



# IME

INSTRUCTOR / COURSE  
EVALUATION

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**Improving Academic Teaching**

**Individual Rapport**

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It helps me as a teacher to know the reasons for the poor performance. Showing concern is also a powerful motivator for some students: they begin to do better.”

A Zoology professor concurs: “I call students in who get less than 50% on the biweekly quizzes. In a way, I play parent with them; I ‘sit on’ them a little. I think I understand better now than when I began teaching the need some students have for external motivation.”

### **7. Consciously use your students’ names whenever possible**

“I call roll several times during the beginning of the term to connect faces and names as soon as possible,” a professor of Forestry says. “Later, if a student looks familiar but I can’t remember his or her name, I simply admit it and ask the student to tell me again. Then I make a point of using the name right away to help me remember it the next time.” A professor of Entomology says, “in a class of 100, there are always three or four names that I don’t seem to be able to learn. Nevertheless, my students greatly appreciate the effort.”

Another strategy is to walk around the class while

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## **10 Have your students fill out a brief questionnaire about their backgrounds and interests**

Typically, such questionnaires ask for information about students' major, prerequisite or related courses taken, job experiences, and career plans. Faculty members use this information to understand their students and to call on those whose experiences may give them a different perspective on class content.

A faculty member in Political Science, for example, asks students to describe their most memorable experience that relates to the subject matter of the course. A faculty member who teaches an Geography course asks about students' travel experiences or knowledge of the peoples of the area through relations, friends, or through reading.

## **11. Post your students' names prominently in a lab or seminar:**

A faculty member in the Natural Sciences has each of his students write his or her name on an index card and tape it above the assigned lab station. Using this technique, from the first day, he can begin calling his students by name. "This is one simple thing may be the most important thing I do to establish a good learning environment in which students feel free to approach me, to ask questions, and to get help if they need it."

An Engineering professor follows a similar routine in his seminar classes which tend to have 15-20 students. "I use 5x8 cards folded lengthwise. On each card I write a student's name as large as possible with a bold felt-tip pen. I set these cards around the table so that students can quickly learn each other's names in the same way I do."

## **12 Provide a relaxing informal atmosphere**

"I bring coffee and donuts periodically to my seminar," says a professor in Engineering. "This helps relax my students and lends a congenial tone to the discussions. I find that this simple act seems to make the sessions more interactive. People tend to discuss issues over coffee and donuts more readily than in a fixed formal classroom setting."

## **13 Pair students up to introduce themselves first to one another and then to the class**

In seminar courses, most faculty members ask their students to introduce themselves briefly to the group. A professor of English has students pair up for a few minutes to interview each other about their backgrounds, literary interests, and expectations from the course. Then members of each pair are asked to introduce each other to the group as a whole.

"I think this approach helps students feel free to talk," the professor explains. It also helps set a pattern for discussion in which students are expected to listen to one another and to address their comments and questions as much toward one another as toward the instructor.

#### 14 Make a game of learning students' names

A professor of Forestry uses what he calls the "Name Game" with students to get everyone in the class acquainted. First, students introduce themselves and tell the class something about their majors and their interests. Then he says, "Okay, let's try that again with just the names, only this time you will have to listen very carefully because I want you not only to introduce yourself but give the names of students who came before you."

The first student gets off easy, since he or she has only to introduce herself. The second person has to give his own name and the name of the student before him or her, and so on. "I put myself in last position," he explains, "and by that time I try to name all students in the room. I find that it is not only an effective way to learn their names, but the game-like quality of it breaks the ice and helps to create a sense of community."

#### 15 Schedule specific topics for your office hours

"I find it useful to identify in advance a specific topic for my office hours," says a Linguistics professor. "I encourage students who are having difficulty in that area to come for help." Based on past experiences she knows which concepts are most likely to cause difficulty. She also knows which students are most likely to have difficulty with those concepts.

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abuse this invitation. “I usually get about six calls per term out of several hundred students since it is a lot less time-consuming to clarify an assignment the night before it’s due than to negotiate a grade or an incomplete for a student who did the wrong assignment. I’ve found it’s cost-effective to be a bit more cooperative and flexible at the front end.”

A professor of Political Science agrees. “Even in my large classes (over 450), I rarely get more than a dozen calls, but the fact that I give out my number lets students know I am available if they need me.”

## **21. Do some of your own work in your campus office**

Several professors do non-teaching work in their campus office with an open-door policy. “I tell my students that if the door is open they should feel free to come in and ask whatever questions they have,” one teacher of Dramatic Art says. “On the other hand, if the door is closed, it means either that I am not in or I prefer not to be disturbed.”

An Engineering professor follows the same policy. He tells students that even outside formal office hours, “If you catch me in my office, I’m fair game. This is my number one job, so I’m around the office a lot.”

## **22. Keep your office door open unless you really cannot be disturbed**

“My students should have first priority on my time,” one Engineering professor says. “I always keep my office door open when I am in and am willing to stop whatever I am doing if one of my students comes by. It’s important not to appear standoffish, to act put-upon, bored, or too busy to spend time with your students out of class.”

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