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MIDTERM
INSTRUCTIONAL
DIAGNOSIS (MID)

USER'S GUIDE

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INTRODUCTION TO MID

Joseph Clarke was the original developer of the Small Group Instructional Diagnosis (SGID). For over twenty years, the process was known as SGID at UD, but then changed to Midterm Instructional Development (MID) to reflect the timing and objectives of the process. Currently, more than thirty major colleges and universities include SGID as a part of their faculty development program.

Professor Clarke used the process in his own Department of Psychology at Washington State University. In 1979, he came to UD to train a group of volunteer facilitators in the process. Part of that training included using MID in the facilitators' classrooms. Thus, from the outset, all would-be MID facilitators experienced the method first-hand.

MID is a midterm evaluation process in which a faculty facilitator asks students three key questions and elicits ideas about the way a course is going. The faculty facilitator gives the results to the faculty member in a confidential manner. The instructor then is free to change the course in any way he/she thinks appropriate.

Experience has shown that both having a MID done and facilitating one can be helpful in developing new perspectives on teaching. Most of the faculty who have tried a MID report improved end-of-term evaluations. They say students appreciate having a chance to diagnose the course at midterm while their comments may impact the course while they are taking it. Facilitators note that students are surprisingly open during the MID process, willingly sharing their ideas about the course and how it might be improved.

So with a limited investment of time and energy, MID benefits all parties involved.



CHARACTERISTICS OF MID

- The process is voluntary, confidential, and insightful.
- It is formative, not summative.
- It is faculty helping each other.
- It involves students.
- Students value the opportunity to provide feedback.
- A chance to make adjustments at midterm instead of waiting till the next semester.
- Helpful in identifying what is working in the classroom.
- Feedback tool for continuous quality improvement.
- Sends a number of powerful and positive messages to students.
- Provides useful feedback.
- Concrete examples from students concerning how they learn and what they need to facilitate their learning.
- Helpful in identifying how to improve teaching.
- Helpful in identifying how well the students understand the material.

BENEFITS OF BEING A FACILITATOR

- A powerful opportunity to improve your own teaching vicariously through hearing students talk about learning.
- It is not a large time commitment.
- Opportunity to interact with students in a unique way.



1) the students have an opportunity to voice their opinions about the course, and they will also benefit from an improved course, 2) the course instructor obtains valuable information which will help to improve his/her teaching and the course, and 3) the facilitator is able to assist a colleague and to interact with students in a manner which is difficult to achieve in other settings.

FIVE STEP PROCESS

STEP ONE

Facilitator and Faculty Member Talk

Purpose: To make sure both parties understand the goals and methods of MID.

The Facilitator should:

- Describe MID.
- Learn instructor's goals and concerns for the course.

The Faculty Member Should:

- Describe the class composition, goals, and concerns about the students or course.
- Decide how to inform students that the facilitator will be coming to class to give them an opportunity to evaluate the course at mid-term. (NOTE: do not give the students the exact date because some students may not attend that class)

Both Parties should:

- Confirm time, place, and date.

STEP TWO

Facilitator and Students Meet in the Classroom

Purpose: To get from students the most information about the course in the shortest time.

The course instructor may introduce the facilitator, but should not be present during the facilitation of the MID. Alternatively, if the instructor is not present, but has men-

tioned at an earlier class that a MID will be performed, the facilitator should give a self-introduction and briefly describe MID and emphasize the importance of keeping to the allotted time. Large classes could take 30 minutes; smaller classes 25 minutes. MID facilitation is typically performed at the end of a class period so it does not unnecessarily disturb the class; however, MID may be performed at other times if the instructor and facilitator agree.

The Facilitator Should:

- Explain the MID process to the class.

Although each facilitator is free to develop his/her individual style, the following sample script highlights the important points that should be explained about the MID to the students:

“Your instructor asked me to come today to talk about this course. The process that we will be using, called MID or Midterm Instructional Development, is designed to provide the instructor with student feedback at a point in time when the instructor can most effectively respond to your concerns about the course; while you are still taking the course, not like end-of-semester evaluations when you have finished the course. MID is also designed to obtain this feedback with a minimum sacrifice of class time. It is very important to note that the use of MID is both voluntary and confidential. Your instructor has requested a MID; it has not been imposed on the instructor by the department chair or dean. The feedback obtained from MID will only be given to the instructor, and the instructor should respond to your comments about the course in the next week.

When the process begins, I will ask you to work in groups of about five

good listener’s technique of rephrasing: “Are you saying...” or “Do I understand you to say...?”

As a facilitator, what if I do not agree with the students’ views and statements? Other than asking for examples and rephrasing, simply list what group spokespersons report.

What if students re-argue points as they give responses?

Take a head count on areas of obvious disagreement and note the results.

What if students do not take the process seriously?

The faculty member should introduce MID as a voluntary way to improve the course. The facilitator should be introduced as an invited guest and should attempt to convey a serious attitude towards the students.

As a facilitator meeting with the instructor, how should I introduce the negative points?

Begin with the positive points on the list before saying the negative points. Also, keep the list until all points have been reported; then leave it with the faculty member for reference.

As a facilitator meeting with the instructor, how can I prevent “sermonizing” about the faculty member’s methods or materials?

Let the MID speak for itself.

As an instructor meeting with the facilitator, how can I prevent myself from being defensive about negative comments?

Listen to the entire report first; then work on response to students. Take negative comments as constructive criticism and make positive changes from them.

- Ask for a student volunteer to copy what is listed on the board on a piece of paper to be shared with the instructor after completion of the in-class portion of the MID. Make sure that the volunteer copier understands that only the comments on the board should be copied on a piece of paper to be given to the instructor.

(NOTE: The student's copy is the only copy of responses. Two student copiers can be used as an assurance that the facilitator's notes are copied faithfully. On rare occasions, copiers have neglected facilitator's notes in favor of his/her own comments.)

- Begin collecting responses to the question "What is helping you learn in this class?" Facilitators have noted that it is good to start the student debriefing on a positive note. After a few good comments have been made concerning the first question, open up the floor for comments about all questions.
- As comments are made by the students, list them on the board under the appropriate question, trying to obtain meaningful comments for each question.
- After about ten minutes, wrap up the process. Thank the students for their time and effort, and tell them that the instructor will respond to their comments within the next week. After the copier has recorded all the comments, erase the blackboard and collect the copied comments. Also, you may collect the comment sheets of each group recorder.

Additional hint for step two:

MID attempts to obtain the most widely held opinions of the students in a class; therefore, there should be general agreement on most points written on the board. However, in some cases there may be strong opinions held by a limited number of students which should still be reported to the instructor. In these instances, the fa-

ilitator might ask for a show of hands on apparent disagreements and list the breakdown on the board (e.g., "10 agree, 3 disagree" or "80% in favor, 20% against").

STEP THREE

Facilitator Reviews MID with Instructor

Purpose: To report to the instructor students' responses to the three questions, to clarify any points of student disagreement, and to provide an overall impression of the class if requested to do so.

The Facilitator Should:

- Meet as soon after the class as possible; the same day is ideal.
- Present student recorder's copy of responses orally with comments and observations as appropriate.
- Indicate which concerns are more significant than others as observed from student input.
- Help instructor plan response to students' comments.
- Share own teaching experience. Offer hypothesis for certain responses if experience is similar.

The Instructor Should:

- Clarify priorities with the facilitator, if appropriate.
- Discuss student responses and select the changes which can be made.
- Prepare an honest, reasonable response to class, keeping in mind that it is not necessary to respond to each and every comment. Tell the class what changes in the course will be made and why certain suggestions, although sound, cannot be made at this time.

(NOTE: Students will sometimes suggest changes which are beyond the instructor's control and would request action at the department level. Also, not all students' suggestions are reasonable. It was once

suggested during the MID process that a statistics course “contained too much mathematics.”)

STEP FOUR

Instructor Meets with Class

Purpose: To assure students that the instructor values their opinions and has listened to their responses to the three MID questions.

The Instructor Should:

- Take no more than ten minutes to review his/her reaction to the responses with students in the next class meeting.
- Present plan to implement some suggestions and/or provide reasons why certain suggestions cannot be implemented.

STEP FIVE

Follow-Up Meeting with Facilitator, Faculty Development Committee Member, or Colleague

Purpose: To offer collegial encouragement.

- A week or two after the MID, review report to students and subsequent classes.
- Discuss progress in implementing changes.
- Analyze any changes noted in student attendance, performance, participation, attitude, etc.
- Look for positive changes.
- Examine any negative changes and make additional plans.
- Although potentially valuable, this step is optional and has not been a regular part of the MID process in recent years. This review closes the loop on the MID process.

HELPFUL TIPS

As a facilitator, what if I misunderstand the students’ responses?

If a comment is not backed by a specific example, ask for an example. Or use the

people to address three questions as they relate to the class. As you are discussing the questions, at least one group member should record each group’s comments. Please try to generate meaningful responses to all three questions. After about ten minutes, we will reconvene to share information. The three questions that I would like you to discuss are as follows.”

(List the following three questions on the board leaving space under each to list students’ responses.)

- 1 What is helping you learn in this class?
 - 2 What is hindering your learning in this class?
 - 3 What suggestions do you have to improve the learning in this class?
- After introducing the MID process, ask students to form groups of about five and have each group choose someone to record the group’s comments. Sometimes the facilitator may need to supervise group formation; but typically, students do this on their own. They may start a bit slowly if they are not familiar with the MID process.
 - Tell students to begin discussing question one. After a few minutes, tell them to begin discussing the remaining two questions. Periodically, remind the students to attempt to address all three questions. Also, inform students as time for group discussion is winding down. After about ten minutes, or when group discussion appears to be slowing, ask the students to reconvene as a class
 - To ensure all students have an opportunity to present their views when working in groups, you might suggest everyone must speak once before anyone else speaks. This solicits group feedback and ensures all group members have the opportunity to participate.