



Departing from anonymous and quantitative student feedback: Fostering learning and teaching development through student evaluations

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Abstract

The Police Studies program at the University of Tasmania (UTAS), Australia has been growing exponentially since 2015. Since then, UTAS became the only Australian university teaching police across several jurisdictions. One key to this success has been the improvement of teaching and learning via an incremental yet drastically altered approach to student experience and feedback. In 2017, rather than relying on student evaluations that were not engaging individuals positively, innovative and alternative means were sought to ensure communication and feedback could contribute to teaching and learning development, as well as collaborative staff and student development. Student evaluations became qualitative only and fully identified. This radically changed the feedback provided to both police and UTAS lecturers teaching recruits at the police academy.

This paper analyses the changes that occurred after teaching staff decided to completely depart from anonymous and quantitative student evaluations. Eighteen (18) police educators teaching at the Tasmania Police Academy (both police and UTAS staff) were invited to provide their views on those changes. Via an exploratory study of staff experience (67% surveys were returned), and in light of recent literature in tertiary education, we contest current assumptions about, and practice in, student feedback. Our approach arguably disputes traditional and historical thinking on the normative role and format of student data in evaluating the quality of a learning experience. We argue that this innovative, transparent and accountable feedback unlocks ways to embed students within curriculum improvement, teacher development, and learning experience.

1. Introduction

The tertiary education of police is a highly debated and divisive topic in both the profession and academia. Yet, in 2017, the University of Tasmania (UTAS) established its leadership in this area by becoming the only Australian university teaching police officers across several jurisdictions. One key to this success was the adoption of a different approach to collaborative curriculum design, teaching and learning, and a radical approach to the positive engagement of students in providing feedback to their lecturers. In 2017, student feedback became qualitative only and fully identified. This radically changed the educative value of the comments provided to both police and UTAS lecturers teaching recruits at the police academy.

Following a brief account of the involvement of tertiary education in the professionalisation of policing worldwide, and then locally, the authors analyse the changes that occurred after teaching staff decided to use named and qualitative feedback from students. The invitation to present this initiative at the University's annual teaching conference allowed the team to reflect on its rationale, as well as its impact. In our discussion, we contest current assumptions about, and practice in, student feedback. Our approach runs counter to traditional and historical thinking on the normativity surrounding student evaluation data, and especially, the format in which institutions have gotten used to evaluating the quality of a learning experience. We argue that our initiative encourages teaching staff to consider drastically innovative, transparent and reliable feedback. In fostering new ways to foster trust between student and educator, student feedback practices can become vibrant ways to embed students within curriculum improvement, unlocking new perspectives for teacher development as well as learning experience.

2. Background (police education + UTAS setting)

Police tertiary education has been a much-debated topic since the 1960s. Most studies on the topic agree that higher education presents many benefits for police, and that "life-long learning and continuing professional development for officers throughout their careers is worth the investment" (O'Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019, p. 101; see also Bradley, 2006; Cordner, 2016; Wood & Tong, 2008). However, it took many years of scholarly and professional arguing before academics became embedded in the training of police officers around the world.

Several factors have contributed to the promotion of police education at university level. First, there was much debate about the role of academics in the teaching of police recruits, and whether or not they are 'atuned' to the realities of the field, and the daily operational business of being a police officer (Cordner, 1996; Wood & Tong, 2008). Scholars have argued that early difficulties (some of them are enduring) of police tertiary education rest in 1) the ill-thought inclusion of ready-made criminal justice curricula in policing studies, when most police everyday dealings rest outside criminal justice, and 2) in the absence of articulated participation of

policing scholars in empirical policing research.

With the adoption of problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1979) in the late 1970s, came the acknowledgement that police officers need to effectively be critical thinkers to solve complex social problems, or at least contribute to their solution. To do so, it was acknowledged that they needed higher level thinking skills before becoming operational (Cordner, 2016). The push for educational qualifications for police has also often moved in lockstep with crisis, social upheaval and subsequent soul-searching through reviews and inquiries into police actions and culture. The 1987 Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland (focused on corruption), the 1995 Wood Inquiry into the New South Wales police force (on misconduct, corruption and the investigation of paedophilia networks) and the 2002 Kennedy Inquiry in Western Australia (again on corruption) have all made various recommendations about ethics and education. In the US, the final report of the 2015 President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing stresses the need for higher education for police. In those recommendations, tertiary education is presented as an 'antidote' to counteract negative public perceptions of the police (Wimshurst & Ransley, 2007). Tertiary education for police was even touted by Fitzgerald as a conduit for actual organisational change (Prenzler et al., 2010). However, due to the often knee-jerk nature of such inquiries, educational reform has often been poorly defined, with curricula and staffing not addressed comprehensively (Wimshurst & Ransley, 2007). Regardless of such 'hiccuppy' developments, while police tertiary education began modestly (with, for example, the inclusion of ethics, risk assessment and/or policy in police curricula), police education and training in most Western countries now involves some level of collaboration between a police organisation and an educational institution, including universities.

The Tasmania Police – University of Tasmania partnership follows this trend, and has been governed most recently under the Australia New Zealand Police Professionalisation Strategy (ANZPAA, 2012). Now in its 26th year, it is the longest-running police-academic partnership across all Australian states and territories (Bradley, 1996; Julian & Adams, 2010; O'Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019; Riley et al, 2017). It sets itself in stark contrast of generally negative literature about such partnerships, which have notoriously labelled universities as ivory-towers that feed on government education schemes (the "uneasy co-existence of practitioners with academics", O'Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019, p. 101). The creation of the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies (TILES), a police-sponsored research centre at the University, adds another dimension to this partnership, allowing academics to work hand-in-hand with police officers at all rank levels, for the purpose of applied and conceptual research into policing. Furthermore, against an international backdrop that pushes forward the professionalisation of police, the Tasmania Police – University of Tasmania partnership is expanding police education delivery and research into new domains (topics studied, jurisdictional capacity and delivery, and research streams).

The quality of teaching dynamics (inclusive of co-teaching with police officers), has often been argued as a component of the partnership's success, and the analysis of those

teaching dynamics is now an ongoing research stream at TILES. Teaching at the police academy is a continuing topic of discussion between UTAS and Tasmania Police, and is strictly monitored by teaching peers and managers, and via rigorous, daily student feedback surveys. A specific recruit satisfaction survey, installed on the SurveyMonkey platform, is run rigorously in the police organisational context, as part of the monitoring of the recruits' learning experience by Tasmania Police. All lectures are assessed, every day, by recruits. Results are collated daily, and immediately feedbacked to recruit course coordinators and lecturers for analysis and discussion or action. In comparison, UTAS student evaluation surveys were constantly receiving low responses from the recruits: with the mandatory nature of the Academy survey, recruits deemed their feedback already recorded by police academy staff and discarded the University instrument. The Dean of the Faculty of Arts therefore authorised all academic staff teaching at the police academy to cancel all UTAS student evaluations in 2012. Instead, lecturers were encouraged to substitute the daily instruments used by the police academy to assess teaching. This was a logical path forward to address survey fatigue, especially since both anonymous surveys were comparable. Questions were phrased in a similar manner, and topics were assessed in the same way: on a Likert scale from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) (see the table 2 at the end of the article).

This all changed in 2017. As part of a process of revision, recruit evaluations of teaching became qualitative only, and fully identified. The feedback provided to all police educators, including University staff, radically changed. The rationale for the change stemmed from a number of dynamics. Education designers and academics had been flagging, for a few years, the rise in critiques about student evaluations as per international literature and research. From a more organisational point of view, police academies must be seen as a higher education microcosm: a small scale representation of the university, dedicated to the tertiary qualification of police officers, their professional advancement, and research capacities (Julian & Adams, 2010; O'Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019; Riley et al., 2017). It is only natural, then, to observe the same dynamics as for 'conventional' students, especially in terms of teaching and learning evaluations, which went from the extremes of the more than occasional venting or extreme congratulations, to derogatory comments towards staff (sometimes outside the context of teaching and learning). As the partnership between the two organisations matured, police educators became more knowledgeable in the kinds of evaluations that could be conducted to obtain more useful and constructive feedback (Berk, 2005). Police officers and academics were of the opinion that:

"The feedback would be considerably more productive if the recruits were held to account for any comment they made." – Police Educator 1

"I completely agree that the feedback should not be anonymous. We need to teach them responsibility for words/actions right from the start of their careers" – Police Educator 2

"They would put more effort into the feedback if there weren't as many 'pointless' questions, more specifically being the number rating system" – Police Educator 4

The academic team, after debating issues of privacy and reliability, agreed with the point on de-anonymisation and full identification of surveys. The decision acknowledged an alignment with the professional standards of police officers to be held to account for any statement made in any public or private forum.

"There is an element of transferability, from the evaluation of teaching onto the professional life that we can take into account; there is also an element of transparency and honesty that is interesting" – UTAS lecturer 1

However, the academics participating in the review of recruit satisfaction surveys approached the topic of dropping the rating scale cautiously. It would imply some significant changes for all staff arguing about their teaching capacity during performance management sessions and quality assurance framework exercises. Staff would have to develop explicit and long-winded narratives about the reasons why they are not 'graded' as teachers and why their survey results are missing from university assessment. After several team discussions and vetting from management, all staff agreed to use identifiable and qualitative data on teaching and learning. All agreed that levels of trust were high enough between teaching staff and recruits to allow honest, respectful and useful feedback; that transparent feedback was in the interest of all parties, including recruits; and that feedback would always benefit the learning and teaching evaluated.

3. Literature review and theoretical framework

Student evaluations

Student feedback is part and parcel of academic life. It is at the core of evaluations of teaching and learning, and has been used widely, for decades, as a general measure of teaching performance (Alderman et al., 2012; Spooren et al., 2013). The actual practice of such evaluations, however, has become a topic of controversy in the academic teaching trade, and in education scholarship.

Student evaluations generally have three main objectives: 1) to improve the quality of teaching, 2) to provide information for appraisal exercises (such as academic promotion or annual performance management as well as curricula audits), and 3) to provide accountability for the institution delivering educational services (Spooren et al, 2013). Tertiary institutions, as well as professional learning institutions (such as apprenticeship or industry-based teaching organisations) use student feedback in many ways and forms, and some secondary schools also use it to assess the learning outcomes of specific activities such as guest lectures or specialised intensive sessions (Barsalou et al., 1974; Berk, 2005).

In many tertiary institutions, student evaluations are also used as feedback to identify development needs. Teaching staff can use student comments to support an argument for professional development in the use of new teaching technologies, or to acquire skills such as public speaking confidence, curriculum development, or the mapping of their teaching competence (Boring et al., 2016; Oerman et al., 2018).

Such evaluative practices are considered important, and are, arguably, crucial to ascertain that the best possible education is provided to students (Hammonds et al., 2016). According to public management frameworks, evaluations have increasingly been used as tools of quality assurance and transparency. Such exercise is aimed at funding and governing bodies, as well as the public and prospective students, especially when 'teaching quality' is a benchmark by which universities might distinguish themselves in what is a highly competitive market (Watson, 2000). In short, student evaluations have become a fundamental instrument in 'customer satisfaction' evidence¹.

There is an argument to be made that students are the core business of universities, and, as such, should be a high priority for their teachers and administrators. With peer-reviews as the only other tool available to teaching staff, students are the only ones able to provide commentary on the quality of teaching in a course, according to the idea that "the opinions of those who eat the dinner should be considered if we want to know how it tastes" (Seldin, 1993, p. xx). There is indeed no argument that student feedback is important, needed, and "considered by many to be essential to improving undergraduate instruction" (Hammond et al, 2016, p. 26). However, there now exists a growing body of literature that argues that student evaluations, while essential for the conduct of tertiary education, have become too streamlined and rigid in their administration and format and that the 'satisfaction-like' tools are inappropriate for some disciplines and areas of study.

More and more, academic staff and specialists in evaluation research have argued that student surveys have been mistargeted, misaligned with teaching and learning priorities, and out of sync with intended learning objectives. Indeed, student evaluations of teaching, teachers and units of study (face-to-face or online) are increasingly being discredited in international scholarly literature (Boring et al., 2016). Critiques have focused on issues of student evaluation format (the ways questions are phrased), contents (what students focus on when they answer) and timeline (when surveys are administered). Results of systematic reviews of student evaluation and feedback have indicated, for example, that

1. Gender weighs heavily on the assessment of staff (female instructors are rated lower than their male counterparts: Boring, 2017; Boring et al., 2016; Miller & Chamberlin, 2000; Mitchell & Martin, 2018).

2. Student results in units of teaching have a significant impact on the ways students view teaching negatively: a student who failed a unit is likely to give negative feedback, as opposed to someone who received high marks, regardless of the quality of teaching (McPherson, 2006).
3. Questions are often ill-phrased, and do not differentiate between the ways in which students and teachers perceive effective teaching (Hornstein, 2017; Spooren et al, 2013).
4. Poorly designed questionnaires suggest that the architects of the questionnaires lack common understanding or consensus regarding what comprises 'good' or 'effective' teaching (Spooren et al, 2013).
5. Students often take this opportunity to 'vent' (especially since student feedback is anonymous), and often unfairly (Bedggood & Donovan, 2012; MacPherson, 2006; Miller & Chamberlin, 2000).
6. Very few students usually respond to surveys, and those who do are often at opposite ends of the satisfaction scale: students who are extremely satisfied or extremely dissatisfied fill in surveys, and those who are mildly satisfied or dissatisfied do not bother contributing their insights (Hornstein, 2017).

While some surveys have face validity, and are strongly embedded in good social science and teaching research work, the perspectives and backgrounds of teaching staff are also not captured, and teaching material is not contextualised enough in these evaluation exercises (Bedggood & Donovan, 2012). For example, there are things that students simply have to know. This is especially true in industry settings, where practitioners need to be proficient in the technicalities of a profession (Bartkowiak-Théron & Herrington, 2016). They also need to have knowledge of the gravitating issues that sustain their activities. For example, nurses and doctors need to hold exceptionally high clinical knowledge, and students in the medical and associated health disciplines will often strive in all clinical units of teaching. This may not be the case in other components such as communication and management, or even the need to keep account of all medicine in storage (McPherson, 2006). These course components are likely to garner less favourable student evaluations than their clinical or operational counterparts.

In Australia, surveying students in order to determine levels of satisfaction is part of the quality assurance and engagement enhancement activities of the university since 1972 (Alderman et al., 2012). It is a required activity under the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011, *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2015*, of which section 5.3 states that:

¹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to argue whether students qualify as 'customers', and we will only note that this has been debated elsewhere for more than twenty years (see, for example: Bedggood & Donovan, 2012; Clayton & Haley, 2005; Franz, 1998; Svensson & Wood, 2007).

1. All students have opportunities to provide feedback on their educational experiences and student feedback informs institutional monitoring, review and improvement activities.
2. All teachers and supervisors have opportunities to review feedback on their teaching and research supervision and are supported in enhancing these activities.
3. The results of regular interim monitoring, comprehensive reviews, external referencing and student feedback are used to mitigate future risks to the quality of the education provided and to guide and evaluate improvements, including the use of data on student progress and success to inform admission criteria and approaches to course design, teaching, supervision, learning and academic support.

The above is important in the context of the initiative on which this article focuses. It concerns the transferability of an 'established' academic evaluation instrument into an industry somewhat new to the domain of professionalisation of staff and to tertiary education: that of policing and law enforcement (Rogers & Frevel, 2018; Wood & Tong, 2008).

Embedding tertiary education instruments in a professional setting

The University of Tasmania is no stranger to student evaluations. Student feedback via survey is actually one of the key instruments used under the Academic Quality Management, part of the ongoing quality assurance framework of the university (University of Tasmania, 2019a). Student feedback is used to inform exercises run under the National Regulatory Framework, for bodies such as the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency² and as part of the Australian Qualifications Framework³, and under "recent regulatory activity and preparation for the university's renewal of registration as a self-accrediting Higher Education Provider in 2018" (University of Tasmania, 2015). Student evaluations inform course and unit management, as well as external referencing (peer-reviews of curricula, delivery and benchmarking) and third party arrangements (University of Tasmania, 2015).

In using student evaluations as part of its managerial practice, UTAS swapped from Student Evaluations of Teaching and Learning (SETLs) to another instrument (eVALUate) in 2016. While the actual feedback practice has remained the same overall (and has not been without academic discontent, due to new limits on question numbers and discipline-specific questions), the stance of the university in making student evaluations part of teaching policy strengthened. Indeed, the principles behind eVALUate are now embedded in the Student Experience Strategy 2016-2020, which draws from

and expands upon the university's strategic plan: "It reinforces our commitment to students to provide access to excellent student support and guidance services, regardless of their location and mode of study" (University of Tasmania, 2015). Articulated around several pillars of teaching and learning, the strategy states that "the views of [UTAS] students, graduates and stakeholders [are] of critical importance in monitoring, reviewing and enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and the student experience". Pillar No.5 in particular, insists on "the partnership between students and the university through conversations, co-creation and celebration, by providing opportunities for students to provide feedback on their university experience, and ensure outcomes are widely promoted". Student feedback therefore informs "all aspects of the learning, teaching and the broad student experience obtained through the administration of regular and systematic student surveys throughout the student life-cycle" (University of Tasmania, 2015).

4. Method

The changes to student feedback practice in the police studies context at UTAS are worth reflecting on. The focus of our study, encouraged by an annual exercise in teaching and learning⁴, was to provide a forum for staff to think through the significant changes made to the way in which student evaluations were conducted at the police academy. We sought the insight of all teaching stakeholders involved in the delivery of the curriculum at the Tasmania Police Academy: Tasmania Police educators (serving officers seconded to teach at the academy) and academic staff.

Shortly after the UTAS recruit course coordinator received the invitation to present at Teaching Matters 2020, ethics approval was sought, and granted, to run a small qualitative project. We invited all teaching staff to reflect on how changes in recruit satisfaction data came about, how they were received and what impact such changes had on learning, teaching and teaching staff themselves. The aims of the project were to:

- a. Document the changes to the evaluation of teaching and learning at the Police Academy,
- b. Analyse the experience of teaching staff involved in this process (UTAS and Tasmania Police),
- c. Challenge (if so) assumptions about the ways teaching and learning are currently being evaluated, and
- d. Identify new pathways for the improvement of teaching and learning by involving students more positively in their own learning experiences.

² TEQSA is Australia's independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for higher education (<https://www.teqsa.gov.au/what-we-do>)

³ The AQF is the national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It is hosted under the auspices of the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment in consultation with states and territories.

⁴ 'Teaching Matters' is the UTAS annual conference on learning and teaching innovation at the University of Tasmania (see <https://www.utas.edu.au/teaching-matters>).

All lecturers and educators with the Tasmania Police Recruit Course were encouraged, on a voluntary basis, to fill in a three-minute anonymous⁵ online survey. They were asked to do this with the view to providing tangible building blocks to address the development of teaching and learning within police studies, and also to comment on what are widely held views of evaluation practice in student evaluations of teaching and learning.

Steps were taken to ascertain validity and reliability as much as possible, as part of this qualitative exercise (Golafshani, 2003; Lub, 2015; Noble & Smith, 2015). Sampling made sure that respondents had taught before and after 2017 for a period of minimum two years (the equivalent of four recruit courses minimum), to allow for reflexivity (credibility and bias limitation). Respondents were invited to comment on the analysis of the survey, prior to its presentation at the conference (respondent validation). Data from police staff and UTAS staff were triangulated with policing and education literature to produce a comprehensive and articulated set of findings. The academic staff was debriefed in a focus group shortly after taking the survey (peer-debriefing). The survey was designed to be as transferable as possible to other disciplinary contexts, especially those closely associated to a profession.

Survey participants could choose to answer all, some, or none of the questions. A dedicated textbox at the end of the survey was dedicated to issues that participants wanted to discuss, but that were not mentioned in the survey. Submission of a response online was considered consent to participate.

In November 2019, eighteen (18) teaching staff members were sent the invitation to participate in the survey. The survey was left live until the write up of this article, to maximise response rates. Table 1 presents a snapshot of the survey outline.

5. Analysis and discussion

Data analysis

A total of twelve responses were received (n = 12, 67%): 5 out of 7 UTAS lecturers, and 7 out of 11 police teaching and coordination staff. Such a response level is considered high in social science research, but needs to be seen in the context of a rather small teaching team, where organisational relationships of trust built over more than twenty years, and deliberative discussions over curriculum delivery and contents are current practice.

A majority of responses indicated that changes were sought to primarily encourage feedback (Fig 1) that is constructive and positive (n = 8), and intended that students take responsibility for their statement (n = 6), which reduced the possibility for derogatory comments (n = 6).

⁵ The anonymous component of this survey would seem contrary to the practice we are advocating for here. However, we need to distinguish the logistics of conducting surveys for the purpose of industry quality assurance, and those of conducting research for publication purposes. Here, the anonymisation was chosen to abide by mainstream minimal risk ethical research guidelines, expedite the ethics clearance process, and the ethics documents that would need to be otherwise signed off individually by respondents.

Table 1: Snapshot of survey contents and outline

Police Studies 'Teaching Matters' Survey	
Page 1	
1.	Information sheet contents.
2.	Consent statement 1: By clicking on 'submit' at the end of this survey, you will agree to participate to this survey. Note that you will not be able to withdraw your responses after submitting them.
Page 2	
3.	You are a <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police officer • UTAS staff member
4.	In your opinion, the decision to swap recruits satisfaction surveys was to (please rank): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage recruits to 'own up' to their statements, since this is what they will have to do when they go out in the field • Discourage discriminatory, unfounded, or abusive statements • Encourage recruits to provide constructive feedback • Encourage more direct lines of communication between students and educators • Provide an identification of student learning styles, in order to adapt teaching techniques to learning preferences • Other: _____
5.	In your opinion, the decision to abandon 'grading' of teaching techniques in satisfaction surveys was due to them (please rank): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being useful • Not being well understood by students • Being somewhat arbitrary • Other: _____
6.	Has the new form of recruit feedback changed the way to teach recruits? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes • No If yes: how so? _____ If no: why? _____
7.	For you, what are the main three things that have changed since the introduction of fully identified, non-graded recruit evaluations?
Is there anything that you would like to add? _____	
By clicking on 'submit', you agree to participate to this survey. Note that you will not be able to withdraw your responses after submitting them.	

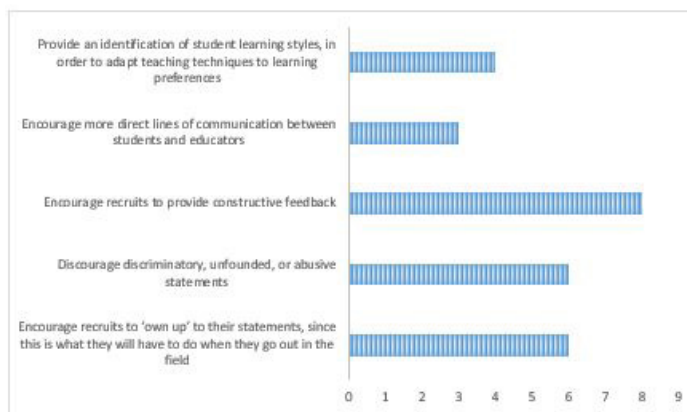


Figure 1: Responses to 'what are the main changes?' (n)

The feedback received seemed to have some impact on the way learning material was delivered in the classroom (Yes: n = 8, 67%; No: n = 4, 33%. Figure 2). Respondents commented that they use more varied ways to teach, use more conversational techniques in the classroom, and rely less on PowerPoint. One respondent also indicated that new, positive feedback helped with teaching techniques specifically.

I now receive very positive comments on teaching and that helps identify what students like in the classroom. Some encouragement to find a variety of things to do, and some confirmation of 'what works' to get or sustain the attention of recruits in class - for example, they like to be clear on Intended Learning Outcomes. – Police Educator 1

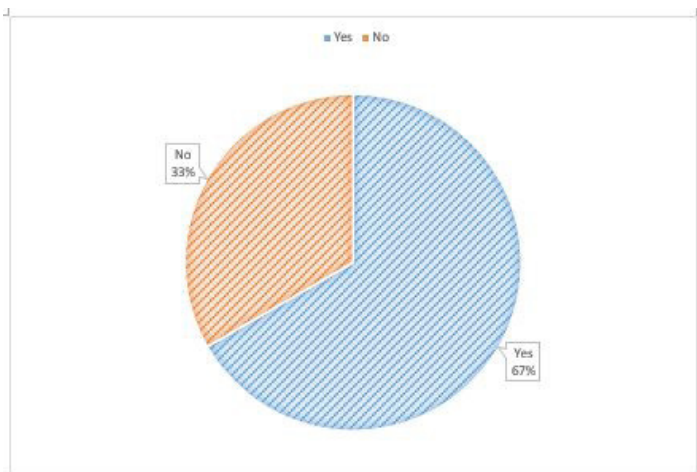


Figure 2: Responses to the question 'have you changed the way you teach as a result of new feedback?' (%)

However, workload and timing of the recruit course (the recruit course is conducted over an intensive 31 weeks) was noted as a hindrance to changing teaching rhythm, dynamics and delivery. As noted by a participant who answered 'no' to the above question:

"My workload is such that I am often unable to spend enough time in contemplation and reflection with the feedback, and that stifles my ability to produce material that will drive change - although I have read and 'surface' reflected on the feedback, I rarely have time to do more than that with it." – Police Educator 2

Qualitative answers to the open questions unveiled a rather positive picture of the feedback obtained in the new identified and qualitative survey. Respondents not only indicated that there was 'more feedback than before', that it was 'more detailed about the content of the sessions being taught', especially 'when recruits were asked to expand on strengths/areas for improvement etc.'. Respondents stated that there are generally 'fewer derogatory comments', with 'less personality driven feedback', and 'more polite, relevant and constructive' comments. It was noted that:

"Recruit feedback is most often positive or neutral; when it is negative, it is usually not constructive and is normally simplistic in that it does not address the learning needs of others but focuses on their own wants and needs." – Police Educator 5

Respondents indicated that the new survey allowed a new relationship to develop between teachers and students, with, it seemed, 'Recruits feel[ing] confident to provide feedback, and feel[ing] like they are being listened to'. In addition to providing 'more constructive feedback, with seriousness', 'in return [the new survey allows] more trust between lecturer and recruit'.

The identification of recruits on survey forms was seen from a more utilitarian perspective, with components of responses enabling educators to map out student learning preferences. As a result, the identification of students allowed:

- "the ability to seek clarification and implement meaningful change that cannot always be communicated clearly in the written feedback"
- "to know who exactly is providing the feedback, so as an educator I can adapt as required"
- "to have better ways to assess the student experience; with the possibility of remediating it in real time."

The Teaching Matters exercise provided an opportunity for university lecturers to reflect on the differences in receiving student evaluations through traditional tools such as eVALUate, as opposed to the new instrument at the academy.

"The decision to swap the recruits' satisfaction surveys was a positive experience for me as an educator. Having taught across many areas of the university, eVALUate has rarely provided me with constructive feedback and is riddled with personal comments unrelated to teaching practice. The recruits' satisfaction surveys were (...) a way for students to express their ideas openly to ensure the material was presented in an engaging, informative and relevant manner." – UTAS Lecturer 3

One UTAS lecturer provided some insight about how the new satisfaction survey had some impact about teaching confidence and, contrary to the literature, self-esteem in how teaching and learning happen at the police academy.

"Identifying the recruit feedback was frankly liberating. It made us, as a group of lecturers, become so much more constructive and confident in what we are doing. It feels like the recruits are taking the feedback process more seriously, and think hard about what they write, and for the purpose of making things better too, for the future of 1) the rest of their own course and 2) future courses. It also shows that feedback can be very constructive. Some of it is positive, some of it negative, and always respectful. I think this is how you build relationships, and how you engage both students and lecturers in the teaching/learning experience." – UTAS Lecturer 1

Discussion and limitations

There are a number of lessons to take out from this study. Primarily, the administration of surveys that allow students to provide constructive, honest and reliable information about the teaching they receive, is essential to curriculum and pedagogical practice. Then, whilst student evaluations of teaching and learning come in many forms (Berk, 2005), anonymised, quantitative feedback is only one of those. It is also fraught with complex issues that often fail to capture specific teaching dynamics or contents values. eVALUate, as currently administered by UTAS, is one of those options. However, one needs to consider the rigidity of these instruments, which are often standardised and conducted

on the scope of a whole course or university, for the purpose of establishing large satisfaction patterns, and whether these macro patterns could be to the detriment of micro, specific disciplines.

The new survey used at the police academy indicates that departing from the traditional notion of anonymised quantitative feedback provides the teaching and learning community with more honest, encouraging and reflective ways to engage students and teaching staff in discussions about teaching and learning, often for the benefit of both parties. Here, the identified, qualitative survey

- provides a forum for feedback that encourages dialogue between student and lecturer
- puts people at the centre of curriculum design and ongoing improvement
- encourages feedback and discussion to improve classroom dynamics and curriculum delivery (University of Tasmania, 2019b)

The point has to be made that whilst literature insists on gender dynamics and discrimination in university surveys (Boring, 2017; Boring et al, 2016; Miller & Chamberlin, 2000), gender was not once mentioned by respondents. This is important to consider, since four out of the five UTAS staff dedicated to the Police Academy are female lecturers, working in a highly masculine environment. The identification of student survey respondents accounts for some amount of accountability and respect, which is crucial in the policing context in which the surveys are conducted. Identifying abusive comments on the part of future police officers is a possible red flag in terms of professional conduct. It also bears some considerable ethical and legal requirements for a profession that is, after all, primarily responsible for the enforcement of the law, including anti-discrimination laws.

Notwithstanding the above comment from Police Educator 2, the fact that evaluations are ongoing certainly allows for educators to adapt to the landscape of learning styles in the classroom, albeit within limits (literature cautiously argues that despite progress in terms of technological modes of delivery, one lesson in a particular format may not cater for all learning styles at any point in time, and may not be advisable anyway; Olson, 2006; Willingham, 2018). Lecturers have however noted that PowerPoint slides have become clearer, that Intended Learning Outcomes have become a standard feature of lessons, and that more interactive ways of teaching have been adopted since the implementation of the new evaluation (see Figure 2).

In the same vein, conducting surveys daily needs some analysis and commentary, and some reflection on whether this is transferable to a university context. At the academy, police officer educators apply for a transfer from operational duties to a teaching position based on many personal and professional factors, some of them not always relating to teaching and education (Bumback, 2011; O'Shea & Bartkowiak-Théron, 2019). A passion for, a knowledge of, or skills in the facilitation of learning in an academic

environment are rarely the driving factor(s). Selection from the pool of applicants for a position at the academy is often based on an individual's personal skill sets and recent operational policing experience rather than his/her ability to promote learning in the student body. New police educators working for the first time in an academic environment rely heavily on immediate, honest and accurate feedback to quickly develop the skills required of effective teachers. A robust, honest commentary system where a police educator has access to the author has proven to be a necessity in the rapid development of educators within the policing organisation and the maintenance of broader educational standards during periods of high staff turnover. Moreover, as police educators become closely involved with this style of feedback, their own aspirations for continual improvement become evident and their ability to impart meaningful and contextualised knowledge to recruits improves quickly and continuously. In the university context, and whilst discussions of the 'ivory tower' still pepper scientific literature, our experience shows that academics have welcomed open feedback, which encourages some reflection on teaching activities. Student evaluations at UTAS are currently run at the end of a semester, which limits opportunities for staff to address immediate learning or teaching issues. While keeping in mind that survey fatigue can quickly become an issue, one could envisage regular one- minute surveys every four weeks, or before mid-semester breaks to check on students and their learning concerns (if any).

Arguably, there are limitations to the feasibility of this initiative, and while the identified, qualitative survey design itself is transferable and generalizable, the particular context in which the survey is conducted at the Tasmania Police Academy poses research limitations. The police academy is run as per policing organisational guidelines, which means that the 'Command and Control' framework very much steers recruits' behaviour (Bradley, 2009). It is only natural, then, for lecturers and police educators to receive constant feedback on what they do, with high rates of responses: recruits are told (not asked) to fill in their satisfaction surveys at the end of the day. This is not the kind of dynamic that we can expect from university students and their lecturers. This does not mean that such new evaluation methods are not transferrable to other fields. On the contrary, practitioner-based education would specifically benefit from such transparent feedback and two-way exchange of knowledge (medicine, social work, security studies, for example).

A point also needs to be made on the impact that new evaluation methods had on Police Studies teaching staff at UTAS. The new dynamics and the relationship between student evaluations of teaching and performance management at UTAS implied that lecturers approach the evidence of teaching activities differently. While the new instrument was being vetted by Faculty and College administrators, the team started writing their own teaching philosophy narratives, developed a statement about teaching evaluation changes as part of the Police Studies core-business, and also used different avenues to get recognition of their teaching. Since 2015, the team has embarked on teaching recognition exercises, and received five team and individual teaching merit certificates and two individual citations, with one staff member encouraged to

nominate for an Australian Teaching Award. While these are significant accomplishments in the career of an academic, these exercises take a significant amount of individuals' time (while arguably still relating to their teaching scholarship). At a time when academics feel constantly pressured to add to their workloads, these are considerable variables to take into account. However, and on the policing side of things, we note that more police officers are complementing their knowledge of policing by enrolling in university courses, often in the education discipline.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

Universities have recently been redefining their role, their generation of knowledge and their relationship with communities. Relationships to students are paramount to their core-businesses, the administration of education services and to the staff that delivers them. When education relates to the needs of a specific industry, such as medical sciences, social work, or, in our case, policing, the dynamics present another layer of complexity. The university needs to adapt to the demands of that industry, whilst maintaining high academic standards. This is in addition to the demands to adapt to new technologies that impact on the industry, and on the ways in which students learn.

Like others in scientific literature, we do not claim that we should completely depart from student evaluation of teaching and learning (Bedgood & Donovan, 2012). However, we argue that adhering to rigid evaluation instruments that are deeply embedded in history and habit is to the detriment of providing evidence of a university's proactive research and scholarship nature. The problems inherent to student evaluations have been well documented in literature. Recently, the impact of teaching evaluations on staff wellbeing has been highly scrutinised, in light of the dramatic consequences various factors (including students' comments) have had on mental ill-health in the academic and educational workplace (England, 2016; Skogen, 2012).

It is high time that the student experience is matched up to the teaching experience, and to revisit student evaluations so that the main stakeholders (students and teachers) see their views valued, constructively assessed and taken into account. Managerial pressures on teaching institutions have normalised the use of surveys to ascertain quality and service delivery. This does not mean that one needs to remain frozen in, what is, after all, a normative way to 'measure' teaching and learning. Our exercise demonstrates that there are many ways to engage in assessment exercises. Universities, and especially UTAS, are well placed to consider the future of learning and teaching with courage, and to leave behind the instruments of the past.

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Appendix

Table 2: At a glance overview of student satisfaction surveys pre and post 2017

Recruit evaluation feedback form (prior to 2017 changes)	New recruit evaluation feedback form (Post 2017 changes)
<p>You are providing feedback on (lecturer's name)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Date and Time of Presentation 2. Module 3. Was well prepared for this session 4. Gave helpful and timely feedback for assignments from previous sessions (if applicable) 5. Clearly explained how this session relates to others in this module 6. Clearly explained at the outset the key learning points in this session 7. Stimulated students' interest in the subject material 8. Clearly highlighted the key learning points during the session 9. Held students' interest and attention throughout the session 10. Effectively encouraged students to ask questions and gave clear answers 11. Effectively encouraged and guided student discussion on this subject 12. Effectively engaged students in a variety of learning activities (e.g. listening, reading, discussion, Q/A, collaborative activities, problem solving activities, case studies, etc.) 13. Made allowances for students' differing learning styles and ability levels 14. Clearly reiterated the key learning points at the end of the session 15. Presented concepts and learning materials in a logical sequence 16. Clearly explained the readings and assignments for this session 17. Was knowledgeable about this subject. 18. Presented an appropriate amount of material for the available time 19. Clearly explained what students were required to do in order to prepare for the next session (if applicable). 20. Started and finished this session punctually 21. Treated all students respectfully 22. Was available for consultation after this session 23. In your own words...How might the presentation of this session have been changed in order to facilitate improved learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Name • Your Syndicate • Presenter's Name • Presentation Descriptor (e.g. Topic Name, Session No., Time of Day, or Nature of Activity) • Module/External Presenter <p>We are serious about continuously improving the police training course. In order to do this we need good quality feedback from trainees to factor into the design and delivery of future lessons and presentations. Please therefore put some thought and effort into <u>writing a paragraph</u> that addresses the question: <i>Which aspects or features of this lesson were either beneficial or detrimental to your learning?</i></p> <p>Consider things such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Were you told at the beginning what you were about to learn? 2) Did you meet the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for this lesson? 3) How do you know you met the ILOs? 4) Were the teaching strategies used appropriate for this subject matter? 5) Were the teaching materials readily available, well organised, up to date? 6) Were you engaged in a variety of learning activities? 7) Were you personally encouraged to participate, question or discuss points? 8) Did some trainees dominate discussions while others flew under the radar? 9) Was your interest stimulated and maintained? How? 10) Were you told how and when the learning from this lesson will be assessed? 11) Was time managed effectively? 12) How would you have gone about teaching this lesson?

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