

Center for Teaching and Learning Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Midterm Assessment Process (MAP)

The MAP is an opportunity for faculty to get student feedback on a course while the course is in progress. The MAP is a confidential and voluntary service. Unlike the mandatory evaluations students fill out at the end of the semester, MAPs are done around midterm to allow faculty to make meaningful changes during the semester.

A MAP is a small-group, consensus-based process designed to gather feedback on teaching and learning directly from students; the process asks students “What is working well for your learning in this course?” “What is not working well for your learning in this course?” “What suggestions do you have for improving learning in this course?” The MAP is a formative assessment method: its goal is improvement in teaching and learning, and the information is intended for your benefit and is shared only between you and the CTL consultant.

A MAP allows faculty to:

- obtain candid information from students about learning, activities and materials;
- to clarify or troubleshoot as a course is ongoing;
- compare faculty ideas/perceptions about the course with those held by students;
- obtain information useful in articulating teaching goals;
- address potential communication issues between teacher and students; and
- benefit from a CTL consultant who collects, synthesizes, and helps interpret student feedback, and identifies appropriate teaching suggestions.

The MAP Process

What happens when I ask for a MAP?

A CTL consultant will contact you to schedule a date for 1) the in-class portion (usually 30-45 minute, depending on class size) and for 2) the follow-up debrief within 48 hours of the in-class visit. Please provide the CTL with the following information:

- Day, time and location of class
- Number of students enrolled
- Unavailable dates (i.e., scheduled exam, guest lecture, or faculty absence)
- Available times the following day for a debrief with the consultant

Once scheduled, the consultant will arrive for class, choose a seat preferably in the back of the room, and observe the class during instruction. In order to be most effective, MAPs should not be scheduled for dates when exams, quizzes, or guest lectures take place, nor when the faculty plans to be absent.

What happens in class during a MAP?

We ask that you introduce us briefly to begin the process before you leave the classroom. First, the CTL consultant describes: the goals of a MAP, the process, and articulates the distinction between MAP and the end of term evaluations. There are three steps to the process: individual, small group consensus, and whole class consensus. The same three questions are asked during each step:

- What is working well for your learning in this course?
- What is not working well for your learning in this course?
- What suggestions for improvements do you have?

If time allows, ask students to continue with 3 related questions:

- What are you [the student] doing that is working well for your learning?
- What are you doing that is not working well for your learning?
- What changes could you make to improve your learning in this course?

What happens to the information generated by students?

The CTL generates a report from the small group and whole class consensus processes. The individual responses are reviewed by the consultant for additional relevant information but are not included in the report. All materials gathered during class are recycled to maintain the integrity of the process. You will receive the typed report during the debrief session with the consultant.

When is the best time for a MAP?

Around mid-term, usually October in the fall or March in the spring, but slightly earlier or slightly later is possible. Please make your request well in advance; at present, there are only two staff consultants trained and available.

What should I do after the MAP?

You should discuss the most important results with your students—this is an opportunity to address their concerns, to clarify something confusing to them, or to respond to their suggestions. You will need to decide how much time to allot for this dialogue and whether you want to try any of the suggestions they offered. Some instructors mention their use of MAPs in their Review process as evidence of a learner-centered approach to teaching, and that is a choice you may make; again, CTL will not share this information with anyone but you.