LISTENING MIDSTREAM: MID-SEMESTER FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS FOR CLINICIANS

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Law schools routinely collect end-of-semester teaching evaluations. However, little guidance exists—from law schools and in the legal literature—on soliciting formative, mid-semester feedback from students. This type of feedback is particularly well-suited to the clinical setting, where learning, supervision, and professional identity formation are intertwined. Drawing on higher-education research to show that mid-semester feedback more effectively improves engagement, learning, and instructional practice for current students, this article analyzes how mid-semester feedback aligns with core goals of clinical pedagogy, including reflective practice, metacognition, professional identity formation, and the lawyering skills of giving and receiving feedback. It then addresses common obstacles—time and bandwidth constraints, uneven or non-actionable comments, candor and anonymity concerns, and bias—and explains how design choices about goals, timing, participants, anonymity, collection modes, question forms, and framing can mitigate these problems. The article further offers concrete implementation strategies for reviewing and responding to student input in seminar, supervision, and individual meetings. Finally, it provides adaptable questionnaires to enable clinicians to embed a sustainable mid-semester feedback practice in their courses.

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Introduction

[A]nyone who wants their voice to be heard should be willing to hear someone else's voice as well.[1]

- Hajer Sharief, Human Rights Activist

"Sometimes the assignments seem to be a lot of work and don't always contribute to my learning." This was one student's response when asked on a mid-semester feedback questionnaire about the clinic seminar. While the author believes that the seminar assignments do further students' learning, upon critical reflection following receiving the comment, she realized she may not have communicated the assignments' purposes. She modified how she introduces seminar assignments in class and what information she includes in the assignment instructions, making explicit the connection between the seminar assignments and the work that lawyers do. Receiving this student feedback mid-stream allowed the author to make changes in the middle of the semester. Without the mid-semester feedback, the student may have continued to feel unnecessarily burdened and disengaged from the course.

While most law schools administer end-of-semester student evaluations of teaching–often using standardized forms across the school or university–there is little guidance from schools or from the legal literature on how to design or solicit mid-semester feedback from students effectively.[2] The clinical teaching literature is rich in discussion

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[1] TED Radio Hour, *Want to Teach Your Kids Democratic Values? Start with Family Decisions, Big and Small*, NPR (Sept. 20, 2024), https://www.npr.org/transcripts/g-s1-23458 [https://perma.cc/AC6F-5NZK].

[2] Throughout this article, we use the term "mid-semester feedback" to reference practices that solicit input from students during a course, typically around the mid-semester mark, about their experiences in the course. Mid-semester feedback also includes the process of reviewing and responding to the feedback. The term "end-of-semester evaluations" refers to school-required student evaluations of teaching (SET) that are administered at the end of a course. While there is no explicit American Bar Association (ABA) requirement that law schools require students to provide end-of-semester evaluations, it is a wide-spread practice and a means to satisfy Standard 403(b). Further, Interpretation 403-1 explicitly states, "Efforts to ensure teaching effectiveness may include… institutional review of student course evaluations[.]" ABA. Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools, Standard 403, 2025-2026 (2025). *See, e.g.*, Meera E. Deo, *A Better Tenure Battle: Fighting Bias in Teaching Evaluations*, 31 Colum. J. Gender & L. 7, 10 (2015) (discussing law schools' use of end-of-semester evaluations in tenure decisions).

of feedback from instructors to students.[3] According to one scholar, "feedback. . . is of singular importance to nearly every aspect of clinical teaching."[4] Feedback from students to instructors has not received the same attention.[5] Given the well-documented benefits of mid-semester feedback in higher education generally, this article fills an important gap in the clinical education literature. Mid-semester feedback serves important goals in higher education, which are equally if not more compelling in the law school context. This article explores the specific synergies between mid-semester feedback practices and the goals of clinical legal education. This article also offers guidance for clinical professors[6] considering adopting mid-semester feedback in their clinics.

We proceed in five parts. In Part I we review the history, purpose, and impacts of mid-semester feedback in higher education by synthesizing existing social science research conducted in non-law-school classrooms. In Part II we discuss how mid-semester feedback advances key goals of clinical pedagogy, cataloguing its specific benefits in the law clinic context and situating the practice within the broader framework of experiential legal education. While the practice has many benefits, we acknowledge that there are also limitations and challenges relating to soliciting mid-semester feedback. These are explored in Part III. In Part IV we survey different approaches to obtaining mid-semester feedback consistent with pedagogical and individual teaching goals. Part IV also offers concrete questions and suggestions for implementing one practice in particular: instructor-administered questionnaires. Questionnaires can be implemented in several different ways depending on the instructor's goals and constraints. We set out the important design choices that must be considered in implementing mid-semester feedback in this manner. Part IV also offers suggestions on how to mitigate the challenges identified in Part III. Part V concerns the final (crucial) step: reviewing and responding to student feedback.

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[3] *See, e.g.*, Victor M. Goode, *There is a Method(ology) to This Madness: A Review and Analysis of Feedback in the Clinical Process*, 53 Okla. L. Rev. 223, 236-37 (2000); *see also* William P. Quigley, *Introduction to Clinical Teaching for the New Clinical Law Professor: A View from the First Floor*, 28 Akron L. Rev. 463, 481-84 (1995).

[4] Goode, *supra* note 3, at 224; *see also* Anne D. Gordon, *Better Than Our Biases: Using Psychological Research to Inform Our Approach to Effective, Inclusive Feedback*, 27 Clin. L. Rev. 195, 198 (2021) ("Feedback is one of the most critical elements of clinical teaching[.]").

[5] In the conclusion of his seminal *Introduction to Clinical Teaching*, Professor William Quigley notes that feedback and evaluation are important for the supervisor as well as for students, and he recommends giving students "as many opportunities as possible to give the teacher their observations[.]" Quigley, *supra* note 3, at 495. Despite its importance, there has been no systematic examination of the practice in the law clinic context.

[6] Throughout this article, we use multiple terms to refer to those who teach in law school clinics, including "professor," "clinical professor," "clinician," "teacher," and "instructor." We use the terms interchangeably to make the reading experience more pleasurable and do not mean to draw any distinctions by using different terms.

I. The History, Purpose, and Impacts of Mid-Semester Feedback

A. The History of Mid-Semester Feedback

Mid-semester course feedback was first introduced by Joseph Clark and Mark Redmond at the University of Washington in 1982.[7] Originally called Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID), the method was defined as "a systematic procedure for collecting data about the student experience in a given course" and was used in undergraduate classrooms.[8] In doing so, Clark and Redmond hoped to create a time-efficient feedback approach that provided more qualitative feedback for the professor than end-of-semester evaluations.[9] In fact, Clark and Redmond purposefully chose to use the word "feedback" rather than "evaluation," in part, to stress the formative and constructive nature of the process.[10] In the more than forty years since Clark and Redmond's research was conducted, mid-semester feedback has been widely used and adopted across higher education.[11]

Although this article discusses a range of approaches to mid-semester feedback, its core definition remains consistent with the original conception articulated by Clark and Redmond: it involves student responses to faculty-generated questions regarding the course, teaching, and/or overall learning environment. Mid-semester feedback is typically solicited via paper forms, electronic surveys, or student meetings around the midpoint in the term, leaving time for faculty to implement changes before the course ends.

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[7] While it is possible that others created similar practices, multiple sources cite Clark and Redmond as the first to introduce the concept at the University of Washington. Patricia R. Payette & Marie Kendall Brown, *Gathering Mid-semester Feedback: Three Variations to Improve Instruction*, IDEA, 1 (Jan. 1, 2018), https://ideacontent.blob.core.windows.net/content/sites/2/2020/01/PaperIDEA_67.pdf [https://perma.cc/AML3-94BS]; Miriam Rosalyn Diamond, *The Usefulness of Structured Mid-Term Feedback as a Catalyst for Change in Higher Education Classes*, 5 Active Learning Higher Educ. 217, 218 (2004); Kristin Vogelsang & Frank Ollermann, International Conference on Higher Education Advances, *Flipped Classroom Evaluation using the Teaching Analysis Poll* 10 (2019), https://archive.headconf.org/head19/wp-content/uploads/pdfs/9203.pdf [https://perma.cc/67VU-5PS3]; E. Murat Sozer, Zuhal Zeybekoglu & Mustafa Kaya, *Using Mid-semester Course Evaluation as a Feedback Tool for Improving Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, 44 Assessment & Evaluation Higher Educ. 1003, 1004 (2019); *see also* Joseph D. Clark & Mark V. Redmond, *Small Group Instructional Diagnosis: Final Report*, ERIC (1982), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED217954.pdf [https://perma.cc/MG43-JYLY].

[8] Jody D. Nyquist & Donald H. Wulff, *Consultation Using a Research Perspective*, *in* Face to Face: A Sourcebook of Individual Consultation Techniques for Faculty/Instructional Developers 45, 51 (2d ed. 2001).

[9] Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 1.

[10] Clark & Redmond, *supra* note 7, at 3.

[11] Sozer et al., *supra* note 7, at 1004 (citing Diamond, *supra* note 7).

B. The Purpose of Mid-Semester Feedback

Although mid-semester feedback can take many forms, its core purpose remains consistent: to yield formative, actionable insights for instructors. Research shows that the most effective teachers are those who inspire students,[12] provide the most challenging work,[13] and value student feedback to improve teaching[14] by using student evaluations.[15] Mid-semester feedback supports this model by offering real-time information from students that frequently allows instructors to make meaningful adjustments during the course—improving both student engagement and instructional effectiveness.[16] This type of feedback is especially valuable because it enables professors to make adjustments that are "specific, timely, corrective, and positively framed."[17] It is specific to the course and to the students currently enrolled; timely because it is gathered while there is still opportunity to implement changes; corrective because it reveals what is not working from the student perspective; and positively framed[18] because it asks students to share what is working well and invites constructive suggestions for improvement.[19]

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12 Laura I. Langbein, *The Validity of Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 27 PS: Pol. Sci. & Pol. 545, 550 (1994).

13 Leslie A. Whittington, *Detecting Good Teaching*, 7 J. Pub. Admin. Educ. 5, 6 (2001).

14 G.L.A. Harris & Dannelle D. Stevens, *The Value of Midterm Student Feedback in Cross-Disciplinary Graduate Programs*, 19 J. Pub. Aff. Educ. 537, 541 (2013) (citing Yuankun Yao & Marilyn L. Grady, *How Do Faculty Make Formative Use of Student Evaluation Feedback?: A Multiple Case Study*, 18 J. Evaluation Educ. 107 (2005)).

15 Harris & Stevens, *supra* note 14, at 541 (citing Suzanna M. Hobson & Donna M. Talbot, *Understanding Student Evaluations: What All Faculty Should Know*, 49 Coll. Teaching 26 (2001)).

16 Depending on the issue, the instructor may not be able to implement changes until the following semester. For example, comments may reveal the need to change an exercise that is only conducted at the beginning of the course. In such situations, the instructor can still timely respond to student comments by explaining future planned changes. This is discussed further in Part V.B, *infra.*

17 Cara Gormally, Mara Evans & Peggy Brickman, *Feedback about Teaching in Higher Ed: Neglected Opportunities to Promote Change*, 13 CBE Life Sci. Educ. 187, 193 (2014).

18 While not all students' feedback will be positive, mid-semester feedback is generally "positively framed" because of the framing created by the professor. For example, prompts often ask students to identify which teaching methods are working well, which encourages reflection on the course's strengths. It is also "positively framed" when the professor asks for what can be improved, which requires students to provide ideas or suggestions rather than just complaints or grievances. *See infra* Part IV.G and the appendices for example language for soliciting mid-semester feedback.

19 Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 2 (citing Doug Holton, Hajara Mahmood, Kathryn Cunningham, Miriam Rosalyn Diamond, Mary Wright, CRLT U. Michigan, Maha Bali, Susan Brown & Eulises Domínguez, Midterm Student Feedback Guidebook, https://bit.ly/msfguidebook (Google Drive) (last modified Sept. 15, 2022); Wilbert J. McKeachie, McKeachie's Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers (10th ed., 1999)).

C. Mid-Semester Feedback vs. End-of-Semester Evaluations

Mid-semester feedback serves a fundamentally different purpose from end-of-semester evaluations. While institutional practices vary, many universities rely on standardized Likert-scale forms distributed at the conclusion of the term.[20] These evaluations are typically summative in nature, designed more for administrative review, promotion, and tenure[21] than for pedagogical improvement.[22] In many cases, faculty are unable to tailor the questions to fit the unique context of their course or discipline. Even when limited customization is permitted—such as through the use of a question bank—the feedback remains retrospective, offering no opportunity for instructors to make meaningful changes that benefit the current student cohort.[23] Students may be less likely to invest significant time or thought into their end-of-semester evaluation when they believe it will have little to no impact on their own learning experience—or even that of future students—because they assume professors will disregard or dismiss their comments.[24] End-of-semester evaluations are typically released only after grades are finalized, creating a long delay between when students provide feedback and when faculty receive it. By then, faculty may already be planning the next semester without that input or be on break—diminishing both the seriousness with which evaluations are taken and the potential benefit of the students' comments. Thus, end-of-semester evaluations often fall short of fostering the kind of substantive, reflective teaching that improves learning outcomes in real time.[25]

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[20] A Likert scale is a type of rating scale that asks participants to provide feedback in numerical format. For example, a Likert scale question on an end-of-semester evaluation form might say, "On a scale between 1 and 5, how effective was the instructor for this course?" (where 1 indicates "strongly disagree" and 5 indicates "strongly agree"). A 5-point scale is most widely used in social science studies. *See* Benidiktus Tanujaya, Rully Charitas Indra Prahmana & Jeinne Mumu, *Likert Scale in Social Sciences Research: Problems and Difficulties*, 16 FWU J. Soc. Sci. 89, 91 (Winter 2022).

[21] S.R. Wickramasinghe & W.M. Timpson, *Mid-Semester Student Feedback Enhances Student Learning*, 1 Educ. for Chem. Eng'rs 126, 126 (2006); *see also* Deo, *supra* note 2, at 10.

[22] Margaret K. Snooks, Sue E. Neeley & Kathleen M. Williamson, *From SGID and GIFT to BBQ: Streamlining Midterm Student Evaluations to Improve Teaching and Learning*, 22 to Improve Academy: J. Educ. Dev. 110, 113 (2004).

[23] Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 2; Christoph Kessler & Simin Nadjm-Tehrani, *Midterm Course Evaluations with Muddy Cards*, 34 ITICSE 233, 233 (2002). After the semester has ended, instructors also lack a convenient way to respond to their former students' comments.

[24] Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 2 (citing Johnette Caulfield, *What Motivates Students to Provide Feedback to Teachers About Teaching and Learning? An Expectancy Theory Perspective*, 1 Int'l J. for Scholarship Teaching & Learning 1 (2007)).

[25] *See* Sozer et al., *supra* note 7, at 1004.

D. The Impacts of Mid-Semester Feedback Documented in Higher Education

The benefits of mid-semester feedback are well-documented across higher education.[26] Drawing from the social science literature, we divide these benefits into five categories.[27] First, as mentioned above, unlike end-of-semester evaluations, mid-semester feedback is particularly impactful because it can improve the experience for current, rather than future, students.[28] This means that course corrections are timely and targeted, directly benefiting the students currently enrolled rather than serving only as improvements for future classes that may or may not have the same needs.

Second, research shows that mid-semester feedback improves both teaching and learning outcomes.[29] This may be, in part, because mid-semester feedback increases student engagement and satisfaction and allays student confusion.[30] Mid-semester feedback has also been shown to increase student motivation and participation.[31]

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[26] Here, higher education refers to both undergraduate and graduate school courses.

[27] Although these benefits inherently overlap with one another, the research and academic literature are distinct about each of these benefits, and each one warrants individual attention.

[28] Harris & Stevens, *supra* note 14, at 552; Whitney Ransom McGowan & Russell T. Osguthorpe, *Student and Faculty Perceptions of Effects of Midcourse Evaluation*, 29 TO IMPROVE ACADEMY 160, 161 (2011); Stephanie Springgay & Anthony Clarke, *Mid-Course Feedback on Faculty Teaching: A Pilot Project*, *in* 4 COLLECTIVE IMPROVISATION IN A TEACHER EDUC. COMMUNITY 171, 172 (Linda Farr Darling, Gaalen Erickson & Anthony Clarke eds., 2007).

[29] McGowan & Osguthorpe, *supra* note 28, at 170; Harris & Stevens, *supra* note 14, at 552.

Some researchers have argued that end-of-semester student evaluations do not, in fact, measure student learning or instructor quality. *E.g.,* Justin Esarey & Natalie Valdes, *Unbiased, Reliable and Valid Student Evaluations Can Still Be Unfair*, 45 ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION HIGHER EDUC. 1106 (2020). For instance, a 2017 research team revisited prior studies and concluded that there are "no significant correlations between the SET ratings and learning." Bob Uttl, Carmela A. White & Daniela Wong Gonzalez, *Meta-Analysis of Faculty's Teaching Effectiveness: Student Evaluation of Teaching Ratings and Student Learning Are Not Related*, 54 STUD. EDUC. EVALUATION 22, 22 (2017) (discussing how prior studies' findings were often skewed due to a publication bias—where smaller studies showing strong positive effects were more likely to be published, while those with no significant findings were often left out).

However, other studies show that student evaluations are a reliable and valid method of collecting information about students' opinions of a course. Chenicheri Sid Nair, Lorraine Bennett & Patricie Mertova, *Responding to the Student Voice: A Case Study of a Systematic Improvement Strategy*, 22 TQM J. 553, 554-55, 561 (2010); *see also* MICHAEL HUNTER SCHWARTZ, SOPHIE M. SPARROW & GERALD F. HESS, TEACHING LAW BY DESIGN: ENGAGING STUDENTS FROM THE SYLLABUS TO THE FINAL EXAM 192 (2d ed. 2017) ("Thousands of empirical studies of student evaluations conclude that in general, they are valid and reliable measures of teaching effectiveness").

[30] *See generally* Lorraine Parkin & Michael Henderson, *Mid-semester Student Satisfaction Feedback: Reducing Confusion and Anxiety*, ASCILITE 456 (2014), https://publications.ascilite.org/index.php/APUB/article/view/1255/998 [https://perma.cc/4SX9-LVQN] (discussing the results of small-scale pilot research where conducting mid-semester student feedback surveys increased student engagement and satisfaction, and reduced student confusion and anxiety).

[31] Clark & Redmond, *supra* note 7, at 15-16; *see* Mark V. Redmond, *A Process of Midterm Evaluation Incorporating Small Group Discussion of a Course and Its Effect on*

Third, mid-semester feedback strengthens student-faculty relationships by improving communication and rapport.[32] When students see their input taken seriously, it cultivates trust and encourages a more collaborative classroom dynamic.[33]

Fourth, mid-semester feedback can promote faculty reflection, growth, and confidence. Mid-semester feedback from students has been shown to stimulate instructors to learn more about new teaching methods and ultimately motivates them to utilize these methods in their classrooms.[34] Mid-semester feedback can lead to meaningful adjustments in areas such as in-class assignments, instructional strategies, assessment methods, and more.[35] Research shows that faculty who actively work to improve their teaching report greater job satisfaction, while those who do not are less likely to effectively motivate and engage their students.[36] Ultimately, engaging in the mid-semester feedback process leads to increased faculty confidence in their teaching methods and themselves.[37]

Finally, studies consistently show that instructors' ratings increased in end-of-semester evaluations for courses where instructors solicited mid-semester feedback.[38] Collecting mid-semester feedback has been

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Student Motivation, ERIC (1982), https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED217953.pdf [https://perma.cc/2S6Y-XX5G].

[32] Darsie Bowden, *Small Group Instructional Diagnosis: A Method for Enhancing Writing Instruction*, 28 Council Writing Program Adm'rs 115, 126-27 (2004); Barbara J. Millis, *Three Practical Strategies for Peer Consultation*, 79 New Directions for Teaching & Learning 19, 21 (2002); Karron G. Lewis, *Using Midsemester Student Feedback and Responding to It*, 87 New Directions for Teaching & Learning 33, 43 (2001).

[33] Alison Cook-Sather, *"I Am Not Afraid to Listen": Prospective Teachers Learning from Students*, 46 Theory Into Prac. 176, 181 (2009); *see infra* Part II.C.

[34] Sozer et al., *supra* note 7, at 1005.

[35] Diamond, *supra* note 7, at 224.

[36] McGowan & Osguthorpe, *supra* note 28, at 160 (citing Keith Trigwell & Michael Prosser, *Development and Use of the Approaches to Teaching Inventory*, 16 Educ. Psych. Rev. 409 (2004)).

[37] Diamond, *supra* note 7, at 226.

[38] Whitney McGowan, Faculty and Student Perceptions of the Effects of Mid-Course Evaluations on Learning and Teaching 149 (Aug. 14, 2009) (Ph.D. dissertation, Brigham Young University) (on file with ScholarsArchive); Wickramasinghe & Timpson, *supra* note 21, at 126; David Kember, Doris Y.P. Leung & K.P. Kwan, *Does the Use of Student Feedback Questionnaires Improve the Overall Quality of Teaching?*, 27 Assessment & Evaluation Higher Educ. 411, 413 (2002) (citing Peter A. Cohen, *Effectiveness of Student-Rating Feedback for Improving College Instruction: A Meta-Analysis of Findings*, 13 Rsch. Higher Educ. 321 (1980)); J.U. Overall & Herbert W. Marsh, *Midterm Feedback from Student: Its Relationship to Instructional Improvement and Students' Cognitive and Affective Outcomes*, 71 J. Educ. Psych. 856, 856 (1979); Harris & Stevens, *supra* note 14, at 552; A. Rae Prince & Morton Goldman, *Improving Part-Time Faculty Instruction*, 8 Teaching Psychology 160, 162 (1981).

Despite the above research, faculty may be concerned that their end-of-semester evaluations may be worse than they otherwise would be if they are not sufficiently receptive to mid-semester feedback. This concern can be mitigated by the design of the feedback exercise, how the exercise is presented to students, and how faculty respond to the feedback. Below in Part IV, *infra*, we suggest channeling student feedback to those aspects of the course

found to reduce student frustrations and mitigate end-of-semester complaints.[39] Given that many universities use end-of-semester evaluations in promotion decisions, this outcome alone can carry significant professional benefits for faculty. Faculty who read the mid-semester feedback, discussed the feedback with their students, and made changes based on that feedback saw the most improvement in their ratings.[40]

One author experienced this benefit first-hand. In one mid-semester feedback survey, a student shared, "I can't always figure out where to look for assignments, since we use email, Canvas [an online learning platform], and OneDrive [a web-based document sharing platform]." The author and her co-teacher received this feedback after a class discussion in which none of the students had completed the reading. While the professors' initial reaction was frustration, the feedback revealed that the real issue was organizational: students were struggling to navigate multiple platforms. The feedback highlighted that students did not understand why the class used different platforms for different purposes—decisions that stemmed both from ABA and confidentiality requirements. In response, the instructors restructured the Canvas site and devoted some class time to discussing the changes. At the end of the semester, the professors received positive feedback both about the changes they had made and about how they had asked for student input.

The weight of the research—as well as personal experience—shows positive benefits from mid-semester feedback in higher education. The next Part explores the specific context of clinical law teaching.[41]

II. The Connection Between Mid-Semester Feedback and Clinical Pedagogy

This Part focuses on clinical legal education, revealing several ways in which the goals of clinical pedagogy are particularly well aligned with the practice of soliciting mid-semester feedback. While the authors believe that there are benefits for conducting mid-semester feedback across all law school classrooms, our own experiences as clinical instructors have been grounded in clinical pedagogy and, therefore,

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that can be changed. In Part V, *infra*, we give suggestions for how to meaningfully review feedback with students so that they feel as though their voice is heard, even if their feedback is not implemented.

[39] Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 6 (citing Ann Veeck, Kelley O'Reilly, Amy MacMillan & Hongyan Yu, *The Use of Collaborative Midterm Student Evaluations to Provide Actionable Results*, 38 J. Mktg. Educ. 157 (2016)).

[40] McGowan & Osguthorpe, *supra* note 28, at 160.

[41] We acknowledge that there are limitations and challenges in implementing mid-semester feedback. These are explored in Part III, *infra*. We also offer thoughts on how to mitigate these challenges in Part IV, *infra*.

this article particularly focuses on mid-semester feedback in law school clinics.[42]

To the authors' knowledge, no law school requires instructors to collect mid-semester feedback, and scholarship on its use in legal education remains limited.[43] Much of the existing data and guidance about mid-semester feedback comes from undergraduate and graduate school studies.[44] One might question the applicability of this research to law school classes, or to law clinics in particular.[45] While it is possible that empirical studies conducted in a law school or clinical setting could yield some divergent results, there is good reason to think that the lessons learned in other higher education contexts are applicable here. A wide variety of disciplines and class types have been studied, including smaller discussion classes.[46] Also, studies on mid-semester feedback have been conducted over several decades, with consistent results.[47] Law professors Michael Hunter Schwartz, Sophie M. Sparrow, and Gerald F. Hess also identify benefits in the law context that are consistent with those found in the higher education literature.[48]

A. Mid-Semester Feedback Aligns with Core Objectives of Clinical Pedagogy

The purposes of mid-semester feedback are well connected to three important goals of clinical pedagogy. First, a key goal of clinical

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[42] We hope future work will further explore best practices for soliciting mid-semester feedback in non-clinic law school settings, as those practices may differ in important ways.

[43] Mid-semester feedback is described as a helpful practice by Professors Michael Hunter Schwartz, Gerald F. Hess, and Sophie M. Sparrow in their books What the Best Law Teachers Do and Teaching Law by Design. Michael Hunter Schwartz, Gerald F. Hess & Sophie M. Sparrow, What the Best Law Teachers Do, 89-90 (2013); Schwartz et al., *supra* note 29, at 209-10. Professors Schwartz, Hess, and Sparrow conducted a survey of law professors' feedback practices and summarized the benefits that professors reported through those practices. *Id.* With these exceptions, the legal scholarship on feedback focuses on feedback delivered by instructors to students. This gap in the literature is striking, given that 51 percent of law professors surveyed reported "gathering and reviewing feedback from students about [their] own teaching during a course." *Id.* at 202.

[44] This literature is described in Part I, particularly Part I.D, *supra*.

[45] Indeed, clinic classes are uniquely intimate environments, as discussed *infra* at Part V.B. *See generally* Kathleen A. Sullivan, *Self-Disclosure, Separation, and Students: Intimacy in the Clinical Relationship*, 27 Indiana L. Rev. 115 (1993).

[46] Wickramasinghe & Timpson, *supra* note 21, at 127 (studying mid-semester feedback in chemical engineering classes containing 30-35 students); Margaret K. Snooks, Sue E. Neeley & Lee Revere, *Midterm Student Feedback: Results of a Pilot Study*, 18 J. on Excellence Coll. Teaching 55, 62, 64 (2007) (studying mid-semester feedback in undergraduate health courses containing 16-25 students and graduate marketing courses containing 31-37 students); Parkin & Henderson, *supra* note 30, at 457 (studying mid-semester feedback in small education courses containing 13-20 students and large business courses containing 39-110 students).

[47] Overall & Marsh, *supra* note 38; Harris & Stevens, *supra* note 14, at 541-42. The Overall & Marsh study was conducted 34 years before the Harris & Stevens study.

[48] Schwartz et al., *supra* note 29, at 209-10.

education is to build reflective practitioners. ABA Standard 303 requires law schools to provide substantial opportunities for students to develop a professional identity. Interpretation 303-5 indicates that reflection is central to this process, stating, "Because developing a professional identity requires reflection and growth over time, students should have frequent opportunities for such development during each year of law school and in a variety of courses and co-curricular and professional development activities."[49] Clinical programs have taken this charge seriously, as most include reflection as an explicit learning outcome.[50] Mid-semester feedback advances this goal in several ways. First, by design, mid-semester feedback questions require student reflection. Mid-semester feedback questions can ask students to reflect on a variety of areas including case work, clinic partnerships, seminar, learning objectives, and teaching, as well as on their own learning. As Professor Timothy Casey writes, "Deliberate reflection provides the new professional with a process to develop professional judgment."[51] Mid-semester feedback, then, is one tool that clinical professors can utilize to help build reflective practitioner students. Second, mid-semester feedback requires reflection not only from students but from faculty members as well. While it is easy, even seductive, to focus only on students' reflection, the most robust clinical teaching practices include self-reflection by the professor as well.[52] Reflection by clinical professors both "retain[s] the substantial strengths of learner-centered methods" while, simultaneously, "pushing our teaching to new heights."[53] Further, reflecting on our teaching practices—and showing students that we are doing so—models excellent lawyering skills for students to learn from.

Clinical pedagogy also aims to "[b]uild lifelong commitment and skills to learn in professional settings[,]"[54] which includes both learning

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[49] ABA Section on Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar, A.B.A. Standards and Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools, Standard 303, 2025-2026 (2025).

[50] *See, e.g.*, Robert F. Seibel & Linda H. Morton, *Field Placement Programs: Practices, Problems, and Possibilities,* 2 Clin. L. Rev. 413, 421 (1996); J.P. Ogilvy, *The Use of Journals in Legal Education: A Tool for Reflection*, 3 Clin. L. Rev. 55, 63, 76 (1996); Carolyn Grose, *Uncovering and Deconstructing the Binary: Teaching (and Learning) Critical Reflection in Clinic and Beyond*, Clin. L. Rev. 301, 303 (2016); Mary B. Spector, *75 Years of Clinical Legal Education: Celebrating the Past While Looking to the Future*, 77 SMU L. Rev. 539, 546 (2024).

[51] Timothy Casey, *Reflective Practice in Legal Education: The Stages of Reflection*, 20 Clin. L. Rev. 317, 319 (2014).

[52] While self-reflection may be important in all teaching, it is particularly important for clinical teachers "due to the nature and scope of their work[]" as both teachers and attorneys responsible for clients. Rachel Camp & Deborah Epstein, *From Learner-Centered to Relationship-Centered: Zealous Teaching and the Pedagogy of Clinic*, 32 Clin. L. Rev. 1, 22 (2025).

[53] *Id.* at 6.

[54] Susan Bryant, Elliott S. Milstein & Ann C. Shalleck, Transforming the Education of Lawyers: The Theory and Practice of Clinical Pedagogy 23-24 (2014).

through reflection as well as metacognition.[55] Metacognitive theory posits that "human performance improves when people strategically plan and reflect on past experiences in order to improve future performance."[56] Mid-semester feedback from students to professors allows law students to develop metacognitive skills by encouraging structured reflection on *how* they learn, not just *what* they learn.[57] As students confront complex material and challenges in their clinical experience, mid-semester feedback—when paired with reflective supervision—can help them identify their own cognitive patterns, assess the effectiveness of their current learning and lawyering strategies, and adjust accordingly.[58] Research in legal education shows that metacognitive thinking—which includes deliberate planning, monitoring, and self-correction—enhances legal competencies, promotes judgment, supports law student mental health, and prepares students for lifelong learning.[59] Importantly, as Professor Jaime Alison Lee notes, metacognition fosters student autonomy, helping them become self-directed learners who can transfer knowledge across diverse contexts—an essential capacity for professional growth and success.[60] Very much in line with clinical pedagogy, teaching metacognitive skills in law school is "closely related to reflective practice and self-regulated learning" and are all "essential to the repertoire of lawyering skills that enhance the learning process for law students and better position them for practice."[61]

Another key goal of clinical pedagogy is to build lawyering skills in students.[62] Specifically, mid-semester feedback exercises can help

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55 *Id.*; Sullivan, *supra* note 45, at 128 ("the primary focus of clinical legal education… is to teach students how to learn from experience"); Michael Meltsner & Philip G. Schrag, *Scenes from a Clinic*, 127 U. Pa. L. Rev. 1, 9 (1978) (referring to this goal as "[l]earning about learning"); Kenneth R. Kreiling, *Clinical Education and Lawyer Competency: The Process of Learning to Learn from Experience Through Properly Structural Clinical Supervision*, 40 Md. L. Rev. 284 (1981) ("the most important and primary goal is to be able to learn from and to internalize the process of learning from one's experiences"); *see* Casey, *supra* note 51, at 322 (defining "reflective practice" and how to teach it).

56 Jaime Alison Lee, *From Socrates to Selfies: Legal Education and the Metacognitive Revolution*, 12 Drexel L. Rev. 227, 229-30 (2020); *see also* Cheryl B. Preston, Penée Wood Stewart & Louise R. Moulding, *Teaching "Thinking like a Lawyer": Metacognition and Law Students*, 2014 BYU L. Rev. 1053, 1060-62 (2014).

57 The term "metacognition" is not frequently used in the legal or clinical literature. Jaime Alison Lee provides this insight into why: "[C]linicians themselves do not often use the term 'metacognition,' perhaps because that term had not yet entered academic discourse by the time that foundational works of clinical scholarship were being written." Lee, *supra* note 56, at 258.

58 Bryant et al., *supra* note 54, at 25.

59 Lee, *supra* note 56, at 229, 237; Preston et al., *supra* note 56, at 1076, 1079-80.

60 Lee, *supra* note 56, at 234-35, 266-68.

61 Jennifer A. Gundlach & Jessica R. Santangelo, *Teaching and Assessing Metacognition in Law School*, 69 J. Legal Educ. 156, 157 (2019).

62 Bryant et al., *supra* note 54, at 27; Madalyn Wasilczuk, *The Clinic as a Site of Grounded Pedagogy*, 29 Clin. L. Rev. 405, 407 (2023) ("Clinical teachers… aim to train

build students' skills in giving and soliciting feedback. Although these skills are given very little—if any—attention during law school, they are fundamental in legal practice. Effective lawyering very rarely happens in a silo. For example, lawyers often give feedback to supervisors through required annual feedback surveys, to colleagues or co-counsel regarding case strategy, or to clients or witnesses preparing for trial. Without practice, providing feedback can feel overwhelming or uncomfortable, often leading to hesitation or missed opportunities for growth. Just as important a lawyering skill is the ability to solicit feedback, which requires self-awareness, preparation, and the ability to ask targeted and specific questions. By modeling this process through requests for mid-semester feedback, professors provide students with a practical example of how to seek and apply feedback as well as an opportunity to hone their feedback-giving skills.[63] In fact, Professor Harriet N. Katz writes that modeling is a "particularly effective way[] to communicate high standards of practice skills and to impress students with regard to professional values."[64] Observing professors solicit and respond to feedback helps build students' own skills in these areas, which they can use when they enter the profession.

B. Mid-Semester Feedback Encourages a Growth Mindset in Both Faculty and Students

A growth mindset is the belief that intelligence can be developed through personal effort, mentorship and support, and good learning strategies.[65] It stands in stark contrast to a fixed mindset—the notion that intelligence is innate and cannot be developed.[66] Extensive research across disciplines has demonstrated the value of adopting a growth mindset, showing that intellectual growth is very much possible. This

students in lawyering skills so that they can be practice ready"); Carolyn Grose, *Beyond Skills Training, Revisited: The Clinical Education Spiral*, 19 CLIN. L. REV. 489, 494 (2013) (one of the broader goals of clinical pedagogy includes "offering opportunities to practice lawyering skills"); David Binder & Paul Bergman, *Taking Lawyering Skills Training Seriously,* 10 CLIN. L. REV. 191, 194-95, 198 (2003) ("Thus, clinical courses effectively provide skills training to the extent that they enable students to transfer the concepts, strategies and techniques they begin to use while in clinical courses to the many and varied practice settings they are almost certain to encounter after graduation."); Sarah Katz & Deeya Haldar, *The Pedagogy of Trauma-Informed Lawyering*, 22 CLIN. L. REV. 359, 378 (Spring 2016) ("Another central value in clinical pedagogy is that students should acquire practical lawyering skills").

63 *See* Harriet N. Katz, *Reconsidering Collaboration and Modeling: Enriching Clinical Pedagogy*, 41 GONZAGA L. REV. 315, 317 (2005); *see also* Minna J. Kotkin, *Reconsidering Role Assumption in Clinical Education*, 19 N.M. L. REV. 185, 199 (1989) (discussing role modeling in clinic).

64 Katz, *supra* note 63, at 317.

65 Carol S. Dweck & David S. Yeager, *Mindsets: A View from Two Eras*, 14 PERSPECTIVES ON PSYCH. SCI. 481, 482 (2019).

66 *Id*.

belief lies at the heart of clinical pedagogy: that students are capable of meaningful development, and that the structures and feedback clinical professors provide make that growth not only possible but likely. Professor Megan Bess asserts that a growth mindset is "necessary for success in the law[,]" "help[s] young lawyers acquire other necessary skills[,]" and "should be included in every law school curriculum."[67] Professor Titichia Jackson similarly states that "the growth mindset ideology should be interwoven into all aspects of legal education."[68]

American psychologist Dr. Carol Dweck has been at the forefront of studying fixed and growth mindsets. Her research shows that fixed mindsets correlate with learned helplessness while growth mindsets encourage persistence and adaptation.[69] Research at the law school level echoes these same findings: students with fixed mindsets had helpless reactions to constructive feedback on legal writing assignments.[70] In contrast, law school students who adopted a growth mindset view challenges as opportunities, avoid being defined by poor performance, and use feedback to meaningfully improve their work.[71] Ultimately, adopting a growth mindset contributes to student motivation, resilience, and academic performance[72] and has reverberating benefits in the professional world.

As clinical faculty, many of us expect our students to develop or adopt a growth mindset in order to be successful in clinic. Yet despite the emphasis on students' growth mindsets, there is relatively little literature addressing the adoption of a growth mindset for faculty.[73] Faculty can actively model a growth mindset for their students by

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[67] Megan Bess, *Grit, Growth Mindset, and the Path to Successful Lawyering*, 89 UMKC L. Rev. 493, 494 (Spring 2021).

[68] Titichia M. Jackson, *Embracing A New Approach to Academic Success: How the Adoption of a Growth Mindset Can Enhance Legal Education*, 53 Cap. U. Sch. L. 233, 255 (2025).

[69] *See* Carol S. Dweck, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success (Ballantine Books, 2d ed. 2016); Carol Dweck, *The Power of Believing that You Can Improve*, TEDxNorrkoping (Nov. 2014) https://www.ted.com/talks/carol_dweck_the_power_of_believing_that_you_can_improve [https://perma.cc/U38B-XDXC].

[70] Bess, *supra* note 67, at 515 (citing Elizabeth Adamo Usman, *Making Legal Education Stick: Using Cognitive Science to Foster Long-Term Learning in the Legal Writing Classroom,* 29 Geo. J. Legal Ethics 355, 373 (2016) and Carrie Sperling & Susan Shapcott, *Fixing Students' Fixed Mindsets: Paving the Way for Meaningful Assessment*, 18 Legal Writing: J. Legal Writing Inst. 39, 40-41 (2012)).

[71] Bess, *supra* note 67, at 515.

[72] *See generally* Kaci Bishop, *Framing Failure in the Legal Classroom: Techniques for Encouraging Growth and Resilience*, 70 Ark. L. Rev. 959 (2018); *see also* Jackson, *supra* note 68, at 248.

[73] The need for instructors to adopt a growth mindset has been discussed in education literature for other disciplines. *See, e.g.,* Susannah Cornes, Dario Torre, Tracy B. Fulton, Sandra Oza, Arianne Teherani & H. Carrie Chen, *When Students' Words Hurt: 12 Tips for Helping Faculty Receive and Respond Constructively to Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 28 Med. Educ. Online 1, 2, 4 (2022).

modeling vulnerability, discussing their own past failures,[74] and creating low-stakes opportunities for failure that help build trust and normalize growth in the classroom.[75]

One such way to do so is by engaging in the mid-semester feedback process with clinic students. The mid-semester feedback process can take a variety of forms, but it ultimately requires a professor to solicit feedback from students, to review and reflect on the feedback, and then to respond to it. This type of exercise demonstrates both humility and vulnerability. Doing so sends clear messages to students: that soliciting and responding to feedback is an ongoing part of professional life and not just part of being a law school student practicing under a student practice rule; that knowing how to respond thoughtfully to feedback is a valuable professional skill; and that all of us are capable of learning, evolving, and improving.[76]

C. Listening to Students Through Mid-Semester Feedback Has Myriad Pedagogical Benefits

Another key research finding regarding mid-semester feedback is the way in which it values students and student perspectives. Valuing student perspectives (often referred to as "student voice" in the research literature) refers to "listening to and valuing students' views regarding their learning experiences, as well as treating them as equal partners in the evaluation process."[77] While professors may be subject-matter experts or experts in clinical pedagogy, students are experts about their own learning. Any professor who has taught for more than one semester knows that each group of students is different; a concept that was easy for students to grasp one semester might be difficult for the next semester's students. While professors can hypothesize about how students learn best, students themselves are often best positioned to identify what actually works, especially given their extensive experience—nearly two decades, in many cases—as learners before entering clinic.

Seeking student perspectives yields a wide array of benefits. It enhances student commitment by building student self-esteem; improves

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74 *See* Part V.B, *infra* for considerations when engaging in self-disclosure.

75 Bishop, *supra* note 72, at 993.

76 A growth mindset approach also aligns with broader institutional and classroom goals around diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and holistic education. Jackson, *supra* note 68, at 240-42, 270-71. Creating a culture that values growth encourages risk-taking and reduces stereotype threat. Mary C. Murphy & Carol S. Dweck, *A Culture of Genius: How an Organization's Lay Theory Shapes People's Cognition, Affect, and Behavior*, 36 Personality & Soc. Psych. Bull. 283, 284 (2010); Daniel A. Southwick, Chia-Jung Tsay & Angela L. Duckworth, *Grit at Work*, 39 Rsch. on Org. Behav. 1, 8 (2019).

77 Ina Blau & Tamar Shamir-Inbal, *Digital Technologies for Promoting "Student Voice" and Co-creating Learning Experience in an Academic Course*, 46 Instructional Sci. 315, 315 (2017).

attitudes toward learning; cultivates a stronger sense of belonging; and transforms teacher-student relationships from passive and oppositional to active and collaborative.[78] While these benefits may be important in any classroom, they are especially well suited for law school clinics, where collaboration and non-hierarchical learning are valued. But these benefits are not one-sided. Faculty also gain: positive relationships with students; improved job satisfaction and well-being; and decreased burnout.[79] Further, listening to student perspectives can help teachers view students differently, which can make faculty more likely to respect and trust students, and to offer students more opportunities to take responsibility for their learning.[80] Ultimately, asking about and listening to student experiences helps to create an environment that supports both academic and professional growth, values that are core to clinical pedagogy.[81] Notably, some research shows that the most influential aspects of student feedback often center on the relational elements of teaching: students place high value on faculty who they perceive are willing to interact with them by accommodating their individual needs, giving meaningful feedback, and sensing when they are struggling with material.[82]

Students also respond particularly positively to faculty who value students by admitting when they do not know something, welcoming diverse viewpoints, and actively seeking student input on their teaching.[83] These practices are core to clinical pedagogy, which demands collaboration, reflection, and respect for each learner's perspective.

D. Mid-Semester Feedback Improves Students' Learning, the Relationships between Professor and Students, and Students' Perception of the Course

In the clinical setting, professors often spend significantly more time with students than in other law school classes. Professors serve not just as instructors, but as mentors, role models, supervisors, "partner[s], catalyst[s], resource[s], [and] poser[s] of questions that

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78 Cook-Sather, *supra* note 33, at 181.

79 Ashley S. Potvin, *"Students Speaking to You": Teachers Listen to Student Surveys to Improve Classroom Environment*, 24 Learning Env'ts Rsch. 239, 240 (2021).

80 Jean Ruddick & Helen Demetriou, *Student Perspectives and Teacher Practices: The Transformative Potential*, 38 McGill J. Educ. 274, 282 (2003).

81 *See* Ann N. Sinsheimer & Omid Fotuhi, *Listening to Our Students: Fostering Resilience and Engagement to Promote Culture Change in Legal Education*, 26 Legal Writing: J. Legal Writing Inst. 81, 85 (2022).

82 Karin J. Spencer & Liora Pedhazur Schmelkin, *Student Perspectives on Teaching and its Evaluation*, 27 Assessment & Evaluation Higher Educ. 397, 405 (2002).

83 *Id.*

sharpen[] learners' thinking."[84] As two scholars have noted, "[w]ithin the supervisory structure, students and teachers build respectful, challenging, and supportive relationships through which students learn about themselves as lawyers and learners."[85] Therefore, taking an action that students perceive to improve the relationship can reap dividends.

Students generally perceive mid-semester feedback positively.[86] Students believe that mid-semester feedback positively impacts learning and teaching,[87] improves communication between students and professors,[88] and boosts performance for both students and professors.[89] Students also believe that the mid-semester feedback process helps them better understand the instructional constraints professors face,[90] and they tend to view professors who engage in the mid-semester feedback process as more committed to teaching[91] and interested in them and their learning.[92] Even small course changes can have a significant impact: qualitative data indicates that students' perceptions of their own learning increase significantly when faculty seek feedback and act on it.[93] Other studies show that making changes in response to mid-semester feedback increases student satisfaction with both the course and the instructor.[94] Additionally, mid-semester feedback has been linked to improved perceptions of course organization and clarity.[95]

III. Challenges and Limitations

While the research is clear that mid-semester feedback can benefit both teachers and students, it is not without limitations or challenges. Below we address those issues that are noted in the literature, that we ourselves have faced, and that have been brought to our attention.

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[84] Camp & Epstein, *supra* note 52, at 13 (citing Kathleen Taylor, *Teaching with Developmental Intention, in* Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress 151-80 (Jack Mezirow ed. 2000)).

[85] Ann Shalleck & Jane H. Aiken, *Supervision: A Conceptual Framework in* Susan Bryant, Elliott S. Milstein & Ann C. Shalleck, Transforming the Education of Lawyers: The Theory and Practice of Clinical Pedagogy 169, 169 (2014). *See also* Camp & Epstein, *supra* note 52 (exploring the nuances of the clinical teacher-student relationship and arguing that teachers should examine their role in that relationship).

[86] Sozer et al., *supra* note 7, at 1005; Snooks et al., *supra* note 46, at 58.

[87] *Id.* at 70; Sozer et al., *supra* note 7, at 1005.

[88] Diamond, *supra* note 7, at 226.

[89] Sozer et al., *supra* note 7, at 1005.

[90] Diamond, *supra* note 7, at 226.

[91] Michael J. Brown, *Student Perceptions of Teaching Evaluations*, 35 J. Instructional Psych. 177, 179 (2008).

[92] Snooks et al., *supra* note 22, at 67-68.

[93] McGowan & Osguthorpe, *supra* note 28, at 170.

[94] Snooks et al., *supra* note 22, at 68.

[95] McGowan, *supra* note 38, at 70-74.

Forefront on many professors' minds may be the possibility of student bias, which we address at the end of this section.

A. Common Concerns with Implementing Mid-Semester Feedback

Lack of Time and Bandwidth. It is no secret that clinicians have multiple demands on their time—supervising (and sometimes handling) case work, teaching the seminar, engaging in scholarship,[96] participating in law school governance,[97] teaching courses outside of the clinic,[98] managing the uncertainties and challenges of their position in the academic hierarchy, participating in the broader clinical or legal community, attending to personal obligations, and much more. Clinical supervision alone is extremely time intensive.[99] In a recent Center for the Study of Applied Legal Education (CSALE) survey, slightly more than half of respondents ranked "other demands on instructors' time" as one of three major challenges facing their law schools' clinics.[100] In addition to balancing multiple time pressures outside of seminar, clinicians may feel unable to cover the content they want to in the clinic seminar, leaving no room to solicit mid-semester feedback. Given this extensive list of demands, for some readers the thought of asking for mid-semester feedback may elicit an immediate negative response—"Who has the time?!"

One way to minimize the demands of the mid-semester exercise is to limit the amount of feedback a clinician seeks. Below in Part IV and in the Appendices, we offer suggestions for designing short and simple questionnaires that take less time to review but still retain many of the benefits described above. In Part V.B, we suggest how professors can distribute the results of mid-semester feedback outside of class. This still requires instructor time but avoids using seminar time. In short: the mid-semester feedback process is customizable.

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[96] According to the most recent Center for the Study of Applied Legal Education (CSALE) survey—a survey of clinical and field placement instructors—nearly one-third of respondents reported that they must produce scholarship and approximately one-half of respondents reported that while producing scholarship is not required, it is beneficial. Robert R. Kuehn, David A. Santacroce, Margaret Reuter, June T. Tai & G.S. Hans, *2022-23 Survey of Applied Legal Education*, Ctr. for the Study of Applied Legal Educ. 58, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5d8cde48c96867b8ea8c6720/660d6e828aac87a8826df928_Report%20on%202022-23%20CSALE%20Survey%20rev.4.3.24.pdf [https://perma.cc/H79G-UTPH] [hereinafter, "CSALE results"].

[97] *Id*. at 55.

[98] *Id*. at 57.

[99] *See* Ann Shalleck, *Clinical Contexts: Theory and Practice in Law and Supervision*, 21 N.Y.U. Rev. L. & Soc. Change 109, 173 (1995) ("Supervision requires an enormous amount of individual diagnosis."); Shalleck & Aiken, *supra* note 85, at 200 ("promoting growth in providing outstanding client representation and learning takes time").

[100] Kuehn et al., *supra* note 96, at 8.

Perceived (and Sometimes Actual) Inutility of Student Feedback. Professors may also worry that they will solicit mid-semester feedback only to receive feedback that is not useful or that is not immediately actionable. This is likely—perhaps almost a certainty. Individual students sometimes submit diametrically opposed comments.[101] Students may comment on something from earlier in the course that was a one-off event that cannot be rectified (for example a critique of a guest speaker), they may suggest a change to the course that is impossible to implement, or they may suggest a pedagogical change that a professor will not implement. For example, a student may dislike the non-directive clinical methodology—especially when fully immersed in it at the mid-semester mark—and request that their professor tell them what to do. While the professor is unlikely to change their methodology, it can still be helpful to know the students' feelings and to provide an opportunity for the professor to explain and engage in deeper discussion regarding their pedagogical choices.[102]

Below in Part IV, we provide suggestions for how to design and administer the mid-semester feedback exercise so as to reduce these types of inutile comments. In Part V.B we discuss how a professor can respond to these types of comments when reviewing the mid-semester feedback with their students.

Lack of Candor in Student Feedback. Some professors have experienced students to provide less-than-forthright comments on end-of-semester evaluations because they fear faculty will read them before grading, despite multiple assurances to the contrary. This concern may be heightened when students provide mid-semester feedback as professors will read the feedback before issuing grades. In addition, even when mid-semester feedback is anonymous, in small classes, as clinics generally are, students may fear that their instructor will be able to identify them.

There is no way to force students to give what they may consider to be their harshest feedback. Throughout the semester—and especially when soliciting mid-semester feedback—professors can stress their openness to feedback and can give examples of course changes they have made in the past in response to feedback. If students fear being identified, professors can use Likert scales. Conversely, professors can

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[101] One author has experienced this multiple times regarding rounds. Some students comment that rounds are a valuable part of the course and greatly contribute to their learning, and others in the same class comment that case rounds are not helpful and should be discontinued.

[102] Michel Estrin Gilman, *Ten Empowering Strategies for Nondirective Clinical Supervision*, 31 CLIN. L. REV. 211, 211-12 (Fall 2024) ("Nondirective supervision is the signature pedagogy of clinical teaching. . . . However, nondirective pedagogy is a challenging mode of education for both students and teachers.").

solicit feedback non-anonymously. Professors might also be served by bearing in mind that students may be providing feedback to an authority figure for the first time and are developing their skills.

Bias and Insensitivity in Students' Feedback.[103] Some may question the accuracy and utility of student feedback on grounds that student comments on end-of-semester evaluations are subject to conscious and unconscious biases and often include rude, insensitive, and sometimes harmful comments that resonate long after they are read.[104] Below we discuss the research on bias in end-of-semester evaluations. We also discuss how the mid-semester feedback process differs from end-of-semester evaluations, and we offer suggestions for mitigating bias.

A substantial body of research establishes that end-of-semester student evaluations are significantly influenced by professor demographics, reflecting underlying student biases.[105] Research shows that instructors from marginalized or underrepresented identities[106]—including those who are female,[107] are of a race and/or ethnicity other

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[103] Clinicians are also biased, which can affect the feedback we provide students. See generally Gordon, *supra* note 4, for an extensive discussion about bias types, bias in teaching, and how to mitigate bias when providing feedback.

[104] As this article focuses on mid-semester feedback (which only professors review), rather than end-of-semester evaluations, it does not address how biased evaluation data can be misused in hiring, compensation, and promotion decisions—a concern that disproportionately impacts marginalized and underrepresented groups in academia. This topic has been addressed extensively by other scholars. *See, e.g.,* Catherine J. Wasson & Barbara J. Tyler, *How Metacognitive Deficiencies of Law Students Lead to Biased Ratings of Law Professors*, 28 Touro L. Rev. 1305, 1307 (2012); Debra Austin, *Leadership Lapse: Laundering Systemic Bias Through Student Evaluations*, 65 Vill. L. Rev. 995, 1005 (2021) ("University review committees and administrators must understand the social science research about demands on female professors, the gendered expectations of students, and the likelihood of less favorable student evaluations when making hiring, retention, and promotion decisions involving women.") (citations omitted); Deo, *supra* note 2, at 39-41 (arguing that student teaching evaluations should be eliminated, modified, and/or replaced/supplemented).

[105] Troy Heffernan, *Sexism, Racism, Prejudice, and Bias: A Literature Review and Synthesis of Research Surrounding Student Evaluations of Courses and Teaching*, 47 Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Educ. 144, 144 (2022).

[106] Deo, *supra* note 2, at 15 ("Many agree that teaching evaluations favor white male faculty over others, and also traditional faculty over anyone with an 'outsider' status (i.e., women, people of color, those who speak with an accent, those perceived to be immigrants, foreigners, or people from a lower socioeconomic status, etc.)").

[107] Much of the literature about bias research centers on bias against female instructors, revealing its presence across multiple dimensions. *See generally* Friederike Mengel, Jan Sauermann & Ulf Zölitz, *Gender Bias in Teaching Evaluations*, 17 J. Eur. Econ. Ass'n 535 (2017) (finding the bias especially pronounced for junior female professors); Anne Boring, *Gender Biases in Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 145 J. Pub. Econ. 27 (2017); Lillian MacNell, Adam Driscoll & Andrea N. Hunt, *What's in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teaching*, 40 Innovative Higher Educ. 291 (2015); Anne Boring, Kellie Ottoboni & Philip B. Stark, *Student Evaluations of Teaching (Mostly) Do Not Measure Teaching Effectiveness*, ScienceOpen.Com (Jan. 7, 2016) https://www.scienceopen.com/

than white,[108] speak a native language other than English,[109] are of older age,[110] are less attractive (based on the students' perceptions),[111] are not heterosexual,[112] and are "intersectional combinations of various identity characteristics"[113]—often receive lower evaluation scores.[114] In addition

hosted-document?doi=10.14293/S2199-1006.1.SOR-EDU.AETBZC.v1#aff0003 [https://perma.cc/SHA5-LBSP]. *See also* SCHWARTZ ET AL., *supra* note 29, at 192.

First, female faculty often receive lower numeric ratings and more negative comments than their male counterparts. Ann L. Owen, Erica De Bruin & Stephen Wu, *Can You Mitigate Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching? Evaluating Alternative Methods of Soliciting Feedback*, 50 ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION HIGHER EDUC., 442, 442 (2025); Boring, *supra* note 107, at 27-28.

Second, students tend to assess female faculty based on different and often additional criteria—such as appearance, personality, and the students' perceptions of the female professor's competency and intelligence. Austin, *supra* note 104, at 1000 (citing Kristina M.W. Mitchell & Jonathan Martin, *Gender Bias in Student Evaluations*, 51 PS: POL. SCI. & POL. 648 (July 2018)).With respect to appearance, students have used evaluations to critique female professors' clothing and style. Austin, *supra* note 104, at 1000; Deo, *supra* note 2, at 26-27. Furthermore, traits like assertiveness, ambition, and independence are typically rewarded in male instructors, while women are expected to be helpful, sensitive, and kind. See Austin, *supra* note 104, at 996-98, where she notes that students expect female professors to nurture them, which is referred to as "academic momism." *Id.* at 998. More recent scholarship suggests that student evaluations are not just gendered, but performative: they tend to reward faculty for aligning with traditional gender norms, assessing how well instructors "perform" their socially-expected gender roles. Sophie Adams, Sheree Bekker, Yanan Fan, Tess Gordon, Laura J. Shepherd, Eve Slavich & David Waters, *Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching: 'Punish[ing] Those Who Fail to Do Their Gender Right'*, 83 HIGHER EDUC. 787, 788 (2022).

108 Deborah J. Merritt, *Bias, the Brain, and Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 82 ST. JOHN L. REV. 235, 235-36 (2008); Austin, *supra* note 104, at 1002 (addressing the "intersectional discrimination" that female law faculty of color face). *See also* Y. Fan, L.J. Shepherd, E. Slavich, D. Waters, M. Stone, R. Abel & E.L Johnston, *Gender and Cultural Bias in Student Evaluations: Why Representation Matters*, 14 PLOS ONE 1, 6 (2019); Kerry Chavez & Kristina M.W. Mitchell, *Exploring Bias in Student Evaluations: Gender, Race, and Ethnicity*, 53 PS: POL. SCI. & POL. 270, 270 (2019).

109 Heffernan, *supra*, note 105, at 148-49; Fan, et al., *supra* note 108, at 6.

110 Julianne Arbuckle & Benne D. Williams, *Students' Perceptions of Expressiveness: Age and Gender Effects on Teacher Evaluations*, 49 SEX ROLES 507, 507 (2003).

111 Austin, *supra* note 104, at 1000.

112 Merritt, *supra* note 108, at 260; Heffernan, *supra*, note 105, at 151; *see also* Kristin J. Anderson & Melinda Kanner, *Inventing a Gay Agenda: Students' Perceptions of Lesbian and Gay Professors*, 41 J. APPLIED SOC. PSYCH. 1538, 1541 (2011).

113 Deo, *supra* note 2, at 33.

114 According to studies, students form an impression of their professors in the first class within the first few minutes, which influence their end-of-semester evaluations. Wasson & Tyler, *supra* note 104, at 1321. Researchers have found that students' impressions are formed based on nonverbal factors, e.g., dress, hairstyle, gestures, and facial expressions. *Id.* ("Research into these 'thin slice' judgments established a link between a professor's nonverbal behaviors and his or her student ratings.").

Prof. Schwartz and his co-authors—all law professors—note that the first few minutes of class are incredibly important and suggest that professors can shape students' first and ongoing impressions by showing respect for and confidence and investment in students' ability to learn. SCHWARTZ ET AL., *supra* note 29, at 192. The authors also suggest being authentic, prepared for each class, and passionate about the subject. *Id.* at 192-93.

to lower scores, professors of marginalized identities may receive hurtful comments.[115]

Structural factors also contribute to disparities in evaluations; for example, faculty who award lower grades relative to other faculty are consistently rated less favorably by students.[116] With respect to the last point, and especially relevant to clinicians, the literature suggests that professors who provide constructive feedback or challenge students may receive lower evaluations.[117] Also relevant to many clinicians: a law professor's status within academia may also affect student evaluations.[118]

Another key finding in the literature on student bias is that students' own backgrounds also shape their responses. Factors such as a student's age, gender, GPA, and whether they are international students influence their evaluations.[119] Students' grade expectations for the course and the grades they received in the course prior to completing teacher evaluations also influence their evaluations.[120] In addition, legal scholars have documented the presence of cognitive bias in student evaluations; in short, poor performers can be responsible for the harshest evaluations.[121] Finally, factors unrelated to the course have also been found to influence student evaluations, including the broader sociopolitical environment.[122]

Research is mixed regarding ways to reduce student bias in end-of-semester evaluations. Some studies have found that informing students about gender bias has a positive effect on quantitative evaluation

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115 Deo, *supra* note 2, at 27-31 (documenting the cruel comments and microaggressions that faculty who are women of color experience); Merritt, *supra* note 108, at 235.

116 Owen et al., *supra* note 107, at 444.

117 Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 3.

118 *See, e.g.,* Wasson & Tyler, *supra* note 104, at 1320-21 (noting that law students may be more disposed to criticize legal research and writing professors who "are at the bottom of the professorial pecking order").

119 Heffernan, *supra* note 105, at 146-47 (writing that women, international students, older students, and students with higher grade point averages submitted higher evaluations).

120 Austin, *supra* note 104, at 1004 (citing Anne Boring, Kellie Ottoboni & Philip B. Stark, *Student Evaluations of Teaching Are Not Only Unreliable, They Are Significantly Biased Against Female Instructors*, London Sch. Econ. & Pol. Sci. (Feb. 4, 2016), https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/impactofsocialsciences/2016/02/04/student-evaluations-of-teaching-gender-bias/ [https://perma.cc/H3VD-3L8E] (noting that rather than improve teaching, this bias can cause professors to inflate grades); Heffernan, *supra* note 105, at 147.

121 Wasson & Tyler, *supra* note 104, at 1307 (describing the "Dunning-Kruger effect," which "argues that poor performers grossly overestimate their performance, lack self-insight, and underestimate the competence of others because the lack the metacognitive skills necessary to recognize their deficits.").

122 Austin, *supra* note 104, at 1006 (writing that factors that influence student evaluations include class size, what time the class meets, and whether the class is required); Heffernan, *supra* note 105, at 147 (writing that factors that influence student evaluations include the design of the classroom, course website quality, and library services); Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 4 (noting that the sociopolitical environment can affect students' learning experiences and course evaluations).

scores for female faculty,[123] although other studies have not been able to replicate these findings in full.[124] Individual faculty members will need to balance the desire to minimize bias utilizing this strategy with the personal vulnerability that may come from surfacing such issues, particularly since this intervention often highlights faculty members' marginalized identities; however, specific guidance on this topic is beyond the scope of this article.

Bias in mid-semester feedback has not been specifically studied, and it is unclear how much the data on bias in end-of-semester evaluations translates to mid-semester feedback. However, there are important distinctions between end-of-semester evaluations and mid-semester feedback.

First, when soliciting mid-semester feedback, professors are approaching students from a place of respect for their learning and experiences in the course. Professors are advised to tell students they care about their learning and will use the feedback moving forward in the current course, as discussed below in Part IV.H. As mentioned above, students are sometimes frustrated with end-of-semester evaluations because the evaluation will not change how they experienced the course.[125]

Savvy students sometimes use end-of-semester evaluations to harm professors they dislike.[126] Often, when introducing end-of-semester evaluations to students, professors are required by their institution to state that the evaluations will be used for tenure and promotion decisions. Mid-semester feedback differs because, as will be discussed further below, when introducing the mid-semester exercise to students, professors can make clear that administrators will not read the students' feedback and that it is for the professor's use only, which may limit student comments that are meant to affect promotion decisions.

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123 David A.M. Peterson, Lori A. Biederman, David Andersen, Tessa M. Ditonto & Kevin Roe, *Mitigating Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 14 PLoS ONE 1, 8 (2019); Anne Boring & Arnaud Philippe, *Reducing Discrimination in the Field: Evidence from an Awareness Raising Intervention Targeting Gender Biases in Student Evaluations of Teaching*, 193 J. Pub. Econ. 1 (Jan. 2021).

124 Ellen M. Key & Phillip J. Ardoin, *Students Rate Male Instructors More Highly Than Female Instructors. We Tried to Counter That Hidden Bias*, The Washington Post (Aug. 20, 2019), https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/08/20/students-rate-male-instructors-more-highly-than-female-instructors-we-tried-counter-that-hidden-bias/ [https://perma.cc/VY2T-TMFW] (finding that after being informed of bias in student evaluations, students were more likely to refer to female professors as "professor"—as opposed to "teacher" or "instructor"—but students did not change their numerical ratings).

125 *See supra* Part I.C.

126 Deo, *supra* note 2, at 28 (quoting a student comment on an end-of-semester evaluation for a pre-tenure faculty member "'I know we have to have affirmative action, but do we have to have this woman?'")

In our experience, some students believe end-of-semester evaluations are never reviewed.[127] Mid-semester feedback is different. Professors can make clear how they have used mid-semester feedback in the past to make changes to the course, so students understand the purpose of mid-semester feedback and that it will not disappear into a void, ignored.

Finally, there are ways that professors can design mid-semester feedback exercises to reduce the likelihood of getting student comments that target a professor's appearance and personality traits, which can particularly sting. Question design is discussed further in Part IV.

The above discussion is not to say that students' mid-semester feedback will not be biased. This is impossible to avoid as we are all biased.[128] Rather, it is to suggest that there are important distinctions between mid-semester feedback and end-of-semester evaluations, which may affect how the data on bias in end-of-semester evaluations translates to mid-semester feedback.

B. Turning the Challenges and Limitations into Strengths

Despite the above limitations and challenges, we assert that mid-semester feedback can provide the opportunity for clinicians to empathize with their students. For many clinic students, clinic is a challenging experience. More than one student has described the first few weeks in the clinic as "drinking from a fire hose."[129] One reason clinic can be a difficult experience is because students are constantly receiving feedback. Students receive feedback from their professor multiple times per week on drafts, in seminar discussions, and in case supervision meetings. They also receive feedback from other students in case rounds discussions, from their clinic case partner(s) during case work, and from clients and other people involved in their cases. The experience of receiving such intense feedback can be difficult.[130] Some students—although certainly not all—bristle at a professor's comments,

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[127] Some professors do not read their course evaluations as a protective measure, knowing that the evaluations are unlikely to reflect their teaching skills. Deo, *supra* note 2, at 35-36. Deo includes a professor's comments: "[A]voiding the evaluations does not mean these faculty members are not interested in improving their teaching; they simply recognize that it may be more important to protect their emotional health." *Id*. at 36.

[128] *See, e.g.,* Gordon, *supra* note 4, at 209; Camp & Epstein, *supra* note 52, at 20 ("Like all other human beings, teachers are shaped by conscious influences—such as, for example, stylistic preferences and conscious biases—as well as those that affect us on a more subconscious level—such as implicit biases, values, and insecurities." (citation omitted)).

[129] Authors' conversations with clinic students.

[130] *See The Difficulty and Discomfort Associated with Receiving Feedback Is a Shared Human Experience*, The British Psych. Ass'n (June 24, 2025), https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/difficulty-and-discomfort-associated-receiving-feedback-shared-human-experience [https://perma.cc/52HL-2DVS].

suggestions, and concerns.[131] Soliciting feedback from students and receiving feedback that may at times feel unfair, inaccurate, or misguided can give professors insight and empathy into the students' experience.[132] As one scholar wrote, "Without empathy, we are teaching content instead of students."[133]

IV. Implementing Mid-Semester Feedback

This Part unpacks the general matters and design choices an instructor must consider when implementing mid-semester feedback from students.[134] In roughly chronological order, the instructor starts by considering their goals, then timing and who will participate in the exercise. Next the instructor must consider various questions regarding the format. Finally, they will decide how to introduce the exercise to students.

Throughout this section, we frequently use teacher-administered questionnaires as an example. We delve into this option in depth for several reasons: it is a relatively simple option to implement, it is less time-consuming than a focus group or a small group exercise, and the authors all have experience with this method.

A. Goals for the Exercise

As part of a reflective teaching practice, it is helpful for instructors to set general and specific goals for each semester's feedback exercise.[135] The instructor's goals will influence all of the implementation decisions

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131 *See, e.g.*, Camp & Epstein, *supra* note 52, at 17-18 (describing a student who is unreceptive to and sometimes ignores a professor's feedback).

132 *See id.* at 16-18 for an in-depth exploration of the importance of empathy in the professor-student relationship in the clinical setting.

133 *Id.* at 16 (quoting Paula A. Franseze, *The Power of Empathy in the Classroom*, 47 Seton Hall L. Rev. 693, 695 (2017)).

134 A note about year-long clinics: Many of the points raised here are applicable, either directly or with adaptation, to year-long clinics. Year-long clinics raise some different considerations, however. First, the timing considerations are different, as students have a longer period of time in the course, and the instructor has a longer period of time to implement the feedback. There is not the same degree of tension between asking questions too early, before students have sufficient experience to give valuable answers, and asking questions too late, when there is insufficient time to respond and implement changes. Also, the time crunch of a semester can be intense. More time-intensive feedback models such as focus groups may be more feasible in a year-long clinic. As the authors' experience is in semester-long clinics, we generally focus on that model. This is also the prevailing model in clinical legal education: only twenty percent of clinics require two terms of enrollment. *See* Kuehn et al., *supra* note 96, at 26.

135 Just as we teach students to "plan, act, then reflect," the cycle of action and reflection is beneficial for instructors. *See* Bryant et al., *supra* note 54, at 13-14; *see generally* Part II.A *supra* (discussing reflective practice as a core tenet of law clinic pedagogy).

that are made, and determine the subjects upon which students are asked their opinion.

First, the instructor should consider their general pedagogic goals. Questions to consider include:

- What does the instructor hope to accomplish pedagogically with students' feedback?
- How does the instructor want students to feel about the process?
- To what extent does the instructor want students to reflect on their learning process?[136]

The answers may seem obvious, but it is worth naming these goals and thinking through how each will be accomplished, especially when designing a feedback exercise for the first time.

In addition to pedagogical goals, the instructor should also consider their professional development goals for the semester. The topics of a questionnaire will vary from semester to semester as part of the instructor's cycle of reflective teaching. The instructor should strategically plan the exercise, reflecting on past semesters' feedback in order to improve the student experience and their future performance as a clinical teacher.

Clinical education provides a multitude of topics upon which one could survey students. As it is best to keep questionnaires short, the instructor should consider which elements they are most interested in focusing on for the moment.[137] Does the instructor particularly want feedback on certain elements of the course? Is there a particular "site of learning" (seminar, rounds, supervision, or case work)[138] that it would be helpful to focus on? Does the instructor want general feedback on the course overall? Or would feedback on specific teaching methods be helpful? Professors can use the exercise to gauge student responses to a new teaching method, such as a new class segment or simulation, or to get a temperature check on established elements of the course that they are considering revising. Also, the instructor should consider what kinds of feedback they are interested in receiving. Will it be most helpful for students to express their feelings, to give detailed narrative responses, or to answer in a more objective way?

In order to best achieve both pedagogic and personal development goals, the mid-semester questionnaire should focus on relevant and

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136 *See supra* notes 56-61 and accompanying text regarding metacognition.

137 SCHWARTZ ET AL., *supra* note 29, at 210 ("Keep the questionnaire process simple. Design a one-page form with three to five questions.").

138 *See* BRYANT ET AL., *supra* note 54, at 3 (describing seminar, rounds, supervision, and field work as the "four methodologies employed in the in-house clinical course").

actionable topics.[139] Students may not believe they are truly being listened to or respected if their comments go nowhere. Instructors should consider how they will channel feedback into aspects of the course (or aspects of the instruction) that can be changed.[140] Specific comments and examples are generally easier to address than general comments. Student responses that are vague or that cannot be acted upon are of much less value for improving instructional effectiveness.

To some extent, specificity can be guided by the wording of the questionnaire. However, even asking for a specific suggestion to improve an area of the course (e.g., case work) could result in somewhat vague responses. For example, an author recently received the following comment on an anonymous mid-semester feedback questionnaire: "I wish that we were able to make more of the low-stakes decisions ourselves with less handholding. I would enjoy the opportunity to develop my own style of lawyering more and take small risks in my lawyering decisions to see how they pan out." The author was surprised to receive this feedback, since her students handle most major case events (such as in-person meetings with the opposing party) without her present. Without specific examples it was unclear which lawyering decisions the student had in mind, and which aspect of supervision was making the student feel constricted.[141] Did the student want to present things differently in emails to the client? In emails to opposing counsel? Or did they feel restricted by the feedback they received during moots of a certain phone call or meeting? Was there specific feedback that they disagreed with or did not understand at the time? It is helpful for the author to know that a student feels this way, but it would have been more helpful to receive a specific example, such as "I would like more control over what I say to clients. When we moot client calls I feel like I'm being fed specific wording."

The instructor's goals will also be influenced by whether they teach alone or with co-teachers. If a single survey is to be administered to all students, it may be wise to focus on elements that are designed and

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139 *Self-Administered Mid-Semester Feedback Surveys*, Am. Univ. Ctr. for Teaching, Rsch. & Learning (Feb. 22, 2023), https://edspace.american.edu/ctrl/midsemester-feedback-survey-guide/#tab-id-1 [https://perma.cc/8A37-BE4K] [hereinafter "AUCTRL Surveys"] (advising instructors to "ask for feedback you can realistically implement" and noting that "feedback is most helpful when it is specific").

140 *Id*.

141 The author discussed this and other supervision-related feedback in supervision meetings. She discussed the clinical methodology, explaining why she reviews student emails and why she moots students for client calls and external meetings. The author also pointed out that students handle most major case events without her present. She also noted that she tries to be mindful and point out when her edits and suggestions are optional as they are based on her own lawyering preferences versus mandatory changes. The professor also discussed that it would be helpful to have specific examples and offered that students could approach her any time to discuss the feedback in more detail.

planned jointly by all instructors, such as orientation, case rounds, or the clinic seminar. Questions that may elicit different responses for different co-teachers, such as questions on case supervision, can still be asked if these are important to the instructors. In this case, a non-anonymous approach would allow the feedback to be tied to the appropriate supervisor.[142]

The appendices below provide examples of different approaches to a mid-semester feedback questionnaire. Appendix A includes two examples of short, three-question surveys that ask broad questions unrestricted to specific sites of learning or elements of teaching. These questions call for narrative answers, but as the survey is very short, it may feel less burdensome to students and instructors. This style of question allows the student to provide feedback on whatever aspect of the course is most important or salient to them. The questions can be structured to prompt metacognitive thinking.[143]

In our experience, even a three-question survey can achieve significant pedagogical goals. One author recently administered the short survey reproduced as Example 1 in Appendix A. Initially the author felt there was not time in the semester for the exercise and was inclined to skip it. A teaching consultant recommended that rather than skipping the exercise, the instructor could pare it down to require less bandwidth. Happily, the exercise produced noticeably positive results, improving the relationships between the students and the teachers, and fostering a more collaborative dynamic in the classroom. Students felt heard and respected, and they left positive comments on the end-of-semester evaluations as a direct result of the exercise.

Appendix B provides examples of questionnaires asking for feedback on specific sites of learning or aspects of a course. Example 1 in Appendix B includes questions on four topics, structured to prompt metacognitive thinking. The topics are: the interview simulation, case rounds, clinic seminar, and supervision. Similar questions could be asked on different topics, depending on the instructor's goals.[144] Notably,

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[142] Both empirical studies and guidance from university teaching centers caution against using evaluation scores to compare faculty to one another. Instead, ratings should be interpreted in the context of an individual faculty member's development over time. *See* Rebecca J. Kreitzer & Jennie Sweet-Cushman, *Evaluating Student Evaluations of Teaching: A Review of Measurement and Equity Bias in SETs and Recommendations for Ethical Reform*, 20 J. Acad. Ethics 73 (2022). The same approach should be taken with mid-semester feedback in co-teaching situations.

[143] *See supra* notes 55-61 and accompanying text; *infra* note 191 and accompanying text.

[144] Sample questions and templates are available at several universities' websites. *See, e.g.*, AUCTRL Surveys, *supra* note 139 at Tab 3, https://edspace.american.edu/ctrl/midsemester-feedback-survey-guide/#tab-id-3; *Using Mid-Semester Course Evaluations*, The McGraw Ctr for Teaching and Learning, https://mcgraw.princeton.edu/using-mid-semester-course-evaluations (on file with authors) (last visited Sept. 24, 2025); *Early and Mid-Semester Student Feedback Question Bank*, Colum. Ctr for Teaching & Learning,

this example also includes a catch-all question, inviting the student to provide any other feedback that they wish about the clinic. The authors have found that this final question elicits valuable information about topics not mentioned in the survey, and also that students will often leave positive comments about their overall experience in the course.

The targeted approach displayed in Appendix B has advantages, although it takes more time to design and more time for the students to complete. By including specific questions about certain sites of learning or specific exercises, the instructor can receive feedback from the entire class on those items. In a three-question exercise, by contrast, it may happen that only one student out of eight will comment on case rounds. Each student may bring up a different element of the course, making it difficult for the instructor to know if an opinion is shared by classmates.[145]

After the instructor finalizes their goals and topics for the exercise, they should reflect on past experiences. What went well the last time they requested feedback from students, and what did not go so well? What would they like to change?[146] The cycle of reflective teaching provides a helpful framework for instructors implementing a mid-semester feedback exercise.

B. Timing

Despite the name, "mid-semester feedback" does not need to be collected at the mid-semester mark. The point is to collect feedback from current students during the course, with time to respond and implement some changes.[147] This can be accomplished early in the course, such as in Week 4, or relatively late, such as two-thirds of the way through. Timing must be considered at the outset.

The seemingly minor question of timing connects to which topics are appropriate for the exercise, and how the instructor responds to the feedback. Consider the students' experiences to date, and what information they have upon which to base feedback. It may not be helpful to ask students for feedback on the casework component of the course in Week 4, for example. And, feedback on rounds will likely be more useful after students have experienced more than one rounds session. This is all to say that instructors should schedule the exercise based on the topics they wish to survey. An instructor's goals for the

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https://bpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/edblogs.columbia.edu/dist/8/1109/files/2016/07/Early-and-Mid-Semester-Feedback-Question-Bank-V4.pdf [https://perma.cc/3NLD-WA2Y] (last visited Sept. 24, 2025).

145 A collaborative small group exercise can allow students to amplify their classmates' comments. *See infra* Part IV.F.; *see also* Veeck, et al. *supra* note 39, at 163.

146 *See supra* Part II.A (regarding reflective practice); Bryant et al., *supra* note 54, at 13-14.

147 *See supra* Part I.C.

exercise may thus dictate its timing to some extent. The authors find that student reflections on casework are generally of higher quality later in the semester, when students are more familiar with their clients and cases, and have gotten over the initial hurdles of learning the basics.

For some topics, such as questions asking for broad feedback on the course, there is a tension between administering the questions too early, when the feedback might not be as helpful, and administering a questionnaire too late, without enough time to implement changes or incorporate the results.

It can be helpful to solicit mid-semester feedback early, or a week or two before the mid-semester mark, so the instructor has time to incorporate the feedback in a meaningful way. This is especially helpful if actionable problems are revealed which universally impact student learning. For example, in one class students overwhelmingly commented that the physical classroom was too small, and as a result the students felt crammed together, making it hard to concentrate. The professor was able to move the class to a different room, increasing the students' comfort for the rest of the semester. Getting this feedback early in the semester allowed the issue to be addressed when it could still maximally improve the students' learning experience.

The timing of the mid-semester questionnaire also impacts whether it will be administered as part of a student's mid-semester self-evaluation and supervisory conference, or as a separate exercise. Some clinic professors hold mid-semester conferences two-thirds of the way through the semester, as they believe that the students' additional weeks of experience allow for richer reflection and discussion, and additional data points for the professor to give feedback to the students. If this approach is taken, it may be helpful to supplement with a very short survey around week 4 or 5, in order to surface any major problems. Even a three-question survey can have a meaningful impact on students' perceptions.[148]

C. Which Students Provide the Feedback?

Feedback can be requested from the entire class, or from a subset of students. Professor Heather Abraham employs a "focus group" approach as her primary method of obtaining student feedback in her year-long Civil Rights and Housing Clinic.[149] At the end of the first

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[148] *See supra* text following note 143 (describing one author's experience with very short surveys) and Appendix A, Sample Three-Question Surveys.

[149] Email from Heather R. Abraham, Assoc. Professor of L., St. Univ. N.Y. Buffalo Sch. of L. to Christine S. Speidel, Assoc. Professor of L., Vill. Univ. Charles Widger Sch. of L. (May 1, 2025 at 11:38 ET) (on file with authors). *See also The Civil Rights and Transparency Clinic: A Q&A with Professor Heather Abraham*, St. U. N.Y. Buffalo Sch. L. Blog

semester she extends an open invitation to all students to voluntarily give feedback on the course in a structured conversational setting.[150] Although structured as a "focus group," participation is not limited to any certain number of students, and in some years all students elect to participate.[151] When all students elect to participate, the exercise is held in lieu of the last class of the semester.[152] Professor Abraham can then review the feedback over winter break and implement changes for the second semester of the clinic.[153]

Many of the goals of mid-semester feedback would seem best achieved by asking the entire class to participate. Certainly, limiting the number of participants seems unwise for small clinic classes.[154] Responses would not be generalizable.[155]

If feedback is requested from the entire class, it can be mandatory or optional to participate. Mandatory participation demonstrates that the instructor values the opinion of each student. If students can decline to participate, the exercise may provide less accurate feedback for the instructor, and the students who opt out may not achieve benefits in their relationship to the instructor. The instructor will not be aware of any criticisms until their end-of-semester evaluations. Mandatory participation also mitigates against selection bias, perhaps generating more accurate and balanced results.

(Nov. 1, 2021), https://www.law.buffalo.edu/blog/Civil_Rights_Transparency_Clinic.html [https://perma.cc/VQR4-DTJK]; email from Heather R. Abraham, Assoc. Professor of L., St. Univ. N.Y. Buffalo Sch. of L. to Christine S. Speidel, Assoc. Professor of L., Am. Univ. Wash. Coll. of L. (Dec. 5, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. ET) (on file with authors).

150 Conversation between authors and Heather R. Abraham in Baltimore, Md. (Apr. 29, 2025); email from Heather R. Abraham of December 5, 2025, *supra* note 149.

151 *Id*. For best practices in administering focus groups, *see* Barry Nagle & Nichelle Williams, *Methodology Brief: Introduction to Focus Groups*, UNCF Special Programs Corp. Ctr for Assessment Plan. & Accountability, https://www.mmgconnect.com/projects/userfiles/File/FocusGroupBrief.pdf [https://perma.cc/6WVL-ANSE]. *See also* Schwartz et al., *supra* note 29, at 210-12 (discussing the use of voluntary "student advisory teams").

152 Conversation between authors and Heather R. Abraham in Baltimore, Md. (Apr. 29, 2025); email from Heather R. Abraham of December 5, 2025, *supra* note 149.

153 The question of anonymity is discussed below in Part IV.D. Professor Abraham's approach is not anonymous. However, it is possible to administer an optional anonymous questionnaire.

154 There is no universal agreement on the ideal size for a focus group, but it is within the range of many clinic class sizes. *See, e.g*., Jenny Kitzinger, *Introducing Focus Groups*, 311 Brit. Med. J. 299, 301 (1995) (asserting that the optimal size is 4 to 8 people); Nagle & Williams, *supra note* 151 at 3 (asserting that the optimal size is 7 to 12 people). The typical clinic class enrolls eight students. Kuehn et al., *supra* note 96, at 26.

155 *See* William M.K. Trochim, *Statistical Terms in Sampling*, Research Methods Knowledge Base, https://conjointly.com/kb/sampling-statistical-terms/#sampling-error [https://perma.cc/29F2-MPQE] (last visited Dec. 14, 2025) (noting that "the greater your sample size, the smaller the standard error"); William M.K. Trochim,, *External Validity*, Research Methods Knowledge Base, https://conjointly.com/kb/external-validity/#improving-external-validity [https://perma.cc/G7D7-U2UZ] (last visited Dec. 14, 2025) (recommending a random selection when drawing a sample from a population).

On the other hand, there are disadvantages to making the exercise mandatory, and one could argue that the results may actually be less accurate. Each clinic class has a different dynamic[156] and students, like teachers, have many demands on their time. Mandatory participation is costly in terms of time trade-offs for students, although this can be mitigated by keeping the exercise short. The students' sense of burden in having "yet another assignment" can also be mitigated by including the feedback questions in a mid-semester self-reflection assignment or as a discussion point in the student's formal mid-semester meeting.[157] Grading can also be a consideration. Asking for feedback in a mandatory assignment raises thorny questions of grading if the students do not complete those questions, and it reminds students that their responses will be considered when the professor grades them. Students may therefore be inclined to say what they think the professor wants to hear. It is also possible that students who volunteer to give feedback may provide more detailed and more constructive responses. Some professors may prefer an opt-in approach in particularly difficult semesters where they are teaching students who are opposed to the clinic's mission or students who clearly do not want to be in the clinic.[158] However, the authors believe it is valuable to survey all students in a course, and that instructors can adapt their mid-semester survey to account for the particular difficulties of any semester.[159]

A combination approach can also be taken. For example, Professor Abraham asks all students to provide brief written feedback in their mandatory mid-semester self-assessment memo.[160] The questions are open-ended and very short.[161] She also offers an optional focus group later in the semester.[162] This allows all students the opportunity to provide some feedback regardless of whether they wish to participate in the focus group. It also provides the professor with feedback at multiple points over the course of the year.

As with so many questions raised in clinic, there is no single right answer.

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156 The typical clinic class enrolls eight students. Kuehn et al., *supra* note 96, at 26.

157 Kreiling, *supra* note 55, at 334-35 (recommending and describing formal evaluation sessions to occur "periodically during and at the end of the fieldwork"). One of the authors regularly includes feedback questions in the mid-semester self-reflection assignment.

158 At some schools it is mandatory to participate in a clinic. *See, e.g.*, *Student Handbook Vol. I, Sec. 1.5*, Univ. of the D.C. David A. Clarke Sch. L., (2024-2025) [https://perma.cc/RLL7-MK9H].

159 *See, e.g.* the brief three-question surveys in Appendix A.

160 Heather R. Abraham, Midsemester Self-Evaluation Memo (Fall 2024) (on file with authors); *see also* email from Heather R. Abraham of December 5, 2025, *supra* note 149.

161 *See* Abraham, Midsemester Self-Evaluation Memo, *supra* note 160.

162 *See supra* notes 149-153 and accompanying text.

D. Anonymity

Questionnaires can be administered anonymously or non-anonymously. Considerations include the response rate, the quality of comments including level of candor, and whether the instructor plans to follow up individually or in class. Each consideration is explored further below.

If the questionnaire is required—such as considered in the student's participation grade for completing written assignments—then a non-anonymous survey is more likely to achieve a 100% response rate, since students will be motivated to submit the assignment. This ensures that each student's opinion is considered. If the questionnaire is voluntary, then it is not clear whether anonymity will produce a higher response rate. The instructor's plan for responding to the student feedback also needs to be considered. A non-anonymous approach permits the instructor to respond to students individually, if preferred. The instructor can respond as part of the mid-semester conference or in a separate meeting.

In theory, an anonymous survey allows students to speak without fear of disapproval or retribution, resulting in more accurate and more candid comments. If students provide positive non-anonymous mid-semester comments but negative comments on the end-of-semester course evaluations, the instructor might consider implementing an anonymous mid-semester survey. Some researchers have found that administering anonymous mid-semester feedback online can lead to higher faculty ratings than other methods.[163]

In small classes, the instructor may suspect they recognize some "anonymous" commenters based on the student's voice, writing style, or perspective. The intimacy of the professor-supervisor relationship in clinical education makes this especially likely.[164] If the student is worried about being identified, an anonymous survey may not increase the candor of the responses. If this occurs (as indicated by negative end-of-semester feedback that was not provided at mid-semester), the instructor might experiment with the form of the questions. Scaled responses are much harder to tie to a specific student than narrative responses. The instructor could also consider having an intermediary collect the feedback and summarize it.[165]

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[163] Harris & Stevens, *supra* note 14, at 541-42. Ease of use and the timely delivery of results may also have been factors in the success of this method, in addition to the anonymity it provided. *Id.*

[164] Effective clinical supervision "requires an enormous amount of individual diagnoses" so the professor can "structure the student's activity to foster learning." Shalleck, *supra* note 99, at 173-74; *see also* Sullivan, *supra* note 45.

[165] *See* discussion *infra* at Part IV.E.

Both anonymous and non-anonymous exercises can further the goals of clinical pedagogy identified in Part II. Students can develop the skills of reflection and metacognition through a mid-semester feedback exercise regardless of whether the exercise is anonymous. One could argue that the skill of giving feedback will be advanced further by a non-anonymous exercise, as giving honest feedback without the cloak of anonymity requires more skill and courage.[166] Of course, a student who provides answers they think the instructor wants to hear is not developing that skill. Each instructor must consider the skills, maturity levels, and other factors unique to each class of students in making this decision.

E. Who Collects the Feedback?

The instructor can, of course, administer the feedback exercise themselves. As discussed above in Part IV.D, responses can still be anonymous. Alternately, another professor or a consultant provided by the university may be available to collect feedback from the students.[167]

A consultant may have special training or skills which can be valuable to the instructor. Regardless of who the third party is, students may feel safer offering critical feedback through an intermediary rather than directly to the instructor, and therefore provide more honest responses. There are also benefits to the instructor in having a third party collect the responses. The third party can aggregate comments for the instructor, and paraphrase or elide any hurtful phrasing used by students. This can soften the impact of ill-considered or hostile comments on the instructor.[168]

However, there are disadvantages of using an intermediary. First, time is at a premium for most clinical professors. It is more time-consuming to involve another person, both during the process and in developing the protocol. The exercise is also less intimate and may build less trust between the instructor and students.

It is more difficult for people to give feedback directly to a supervisor. If building that skill is a top goal of the exercise, consider having the instructor collect feedback directly. This consideration may

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166 Engendering courage in students may be "one of the greatest gifts we can present to them." Mary Marsh Zulack, *Rediscovering Client Decisionmaking: The Impact of Role-Playing*, 1 Clin. L. Rev. 593, 604 n.17 (Spring 1995).

167 Some universities provide this service to professors. *See, e.g.*, *Midterm Student Feedback*, Univ. of Mich. Ctr. for Rsch. on Learning & Teaching, https://crlt.umich.edu/faculty/feedback (on file with authors) (last visited Sept. 24, 2025) (describing the process for a consultant to visit a class to collect student feedback). One of the authors has used teaching consultants provided by two of the universities at which she has taught.

168 However, this filter could frustrate students who believe the instructor is actually reading their feedback.

not trump others, however. In the workplace, students may be asked to provide direct feedback but they may also be asked to provide anonymous feedback to a supervisor. The authors encountered both models in the workplace prior to entering academia. The exercise can be designed for students to practice giving effective feedback regardless of who collects their responses.

F. Modes of Communication and Engagement

The instructor will need to decide whether to collect feedback verbally, in writing, or using both methods. In-person discussions, whether one-on-one, as a small group, or in a large group format, provide the opportunity to probe or ask follow-up questions.[169] However, they are more time-consuming than a written questionnaire. The instructor's preferences regarding anonymity and whether a third party will collect the feedback will influence its form as well.[170] Some students will express themselves more eloquently in writing, and others will provide much more detail in a verbal interaction than they will in a written assignment. There can be multiple reasons for this, including concerns about social acceptability and the permanency of the record being made.[171]

One common method of collecting mid-semester feedback is a small group discussion, involving all students in a course.[172] This is the most common approach at the University of Michigan, facilitated by a consultant.[173] The small groups share their responses verbally with the whole class and the consultant.[174] The responses are anonymous, as the

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169 *See* William M.K. Trochim, *Types of Surveys,* Research Methods Knowledge Base, https://conjointly.com/kb/types-of-surveys/ [https://perma.cc/BR7K-5QJ8] (last visited Dec. 14, 2025).

170 The question of anonymity is discussed *supra*, at Part IV.D. Obviously, collecting anonymous verbal feedback would require the feedback to be collected by an intermediary. If the instructor strongly prefers to collect anonymous feedback, the availability of a third-party facilitator would determine whether the exercise is written or oral.

171 *See* William M.K. Trochim, *Interviews*, Research Methods Knowledge Base, https://conjointly.com/kb/conducting-research-interviews/#recording-the-response [https://perma.cc/SKF8-GRZN] (last visited Dec. 14, 2025) ("Respondents are often uncomfortable when they know their remarks will be recorded word-for-word. They may strain to only say things in a socially acceptable way.").

172 *See generally* Snooks et al., *supra* note 22 (describing three small group feedback techniques: Small Group Instructional Diagnosis developed in 1982, the Group Instructional Feedback Technique developed in 1993, and Bare Bones Questions developed in 2004).

173 Univ. of Mich. Ctr. for Rsch. on Learning & Teaching, *supra* note 167 ("Small Group Method: This is the most common approach CRLT takes to gathering midterm feedback… Each group receives a sheet with the following questions: 1. What are the major strengths in this course? 2. What changes could be made in the course to assist you in learning?"). In one author's experience, for small classes the class is not broken up into small groups; rather, the consultant facilitates a large group discussion.

174 *Id.*

professor leaves the room during the exercise.[175] If anonymity is not desired, the professor could administer the small group method rather than using a consultant.[176] Small group feedback exercises can also be held online using a collaborative platform such as Google Docs.[177]

The professor can also lead a large group discussion exercise. In this case, it may be helpful to start with a physical activity to engage students, priming them to actively participate in the discussion to follow.[178] For example, Professor Heather Abraham begins with a card sorting activity.[179]

Instructors can request feedback by multiple methods and at multiple times throughout a course. If the first method attempted does not result in useful or accurate comments, it can be supplemented later in the semester. For example, if students complete a written questionnaire before the midpoint of the semester, they can be invited to supplement their responses verbally in their individual mid-semester meeting with the instructor.

One of the authors routinely incorporates mid-semester feedback questions into the students' mid-semester self-evaluation questionnaire. The student's self-evaluation is then discussed at an individual meeting between the student and the instructor. The author finds that this allows students to provide feedback in whichever mode they feel most comfortable. In past semesters, certain students who wrote "bare bones" answers to the questions requesting feedback on the course have provided surprisingly detailed and thoughtful verbal feedback during

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175 *Id.*

176 This has been described as a "last resort," and is discouraged by multiple researchers on the grounds that students are unlikely to give candid responses in this setting to their instructor. *See* Snooks et al, *supra* note 22, at 116.

177 *See* Veeck et al., *supra* note 39 (introducing and assessing the utility and suitability of online collaborative midterm evaluations by students using Google Docs). Professors Veeck, O'Reilly, MacMillan, and Yu conducted two pilot studies of anonymous online collaborative evaluations involving 110 and 140 students, respectively. *Id*. at 161. The studies show that detailed directions and preparation of the students is crucial if using this method; without them, irreverent and confused students compromised the results. *Id*. at 161, 166. While collaborative evaluations did not produce a statistically significant difference in the number of actionable comments, *id*. at 163, the method may have other benefits. In particular, "synergistic comments," in which several students agreed with an initial comment, led instructors of the courses to make changes which they likely would not have made in response to isolated individual comments. *Id*. at 163-164. The method may also have additional value for students in classes that emphasize collaboration skills. *Id*. at 166.

178 *See* Robin A. Boyle & Rita Dunn, *Teaching Law Students Through Individual Learning Styles*, 62 Alb. L. Rev. 213, 229-232 (1998) (discussing instructional strategies to help tactual and kinesthetic learners in law school courses, and noting that a significant percentage of law students tested had high kinesthetic learning strengths).

179 Heather Abraham, Focus Group Discussion Guide (Fall 2024), on file with authors. In the card sorting activity, each student receives a stack of cards, with a class topic written on each card. The students organize the cards in the order of most valuable class to least valuable. *Id*.

the individual meeting. A focus group exercise could also incorporate both written and verbal feedback.[180]

Whatever mode of communication is used, the learning objectives described above in Part II are best advanced if the student has notice of the questions and adequate time to consider them before providing responses. A quick "off the cuff" answer does not build skills of reflection and metacognitive thinking in the same way as a thoughtfully considered answer does.[181] Providing advance notice to the student also increases the student's sense that the professor cares about the answer and has thoughtfully planned the exercise, advancing the goals of improving the student-teacher relationship and modeling reflective practice.

G. The Form of the Questions

There are many ways to ask questions. The instructor must carefully consider the wording and form of the questions in light of the goals

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[180] It bears noting that a structured written or verbal exercise is not the only way that instructors obtain student feedback during a course. Many instructors use quick check-ins at the beginning or end of class to get immediate feedback on assignments or course content. Weekly reflection assignments can also be used to provide the instructor with regular feedback on case or seminar work. In-class check-ins can be accomplished anonymously in writing, by collecting responses on index cards. Check-ins can also be conducted with a visual component using online platforms such as Mentimeter or Poll Everywhere. For example, in the "Cage Gauge" exercise, students are shown a grid with nine drawings of the actor Nicholas Cage displaying a different emotion. Students participate in the poll by selecting the emotion closest to how they feel. The whole class then sees the results, and the instructor can debrief the exercise. Ben Crothers, *For a Perfect Team Boost, Try the Nicolas Cage Gauge*, Bright Pilots (June 3, 2022), https://brightpilots.com/blog/post.php?id=23 [https://perma.cc/PS23-GVZQ]; Steven Sampson-Jones, *Agile Team Health & Wellbeing: Kickass Cage Gauge*, Medium (Apr. 30, 2021), https://medium.com/@stevensampsonjones/agile-team-health-wellbeing-kickass-cage-gauge-cdb75102cff3 [https://perma.cc/SS2A-HSGP]. *See also* Michael Hunter Schwartz, *Teaching Tidbit of the Week: Speedy, Frequent, and Easily Digestible Feedback on Your Students' Learning,* TaxProf Blog (Nov. 6, 2025), https://taxprofblog.aals.org/2025/11/06/teaching-tidbit-of-the-week-speedy-frequent-and-easily-digestible-feedback-on-your-students-learning/ [https://perma.cc/7NFZ-SXYH]; Schwartz et al., *supra* note 29, 169-174 (discussing classroom assessment techniques).

A formal mid-semester feedback exercise can be a supplement to such continual feedback and "temperature check" practices. The mid-semester feedback exercise is distinctive in several ways: designating the time for students to provide feedback on the course in more detail and giving the introductory statement frames the exercise as more serious. Also, a more formal assignment requires the professor to go through critical reflection and address the feedback with students, which instructors may not do with shorter "temperature check" practices.

[181] This could be an alternative explanation for the example given above, in which students who provided minimal written responses on a questionnaire volunteered quite detailed, thoughtful responses during their follow up meeting with the instructor. Rather than indicating more comfort with verbal communication, for some students it may be simply that they had had more time to think about the questions. Some students may devote insufficient time for thoughtfully completing the written assignment or questionnaire.

established for the exercise. The questionnaire may need to be drafted, then compared with the goals, and then redrafted.

When asking for students' suggestions through open-ended questions, it can be helpful to include a reminder about the aspects of the course that they cannot change. Otherwise, students may provide suggestions that cannot be implemented, leading them to feel frustrated and dismissed, or that the exercise was merely busywork. For example, one semester, a student commented that the clinic should not accept a certain type of case. For future semesters, the instructors proactively clarified that they were not looking for feedback on the types of cases the clinic handled.

The design of the questionnaire can help students give answers that are more constructive and helpful to the instructor. Best practices include the following:

- Focus on one topic in each question.
- Ask students to share one suggestion or one comment at a time.
- Use narrower questions to generate more detailed and targeted answers and use broader questions to solicit students' impressions of the course.[182]
- Avoid yes/no questions.[183]
- Avoid questions that suggest the desired answer.[184]
- Limit the number of questions.[185]
- Consider a mix of qualitative and quantitative (scaled) questions.[186]
- Consider whether the questions require defining any terms or explaining any scales.[187]

If the professor uses any terms that need defining, they should do so on the questionnaire.[188] For example, if the instructor includes the following Likert-scale question: "The instructor creates an inclusive learning environment where everyone is welcome and supported," then

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182 American University Center for Faculty Excellence, *Preparing to Collect Midsemester Feedback from Students*, YouTube (Mar. 20, 2023), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZoy4KUdJv0 [https://perma.cc/4CRM-3C3V] [hereinafter "AUCFE"].

183 Yes/no questions provide little information to the instructor, and little opportunity for students to develop reflection and feedback skills.

184 Questions that suggest the desired answer fail to demonstrate respect for students' opinions or openness to criticism.

185 Schwartz et al., *supra* note 29, at 210 ("Keep the questionnaire process simple. Design a one-page form with three to five questions.").

186 *See infra* notes 195-200 and accompanying text.

187 AUCFE, *supra* note 182.

188 *Id*.

"inclusive learning environment" should be defined.[189] This is also a consideration in interviews.[190]

If developing student metacognition is one of the goals, this will also influence the design of the questions.[191] Consider these examples of a two-question series asking for feedback on an out-of-class client interview simulation:

> Version A:
>
> *What is one thing you liked about the simulation?*
>
> *What is one change you would make to the simulation process?*
>
> Version B:
>
> *What is one aspect of the simulation that worked well to support your learning?*
>
> *What is one aspect of the simulation that should be changed to better support your learning?*

Both versions focus narrowly on one topic within the instructor's control, and both ask for one suggestion at a time. The advantage of Version B is that it prompts students to reflect on their learning process and improve their metacognitive skills while also providing specific feedback on the topic. Whether students "like" an aspect of the course may not be important to a professor's pedagogical goals.

Consider also the danger of bias. The form of the question can either invite or mitigate student biases from coloring the responses.[192] For example, "What do you like about the instructor?" is a question that invites students to reflect on their subjective likes and dislikes, which may be colored by unconscious bias. Asking students to respond to specific, targeted prompts rather than open-ended or general questions may help reduce biased responses and yield more actionable feedback.[193] Rather than, "What do you like about the instructor?" one might ask, "Does the professor require high levels of performance?"[194]

Teaching and learning specialists recommend using a mix of scaled questions and open-ended questions calling for a narrative.[195]

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189 *Id.*

190 *See* Trochim, *supra* note 171.

191 *See generally* Preston et al., *supra* note 56, at 1080-87.

192 AUCFE, *supra* note 182.

193 Kreitzer & Sweet-Cushman, *supra* note 140, at 73-84.

194 AUCFE, *supra* note 182.

195 *See, e.g.*, American University Center For Faculty Excellence, *Building Connections: Student Feedback and Co-Creation for an Equitable Classroom*, 6:55-7:46, YouTube

A combination of qualitative and quantitative questions can provide the instructor with a "well-rounded understanding" of the student's experience.[196] Scaled questions provide quantitative data, allowing instructors to compare average responses across semesters and identify trends.[197] Scaled questions should also be faster for students to answer and they can be made fully anonymous.[198] However, scaled questions alone are unlikely to unlock the full benefits of mid-semester feedback. Qualitative questions should also be included to provide context, details, and other information about why students feel a certain way.[199] Qualitative and open-ended questions also allow students the opportunity to fully share their thoughts with the instructor, showing respect for the student voice.[200] The authors prefer to receive specific feedback and they rely on qualitative questions in order to keep questionnaires short. They also find that the goals of helping students articulate feedback are better served by qualitative questions.

As an example, one scaled question could be, "The expectations for assignments are clear," with response options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).[201] An instructor might include this question if they have set a personal goal of increasing the average score for this question. Or, they could ask this question to monitor students' general satisfaction with the assignment instructions without any particular goal in mind. If this question is asked, it could be accompanied by qualitative questions asking for specific actionable feedback. Consider a course in which the expectations for most assignments were clear, but students felt quite confused about one particular assignment. The scaled question alone will not identify the specific issue causing students to give a lower rating.

(Sept. 17, 2024), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=46Ybm-_1HFQ [https://perma.cc/S6PV-CGZJ] (discussing qualitative and quantitative survey questions) [hereinafter *Building Connections*]; *Designing Evaluation Questions*, Univ. of Oxford Centre for Teaching and Learning, (2024), https://www.ctl.ox.ac.uk/designing-evaluation-questions [https://perma.cc/8LVN-C378].

196 *Building Connections*, *supra* note 195, at 7:40-48.

197 *Id.* at 7:04-7:22 (scaled questions "allow you to identify trends and make data-driven adjustments").

198 *See supra* note 164 and accompanying text (discussing the difficulty of fully anonymizing narrative responses in the intimate clinic setting).

199 *See, e.g.*, Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 2 ("the Likert-scale format does not permit a nuanced, complex view of learners' experiences").

200 *See supra* II.C (discussing the pedagogical value of seeking student perspectives).

201 The resources mentioned above in note 144 include examples of other scaled questions that may be helpful for clinical professors. *See, e.g., Early and Mid-Semester Student Feedback Question Bank*, *supra* note 144. *See also* Trochim, *Scaling*, Research Methods Knowledge Base, https://conjointly.com/kb/scaling-in-measurement/ [https://perma.cc/8Z9B-N2SR] (last visited Dec. 14, 2025) (describing scaling and introducing various scaling methods).

A questionnaire section on class assignments which integrates qualitative and quantitative questions as well as metacognitive thinking might read:

> Class Assignments
>
> 1. What is one aspect of the class assignments that is working well to support your learning?[202]
>
> 2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement by circling a number below.
>
> *The expectations for assignments are clear*
>
> 5 - Strongly agree
>
> 4 - Agree
>
> 3 - Neither agree nor disagree
>
> 2 - Disagree
>
> 1 - Strongly disagree
>
> 3. If you selected 1, 2, 3, or 4 above, what specifically has been confusing or unclear?
>
> 4. What is one aspect of the class assignments that should be improved to better support your learning?

As noted above in IV.A, it is best to keep questionnaires short, and the instructor should carefully select questionnaire topics to avoid overloading students.[203] Asking both quantitative and qualitative questions on a specific topic such as assignments may further the instructor's goals for the exercise. It may also require the instructor to include fewer topics in their questionnaire.

H. Introducing and Administering the Exercise to Students

The instructor's framing of the exercise is important to its success in several ways. The way the instructor introduces the exercise can model reflective practice and a growth mindset.[204] Students may be initially skeptical that the exercise is worth their time. The instructor should take time to explain their goals to the students, and how they will respond to the feedback. The skill of evaluation should be explicitly named as a goal of the exercise and presented as a benefit that students will gain from

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202 *See infra* Appendix A.
203 *See supra* note 137 and accompanying text.
204 *See supra* Part II.B.

the course.[205] The instructor's careful positive framing can contribute to the learning experience and encourage students to provide thoughtful answers.[206]

When introducing the exercise, it is helpful for the instructor to give examples of how they have used past student comments to make changes. This openness encourages students to be honest and specific in their responses.[207] Examples of past changes can also help students understand some of the challenges that professors face. In our experience, students appreciate professors attempting to adjust the course to meet student needs, even if they do not necessarily agree with the other students' suggestions. One of the authors has repeatedly had the experience of a student tempering their criticism of an element of the course after realizing that other students had advocated for the element to be structured that way. For example, a student who wrote that they felt overwhelmed by the front-loaded nature of the clinic seminar and advocated to drop some of the early assignments was quite understanding in a follow-up conversation after the student was told that prior semesters' students had asked for certain classes and exercises to be moved earlier in the semester in order to feel better equipped to move their cases forward. Explaining some of the instructor's pedagogical choices in the context of past student feedback, and doing so while introducing the exercise, may help students understand and consider competing demands as they complete the exercise.

Short mid-semester questionnaires can be administered in the same manner as an end-of-semester evaluation. Conducting the exercise during class may increase the response rate for anonymous or ungraded exercises. This practice also shows respect for the students' time and emphasizes the importance of the exercise. One of the authors once sent an anonymous mid-semester feedback questionnaire to students during spring break. To her chagrin, not one of the students completed it. The author has never had that experience when administering the questionnaire during class time.

When the mid-semester questionnaire is administered during class, similar best practices and considerations apply as with end-of-semester evaluations. The exercise can be introduced at the beginning of class or in the middle, with the instructor leaving the room and then returning after 10 minutes or so. The advantage of administering the questionnaire in the beginning or the middle of class is that it may incentivize students to complete the exercise. The class is not over, so students cannot use

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205 *See* Nina W. Tarr, *The Skill of Evaluation as an Explicit Goal of Clinical Training*, 21 Pac. L. J. 967, 984 (July 1990).

206 *See supra* Part I.B, notes 17-19 and accompanying text.

207 Lewis, *supra* note 32, at 39.

the time to leave early. However, any negative thoughts or emotions stirred up by the exercise may influence the rest of the class. If one or more students are habitually tardy to class, it may be best to administer the questionnaire in the middle of class rather than at the beginning. This also bears the advantage that the beginning segment of class will not be influenced by the exercise.

V. Where the Rubber Meets the Road: Reviewing and Responding to Mid-Semester Feedback

This section addresses best practices for reviewing students' feedback and addressing it with them. Some of this section may be inapplicable to professors who work with an external party—e.g., a consultant or another instructor—as the external party may have their own suggestions for reviewing and responding to feedback.[208] While it may seem daunting, this process—soliciting student feedback and then applying their implementable suggestions—demonstrates a professor's "deep respect for students."[209]

Before diving into tips for reviewing and responding to feedback, it is first helpful to review principles applicable to accepting feedback. As one scholar observed: "a feedback message engages a broad range of cognitive responses in the recipient along with a number of often complex personality variables."[210] Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen, who are both affiliated with the Harvard Law School Negotiation Project, have worked with multiple types of businesses and organizations and have studied feedback extensively as clients frequently raise feedback conversations as among the most difficult.[211] As a result of their work, they have determined that receiving feedback well depends not on the giver of the feedback, but rather on the receiver.[212] Stone and Heen define feedback broadly;[213] and they argue that people must be able to effectively receive feedback, even when the delivery is less than ideal.[214]

Stone and Heen identify three triggers that are activated when someone receives feedback: an identity trigger, a truth trigger, and a relationship trigger.[215] When these triggers are activated, professors may not be able to appreciate and respond to students' feedback.

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208 *See* discussion *supra* at Part IV.E.

209 Schwartz et al., *supra* note 29, at 210.

210 Goode, *supra* note 3, at 226 (writing that feedback has been well studied in other disciplines–e.g., human relations, psychology, and personnel management and that those "studies resonate[] with conceptual parallels to the law school clinical experience.").

211 Douglas Stone & Sheila Heen, Thanks for the Feedback 3 (2014).

212 *Id.* at 5-6.

213 *Id.* at 4 (defining feedback as "any information that you get about yourself").

214 *Id.* at 6.

215 *Id.* at 16.

The identity trigger is activated when feedback conflicts with how one sees oneself.[216] For example, a student may write, "Professor S. doesn't explain the law very clearly," and Professor S. may think to themself, "But I pride myself in my clarity, in fact, other law professors have complimented my clarity!"

The truth trigger comes into play when one part of the feedback seems off, untrue, or unhelpful, so the receiver disregards all the feedback without attempting to understand it.[217] For example, a student may comment, "Professor H. lectures for the majority of class, which I personally find boring." Professor H. may react by thinking, "Wait a minute, I incorporate a number of teaching methods besides lecture. This student clearly can't be trusted to give valid feedback." By immediately dismissing the feedback without trying to understand it, the professor loses out on what could be helpful insight. In addition, if the professor has asked for feedback non-anonymously, the professor may dismiss all of the student's feedback based on the one comment.

The third trigger, the relationship trigger, rears its head when a person dismisses the feedback because of their relationship with the giver.[218] Professors may be tempted to dismiss feedback because they suspect that the feedback comes from a student with whom they have a difficult relationship and the professor finds the student not credible. First, as discussed above, when feedback is anonymous, we suggest resisting the temptation to attribute feedback to any particular student. Second, even if a professor is near-certain as to who wrote the feedback, we suggest engaging in the process of critical reflection (discussed below) to consider how to respond to feedback, no matter the giver.

Being aware of the three triggers before a professor reviews students' feedback can help professors understand their initial responses and engage in critical reflection on the feedback.[219]

A. Reviewing Mid-Semester Feedback

For any professor, the thought of reviewing students' feedback can be anxiety-provoking. What will students say? Will they express dislike for seminar, casework, or the clinical model? Will the feedback include comments targeted implicitly or explicitly at the professor's identity? Before reviewing the feedback, it may be helpful for professors to remind

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216 *Id.* at 16-17; *see also* Goode, *supra* note 3, at 267-68 ("All persons share in this tendency to view self-confirming feedback as more informative, compelling, and trustworthy than feedback that contradicts self-image.").

217 Stone & Heen, *supra* note 211, at 18-21.

218 *Id.* at 16. Law professors may also be tempted to dismiss all feedback because it comes from students, thinking that students lack expertise, training, and experience to comment on the course.

219 Cornes, *supra* note 73, at 3.

themselves of some of the principles discussed above. First, students learn differently, and teaching methods that work for some students may not work for others.[220] Second, for clinical courses, especially because they can be on the smaller size, the results "are more susceptible to 'the luck of the draw' than averages of larger samples."[221] Third, the process of soliciting feedback from students provides professors with the opportunity to discuss what aspects of the course can and cannot be changed and can help students understand the professor's instructional choices.[222]

While professors may be eager to review student feedback, it is beneficial to be deliberate about when and where they choose to do so.[223] To ensure that they can effectively review and receive the feedback, professors may want to set aside time on their calendar and avoid times when they are likely to feel hungry, tired, angry, or other emotions that may interfere with their review.[224] Being deliberate about scheduling the time to review will allow the professor to engage mindfully, giving them room to consider the emotional responses and triggers that may arise.[225]

Once professors are ready to review the feedback, it is recommended that they briefly read through it.[226] If a professor has used a Likert scale, they should scan the numerical responses.[227] While it may not be the case for all professors, many focus on the negative comments during the first read through, so they will want to read through the feedback again after getting a more general sense.[228] As professors review the feedback a second time, they can start to recognize themes and patterns

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220 *See* discussion *supra* at Part II.C. *See also* SCHWARTZ ET AL., *supra* note 29, at 25 ("Having a variety of teaching methods allows students to learn things in different ways, reaches students' diverse learning preferences, helps students solve legal problems from new angles, and mixes up the usual class performance patterns. Students' interest surges and they frequently talk about those teaching methods that break the usual mode of law school teaching.").

221 Philip B. Stark & Richard Freishtat, *An Evaluation of Course Evaluations*, SCIENCEOPEN 1, 5 (Sept. 26, 2014), https://www.stat.berkeley.edu/~stark/Preprints/evaluations14.pdf [https://perma.cc/S4L8-TAKV] (writing about student teaching evaluations and noting that the results in small classes may be "more extreme than evaluations in larger classes, even if the response rate is 100%").

222 *See* Diamond, *supra* note 7, at 226; *see also* Lewis, *supra* note 32, at 39.

223 *See* Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 3 (giving recommendations for reviewing student evaluations of teaching).

224 *Id.* Clinicians may recognize this advice as similar to what we suggest to students to set themselves up for successful client interactions. *See, e.g.,* Susan Bryant, *The Five Habits: Building Cross-Cultural Competence in Lawyers*, 8 CLIN. L. REV. 33, 78 (discussing ways in which to mitigate bias and stereotype in client interactions).

225 Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 3.

226 SCHWARTZ ET AL., *supra* note 29, at 209.

227 *Id.*

228 *Id.*

that arise.[229] It may be helpful to categorize the comments by topic, e.g., course materials, teaching methods, and grading.[230]

Following the second read-through, professors can take time to engage in critical reflection before making course changes.[231] This process of critical reflection involves considering the feedback and how the professor wants to respond to it – does the professor want to make a change now, make a change in the future, or not make a change? Without taking the time to critically reflect, professors may make changes to the course simply to make students happy.[232] For example, multiple students may comment that the reading for seminar is too long. Initially upon reading that feedback, a professor may think that they must cut all the readings moving forward or they may simply dismiss the feedback as "typical" student complaints.[233] However, upon taking the time to critically reflect, the professor may consider that in some seminar classes the professor has not had time to cover all the assigned material, which could leave students feeling frustrated, and so moving forward the professor will designate those readings that will not be covered in class as optional. The process of critical reflection allows professors to decide whether change is warranted.[234]

Critical reflection also allows professors to engage in mindfulness and examine their reactions to the feedback.[235] Professors may ask themselves: How am I feeling as I review the comments?[236] Am I

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229 *Id.*; *see also* Robert Marx, *Soliciting and Utilizing Mid-Semester Feedback*, Vand. U. Center for Teaching, Agile Learning, https://derekbruff.org/vanderbilt-cft-teaching-guides-archive/soliciting-and-utilizing-mid-semester-feedback/#do [https://perma.cc/B7MU-C9D5] (last visited Sept. 22, 2025).

230 *Id.*

231 Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 1 (discussing reflection in the context of student evaluations of teaching [SETs]: "For SETs to be effective, they must prompt faculty action that involves reflection, professional learning and change.").

Given the importance of reflection to clinical pedagogy, unsurprisingly, this is not the first article to recommend that professors also engage in reflection. *See, e.g.,* Camp & Epstein, *supra* note 52, at 22.

232 Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 4 ("[F]aculty may introduce unjustified changes into their teaching . . . merely to please students.").

233 Manya Whitaker, *How to Make the Best of Bad Course Evaluations*, Chronicle Higher Educ. (June 2, 2019), https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-make-the-best-of-bad-course-evaluations/ (on file with authors) ("Don't dismiss their opinions as ill-informed simply because they're students. The fact is, while most faculty members are experts in their content, very few have any formal pedagogical training. No matter how well you know the material or how much effort you put into teaching, if students aren't learning, something has to change.").

234 Marx, *supra* note 229.

235 Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 3-4 ("A mindful approach to feedback includes openness and curiosity about the reaction, perspective-taking and letting go of judgment [which] can reduce faculty fragility, in which marked discomfort and defensiveness impedes appropriate and productive actions and may lead to disengagement.").

236 *Id.* ("Faculty should understand that it is common to experience strong emotional reactions to critical feedback in [student evaluations of teaching], including shame, guilt, and anger.").

fixating on or giving unequal weight to critical comments?[237] Have I acknowledged the positive comments?[238] Am I allowing feelings of impostership to interfere with my review of the feedback and my decisions regarding how to respond?[239]

During the process of critical reflection, professors may also find it helpful to talk about the feedback with a colleague.[240] These discussions can help contextualize feedback, especially if a professor is new to clinical teaching, to teaching in general, or to the institution.[241] A more experienced colleague may read the feedback with a less critical eye, bringing a different perspective.

After critically reflecting, professors can sort the feedback into the three categories mentioned above to prepare for discussion with the students: 1) What can be changed now; 2) What can be changed in the future; and 3) What cannot—or should not—be changed.[242] Sorting the feedback in this way can help the professor prepare for addressing the feedback with the students. Comments that fall in the first category may include comments about classroom instruction.[243] For example, if many students comment that they like working in groups, the professor might consider incorporating additional group work during the course. With respect to what can be changed in the future, if the professor solicits comments about clinic orientation—or if the professor happens to receive them—the professor can use those comments to make future changes. With respect to what cannot be changed, students may comment on the seminar's start time or an aspect of course design (e.g., the number of simulations), which may be impossible to change mid-semester.[244]

B. Responding to Mid-Semester Feedback

How a professor responds to their students may be the most important aspect of the mid-semester feedback process.[245] Professors should respond to feedback promptly, ideally in the next class session or meeting with the student.[246] Addressing the feedback promptly signals

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237 *Id.* at 4.

238 *Id.*

239 *Id*. ("Feelings of impostership can lock faculty into a static state, where one is less able to take chances, draw meaning from experience or continue to improve.").

240 *See* SCHWARTZ ET AL., *supra* note 29, at 212 ("Talking with colleagues about teaching and learning is a common and effective type of development activity.").

241 Based on one author's experience.

242 AUCFE, *supra* note 182.

243 *Id.*

244 *Id.*

245 Lewis, *supra* note 32, at 39.

246 SCHWARTZ ET AL., *supra* note 29, at 210; *see also* Wickramasinghe & Timpson, *supra* note 21, at 132 ("It is essential that the instructor discuss the results of the mid-semester

to students that the professor has reviewed their feedback and cares about it.[247] Disregarding feedback may lead students to feel disgruntled or disaffected, and to feel as though their time has been wasted.[248] Researchers have documented "real benefit when instructors are able to discuss course improvements in an open, respectful and constructive manner."[249]

Below are considerations for reviewing feedback in seminar, individual meetings, and in supervision. No matter where a professor addresses the feedback, at the end of the discussion professors should make sure to thank students for their feedback and welcome additional feedback. Researchers have found that students often feel more comfortable providing professors with feedback following the formal mid-semester feedback process.[250] Professors may therefore consider reminding students how they can provide feedback moving forward. For example, the professor may alert students that the professor is open to feedback at any time—via email, in-person, and/or via anonymous form.[251]

Regardless of where a professor reviews the feedback, they may ask for suggestions on how to implement conflicting feedback or non-specific, general feedback. For example, professors may then enlist the help of advanced students to implement the feedback. One professor of our acquaintance received feedback that students feel overwhelmed at the start of the semester when assigned a new case. The students' feedback lacked details regarding what type of assistance would be beneficial, so the professor brought the feedback to their advanced students. The advanced students created a "getting started" checklist that future students could use when first assigned a case.

1. Reviewing Mid-Semester Feedback in Seminar

When discussing the feedback with students, professors can summarize the feedback they have received, noting common themes.[252] Professors should tell students what they have learned and what changes they will make to the course as a result.[253] If a professor will not make

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evaluation with the class as soon as possible. Students will become very cynical of the entire process if they feel their comments and feedback lead to no changes").

247 Marx, *supra* note 229.

248 *Id.*; Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 4.

249 Wickramasinghe & Timpson, *supra* note 21, at 132.

250 *Id.*

251 One author—at the suggestion of another author—has created an anonymous Google Form that is available to students throughout the semester to provide feedback.

252 AUCFE, *supra* note 182.

253 Lewis, *supra* note 32, at 39.

a change, then they should explain why.[254] This discussion also helps students understand others' perspectives and provides context for the professor's pedagogical decisions.[255] Professors can use this opportunity to discuss conflicting feedback. For example, a professor may share that half of the respondents like having structured rounds (where the professor chooses the topic for discussion), and half prefer that one team present on a case. The professor can then discuss what they will do moving forward given the conflicting feedback. The professor could, for example, decide to alternate the format of rounds for the remainder of the semester. Or they could explain at the beginning of future rounds classes why a particular structure was chosen for that day. Conveying students' differing preferences reminds students that the professor cannot please all students.[256]

During this discussion, professors may be tempted to only address the negative comments; however, students benefit from hearing the positive comments, too.[257] Only focusing on the negative feedback may leave students with the impression that all students dislike the course, which may inaccurately represent students' perspectives.[258] Furthermore, professors can use the opportunity to tell students how the seminar or other sites of learning will continue to reflect students' preferences.[259] For example, if students comment that they like incorporating games in seminar, the professor might mention that games will be incorporated in future classes.[260]

If professors have used the mid-semester feedback questionnaire to encourage students to reflect on how they might improve their own learning, they could use the feedback review session to discuss any discrepancies that surface in the students' comments.[261] For example, one professor of our acquaintance has noticed a pattern: most students

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254 Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 4 (recommending that professors address why a change cannot be implemented "from a pedagogical perspective").

255 Marx, *supra* note 229; *see also* Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 4 ("[C]ontradictory or confusing input can be rich fodder for discussion. Students can help the instructor tease out concerns or identify tricky issues without the assumption that there will be neat, perfect answers to every item.").

256 Marx, *supra* note 229.

257 Lewis, *supra* note 32, at 39.

258 One author's conversation with a teaching consultant. It may also leave the professor with an inaccurate perception of the course. Cornes et al., *supra* note 73, at 4.

259 *See id.* ("Reinforcing feedback serves to illuminate behaviors that are working well, raising faculty awareness of effective methods to allow deliberate continuation of these behaviors.").

260 For an example of a game incorporated by some clinicians to teach direct examination, see for example Paul Bergman, Avrom Sherr & Roger Burridge, *Learning from Experience: Nonlegally-Specific Role Plays*, 37 J. Legal Ed. 535, 548-549 (1987), which describes an exercise using children's blocks to demonstrate how information can be lost when provided verbally and not visually.

261 *See supra* notes 54-61 and accompanying text regarding metacognition.

report that *they* participate often in class discussions to help their learning, and it would help their learning if *other students* participated more. These responses revealed that many students' self-perceptions were inaccurate, or, at the very least, not aligned with how their peers experienced the class. The professor uses these comments during the class's follow-up discussion in two ways: (1) to spur students' reflection of the difference between their self-perception as a student who speaks often, and their classmates' perception of them as someone who could speak more in class, and (2) to encourage all students to participate more in class. If there are other behaviors that students could engage in to improve their own learning, then the professor could share those during the debrief.[262]

Finally, professors may choose to create a written summary of the feedback to accompany their presentation to students.[263] This can help the more than two-thirds of learners who are visual learners, meaning they benefit from information presented visually as opposed to orally.[264] Professors who lack time to review the feedback in seminar might consider posting a summary of students' comments and the professor's responses by email or to an online learning platform.[265] Students appreciate timely responses to their feedback, and posting comments online is one way to ensure students know they have been heard and allows professors to respond to the feedback without using valuable class time.

2. *Addressing Mid-Semester Feedback in Individual Meetings with Students*[266]

As discussed in Part IV.F, some professors solicit mid-semester feedback by asking students non-anonymous questions on a mid-semester self-assessment form in advance of mid-course check-in meetings.[267] (Sample questions are included in Appendix B.) Discussing

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262 Lewis, *supra* note 32, at 39.

263 Payette & Brown, *supra* note 7, at 4 ("Some instructors create tables and graphs of their data, and others make handouts or PowerPoint presentations").

264 Ruth Colker, *Toward Universal Design in the Classroom*, 71 J. Legal Ed. 57, 65 (citing Jason S. Palmer, *"The Millennials Are Coming!": Improving Self-Efficacy in Law Students Through Universal Design in Learning* 63 Clev. St. L. Rev. 675, 703 (2015)).

265 *Mid-Semester Feedback*, U.N. Carolina Charlotte, the Ctr. for Teaching & Learning, https://teaching.charlotte.edu/teaching-guides/mid-semester-feedback/ [https://perma.cc/2477-CJNT] (last visited Sept. 22, 2025).

266 While beyond the scope of this article, individual meetings with students can also allow professors to check in on implementation of disabled students' accommodations.

267 In one author's experience, it was difficult to use individual meetings to respond to anonymous feedback, as inevitably students have different points of view and often make conflicting comments. By discussing anonymous feedback in individual meetings, students may feel forced to reveal their anonymous comments.

the feedback in individual meetings is a more intimate setting as compared to in the larger clinic seminar setting.[268] Professors may receive more specific, targeted, and personal feedback when soliciting feedback in this way. For example, a student may comment, "I wish you would have provided me with a template when I was drafting the complaint for custody." Professors can use the student's feedback as a launching point for a discussion about their pedagogical choices and the underlying rationale.[269] Or a student may comment that they feel like the professor expects the student to grasp case-related concepts more quickly than they are able. The professor may use the meeting to discuss with the student what may be happening – is the student not spending enough time on their cases? Is there an issue with their legal research skills? Has the professor assigned too many cases with too many complex issues? Or perhaps something else is going on, which the professor and student can unpack in the mid-semester meeting, using the feedback as a starting point.

The clinical supervisor-student relationship is often more intimate than other teacher-student relationships.[270] Professors may find addressing non-anonymous feedback in individual meetings more challenging than soliciting feedback anonymously and addressing it broadly and briefly in the seminar class. Soliciting individual feedback may require more time from the professor, as they must prepare for individual conversations about each student's feedback. As the example above underscores, the individual feedback a student provides may be (or feel) more personal: "I wish *you* had given me a template. . ." It may be easier, especially given some of the constraints addressed in Part III.A, to solicit anonymous feedback and address it with a large class once.

Despite the challenge of addressing feedback in individual meetings, there are important factors that weigh in its favor. First, giving students the opportunity to provide non-anonymous feedback helps prepare them for providing supervisors feedback in the workplace. Some students may find it challenging to give feedback to a person in a position of authority, and they may only find it less challenging with practice.[271] Depending on a student's identity, talking to a supervisor about how a course or the working relationship can be improved

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268 *See generally* Sullivan, *supra* note 45, for a discussion about intimacy in the clinic supervision relationship.

269 Some clinics choose not to provide templates as templates can be limiting.

270 Sullivan, *supra* note 45, at 117.

271 *See* Houyuan Luo, Clinical Supervisors' Experience of Asking Supervisees for Feedback on Their Supervision: A Consensual Qualitative Research Study 1, 47 (June 2020) (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta) (on file with authors).

may feel uncomfortable and perhaps even inappropriate.[272] Others may feel no such barriers. During one author's first year of teaching, at the conclusion of an end-of-semester meeting where the professor provided feedback to the student, the student said, "And now I have some feedback for you…"

Second, engaging in these conversations allows professors to model how to accept and gracefully respond to feedback, exemplifying appropriate behavior in a workplace. Unfortunately, examples of poor behavior by attorneys in the workplace abound.[273] By engaging in constructive conversations with students about the supervisor-supervisee relationship, professors demonstrate that professionals can solicit, accept, and respond to feedback, showing students what is possible, which may set a positive example that students can refer back to should they find themselves in a workplace with a supervisor who bullies, ignores, or otherwise mistreats them.

Third, engaging in these conversations "contributes to a reduction in hierarchy between teacher and student."[274] Professors make themselves available for feedback in the ways that they expect students to be available.[275] Students may feel empowered by a more equal relationship, especially given the hierarchy that frequently dominates legal education.[276]

As professors prepare for these conversations, they may find it useful to consider whether to engage in self-disclosure and to what extent. Professors may find themselves considering whether

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272 Whether a professor or student considers this conversation difficult will depend on their identities, including ethnicity, race, sexuality, disability, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, role, birth order, etc. Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton & Sheila Heen, Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most 138 (2023) ("Conversations that implicate or are impacted by important aspects of who we are can be charged for many reasons."). *See also* Erin Meyer, *When Diversity Meets Feedback*, Harv. Bus. Rev. Mag. (Sept.-Oct. 2023), https://hbr.org/2023/09/when-diversity-meets-feedback (on file with authors).

273 *See, e.g.*, Erica Orden, *Before He Became Trump's Bulldog at DOJ, Emil Bove was Nearly Demoted for Bellicose Management Style*, Politico (Feb. 23, 2025), https://www.politico.com/news/2025/02/23/emil-bove-trump-justice-department-00205639 (on file with authors) (describing attorney Emile Bove's behavior: "He belittled the work of his subordinates. He was unusually tough on law-enforcement agents. After one blow-up with a fellow prosecutor, he refused to speak with that person for years and declined to make eye contact even if the two were alone in an elevator."); Katie J.M. Baker, *How a Trump-Beating, #MeToo Legal Legend Lost Her Firm*, N.Y. Times (June 28, 2024), https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/28/business/roberta-robbie-kaplan.html [https://perma.cc/B4XU-VU6V] (describing prominent attorney Roberta Kaplan's behavior as "ranging from micromanagement to vulgar insults and humiliating personal attacks").

274 Sullivan, *supra* note 45, at 123 (discussing "mutuality" as an element of the student-supervisor relationship and noting that "clinical teachers not only expect their students to make self-disclosure as part of their pedagogy, teachers make it as well").

275 Goode, *supra* note 3, at 224; *see also* Gordon, *supra* note 4, at 198.

276 Sullivan, *supra* note 45, at 123.

to disclose personal and professional information, in addition to pedagogical information.[277] A professor may want to model self-reflection, requiring them to reveal information about themselves. This may be "risky," as it requires trusting the students and oneself.[278] For example, if a student comments that a professor has seemed distant and unavailable, the professor might consider to what extent to disclose that personal obligations have distracted them that semester.[279]

3. Addressing Mid-Semester Feedback in Supervision

Clinical professors may also consider using mid-semester feedback as a launching point for discussion with students in supervision meetings with teams of students. For example, one of the authors received feedback on an anonymous mid-semester feedback teacher-administered questionnaire that a student did not understand why they had to write pre- and post-supervision memos. Rather than addressing this feedback in seminar, the author discussed that specific issue with each team of students in supervision. The author did this because each team had different tendencies when writing their pre- and post-supervision memos. For example, one team submitted lengthy memos and another team submitted overly short memos. Addressing the feedback in supervision allowed the professor to talk to each team about how that particular aspect of supervision was working for them.[280]

Conclusion

Mid-semester feedback from students can give instructors valuable information about students' learning and about students' perceptions of the instructor and of the course. The mid-semester feedback practice described in this article also provides opportunities for teachers to reflect and make adjustments, while cultivating an ethos of mutual respect and growth. Finally, the mid-semester feedback process allows clinical law professors to model an important professional skill and gives students the opportunity to provide feedback and engage in discussion about it in a safe space.

Adopting a mid-semester feedback practice may also prompt clinicians to incorporate other types of feedback throughout the

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277 *Id.* at 127.

278 *Id.* at 128.

279 *Id.* at 129-32 (in-depth discussion about the dilemmas around engaging in self-disclosure with students).

280 Interestingly, in one team, partner A really liked the memos as it helped them remember what work the team had done and what was discussed in supervision, while partner B felt that both memos were busy work.

semester. Exit tickets, warm-up questions, and temperature-check exercises such as the Cage Gauge can all provide valuable information for faculty about students' clinical experiences.[281] It is our hope that this article spurs further research and classroom experimentation incorporating mid-semester feedback in clinical courses.

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[281] *See supra* note 180 (discussing feedback practices other than formal mid-semester feedback exercises).

Appendices

Appendix A.
Sample 3-Question Mid-Semester Feedback Teacher-Administered Questionnaires.

Example 1. This questionnaire may be useful for professors who have limited time or bandwidth to solicit mid-semester feedback. The questions were developed by one author in consultation with a consultant from their university's Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning. These questions can be asked anonymously or not. The author administered this questionnaire anonymously.

1. What is one aspect of the course that is working well?
2. What is one aspect of the course that is not working well?
3. What is one aspect of the course that you believe should be changed and how?

Example 2. The Columbia University Center for Teaching and Learning suggests using the following three-question survey:[282]

1. What can we start doing in this class that would help you learn?
2. Is there anything we should stop doing that isn't helping you learn? If so, please explain.
3. What should we continue doing that is helping you learn?

Example 3. Professors Michael Hunter Schwartz, Sophie M. Sparrow, and Gerald F. Hess suggest the following three-question questionnaire in Teaching Law By Design.[283] When the authors of this article have asked questions like this on mid-semester feedback questionnaires, they have listed the types of teaching/learning methods that they have employed in the course. Examples include out-of-class simulations, in-class role plays, case rounds, etc.

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[282] *Early and Mid-Semester Student Feedback*, Colum. Ctr for Teaching & Learning, https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources-and-technology/resources/student-feedback/ [https://perma.cc/8MMN-EZ2D] (last visited Sept. 22, 2025). Additional sample questions from the Columbia Center for Teaching and Learning, including Likert-scale and targeted questions, are available online. *See Early and Mid-Semester Student Feedback Question Bank*, *supra* note 144.

[283] Schwartz et al., *supra* note 29, at 210.

1. What teaching/learning methods have been most effective for you in this course?
2. What teaching/learning methods have been least effective for you in this course?
3. What other teaching/learning methods should we try in this course?

Appendix B.
Sample Questions for a More Comprehensive Mid-Semester Feedback Teacher-Administered Questionnaire.

Example 1. Professors might consider choosing questions from the list below that apply to their clinics, and the questions can be adapted to inquire about specific elements of the clinical experience. The questions were developed by one author in consultation with a consultant from their university's Center for Teaching, Research, and Learning. These questions can be asked anonymously or not. The author administered this questionnaire anonymously. Another author asks very similar questions non-anonymously as one section of the mid-semester self-evaluation assignment. These questions can be modified to ask about other aspects of the course, for example, class assignments, class discussions, instruction, and casework.

Introduction. Please use this form to provide feedback on your experience in [clinic name] so far. This form is only shared with me, and all responses are anonymous. **Please be as specific as possible with your feedback,** so that I can implement your suggestions and/or address any issues you identify.

Thank you for taking the time. I will address your comments in our next seminar.

1. Out-of-class interviewing simulation.

a) What is one aspect of the simulation that worked well to support your learning?

b) What is one aspect of the simulation that should be changed to better support your learning?

2. Rounds.

a) What is one aspect of rounds that is working well to support your learning?

b) What is one aspect of rounds that should be changed to better support your learning?

3. Seminar.

a) What is one aspect of seminar that is working well to support your learning?

b) What is one aspect of seminar that should be changed to better support your learning?

4. Supervision.[284]

a) What is one aspect of supervision that is working well to support your learning?

b) What is one aspect of supervision that should be changed to better support your learning?

5. Miscellaneous. Please use this space to provide feedback about any other aspect of [name of clinic] that you wish.

Example 2. Professors may instead want to focus on particular aspects of the course. Below are sample questions suggested by the American University Center for Teaching, Research & Learning:[285]

1a. How does the instructor help you understand what the most important points are within class?

1b. Could the instructor do anything differently?

2a. How is the pacing of this course for you?

2b. Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

3a. To what extent are the course materials valuable?

3b. Which of the materials—used in class or assigned out of class—have been most useful and least useful to your learning?

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[284] The author deviated from the suggested structure to ask for more specific feedback from the students. She asked the following:

> a) Supervision is/is not working for me because. . .
> b) One piece of feedback I have for [Professor Name] regarding supervision is. . .

[285] AUCFE, *supra* note 182. Additional sample questions from the American University Center for Teaching, Research & Learning are available online. *See* AUCTRL Surveys, *supra* note 139.