.

- Department Team analyse transcript and list of codes, and produce short report on the Focus Group to be shared with staff.

- Summary of staff responses shared with students.

Focus Group. Questions have been structured as follows

1 Introductions (10 min)
- **a.** Name
- **b.** Year of Study, subject
- **c.** Further specialisms (e.g. composition, performance, studio work)

2 Free association, online teaching e.g. via Padlet/Menti (10 min)
- **a.** What things come to mind when you consider online teaching?
- **b.** What do you think is important to discuss in relation to your experience of online teaching?

3 General perceptions of the online environment (10 min)
- **a.** Strengths [Open ended first]
    - **i.** What was beneficial to your experience in taking material online?
- **b.** Weaknesses and areas for improvement [Open ended]

4 What does the experience lack? What did you miss about your student life? [Open ended first] (10 min)
- **a.** How important are opportunities to discuss concepts and knowledge with peers?
    - **i.** Does this usually happen in your experience?
    - **ii.** If so, did it continue after the switch to online teaching?

5 What aspects of online teaching would students like to see retained in the future?
[Open ended first] (10 min)

6 Are all modules equally effective in delivering online learning? [Open ended first] (10 min)
- **a.** What makes some more effective than others?
- **b.** What difference does the technology an instructor makes use of make?

7 Are online courses preferable, overall, to real-life courses? (10 min)
- **a.** Perhaps, for example, they allow for juggling of work commitments?
    Were you engaged in employment subsequent to transfer of all teaching and learning to online format?

MU327 Mid-Semester Turning Point Evaluation Questions

Short Answer

1 The Lecture:
Suggest one to three elements that can enhance your lecture experience.

2 The Lecturer:
How do you think the lecturer can improve your experience of this module?
Please, provide one to three different points.

3 Module Materials:
Could you suggest one to three elements that could be provided by your lecturer to support your engagement with content?

4 Your Expectations:
Why did you register in this new module?

5 Your Expectations:
What do you expect to understand at the end of the class that you do not know now?

6 Your Expectations:
What do you expect to be able to do at the end of the course that you cannot do now?

7 Your Expectations:
Please suggest one question that we could have asked that would have better enabled you to give feedback on teaching and learning in this module.

Multiple Choice

1 The Lecture:
I am happy with the contents and modes of delivery of the lecture.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

2 The Lecture:
I understand most of the content delivered during the lecture.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

3 The Lecture:
I feel comfortable with the discussion/interaction element of the lecture.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

4 The Lecture:
I believe that the discussion/interactive component is helpful to my understanding of lecture contents.
e. Strongly Agree **f.** Agree **g.** Disagree **h.** Strongly Disagree

5 The Lecturer.
I find the lecturer approachable and easy to communicate with.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

6 The Lecturer:
The Lecturer encourages me to speak my mind on questions and issues arising during the course of the lecture.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

7 Module Materials:
I am happy with the amount of reading/listening materials provided by the lecturer.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

8 Module Materials:
I find the materials provided clear and consistent with each lecture content.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

9 Module Materials:
I am happy with the amount of work required in the module.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

10 Understanding. Presently, I understand…
Creative activities in different musical processes and histories.
a. Strongly Agree **b.** Agree **c.** Disagree **d.** Strongly Disagree

11 Understanding. Presently, I understand…

Differing creative approaches to musical writing, performance and production.

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

12 Understanding. Presently, I understand…

How to engage in creative collaborations with other students from different backgrounds.

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

13 Understanding. Presently, I understand…

How ideas we will explore in this module relate to ideas I have encountered in other modules within this subject area.

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

14 Attitudes. Presently, I am…

Enthusiastic about Creative Practice in Music

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

15 Attitudes. Presently, I am…

Interested in discussing the subject area with friends and fellow students

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

16 Attitudes. Presently, I am…

Confident that I understand the subject matter covered in this module.

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

17 Attitudes. Presently, I am…

Confident that I can undertake the creative component of this module.

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

18 Attitudes. Presently I am…

Comfortable asking for help from others (module coordinator, peers) when working or issues or problems arise.

   e. Strongly Agree   **f.** Agree   **g.** Disagree   **h.** Strongly Disagree

19 Your Expectations:

The creative component of the assessment influenced my decision to choose this module.

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

20 Your Expectations:

The module reflects my initial expectations.

   a. Strongly Agree   **b.** Agree   **c.** Disagree   **d.** Strongly Disagree

MU327 Student End of Semester Turning Point Questionnaire

All questions are meant to be multiple choice-type, except for the narrative ones.

A Module Materials

1. There were sufficient resources to support my learning in this module.
2. The lectures were well prepared and easy to follow.
3. There is a clear match between stated learning outcomes and the module material.
4. The group sessions are effective towards work on the final project.
5. The workload for this module is manageable.
6. The workshops and guest lectures are engaging additions to the module content.
7. The workshops and guest lectures are consistent with the outcomes of the module.
8. **Narrative.** Can you identify any methods of delivery or aspect of the lecture that you find particularly helpful?
9. **Narrative.** Do you have any suggestions as to how the module or its delivery might be improved in the future?

B Feedback and Assessment

10. I am satisfied with the quality of oral/written assessment feedback received in this module.
11. The assessment feedback was given in a timely manner to help learning.
12. Direction on how the assessment(s) would be graded reflected the feedback I received.
13. **Narrative.** Do you have any suggestions that could improve the processing of assessment feedback for this module?
14. **Narrative.** Do you feel that the feedback your provided in the November Turning Point questionnaire was taken on board by the lecturer? If yes, how?

C Expectations

15. This module met my initial expectations.
16. This module inspired me and stimulated my creativity.
17. The module helped me deepen my understanding and broaden my perspectives on music and creativity.
18. **Narrative.** What did you like about this module?

D Attitude

19. I kept up to date with the module content.
20. I have attended most of lectures, workshops and group meetings for this module.
21. I would recommend this module to my peers.
22. **Narrative.** As a student, what could you have done differently to improve your experience with this module?

Group Reflection Process

- Group reflection meeting time scheduled and subjects for discussion agreed.

- In advance of the meeting each group member makes some notes on the issues to be discussed.

- During the meeting a pre-agreed prompt is used to begin discussion for each subject, allowing members to consider the positive and negative aspects of the subject being discussed.

- Participants note common themes and the other main issues that arise during the discussion allowing them to use these reflections to shape future practice.

- Agreement reached through consensus about any plans for future activities based on the group discussion.

Developing Student Feedback and Engagement for the Maynooth University Music Department

> ### About this study
>
> **Developing Student Feedback and Engagement for the Maynooth University Music Department**
>
> Gordon Delap, Estelle Murphy, Michael Palmese & Francesca Placanica
> Maynooth University Department of Music