

Report of the UK Senate Teaching Evaluation Ad-Hoc Committee

November 2014

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UK adopted the current University of Kentucky (UK) Teaching Course Evaluation (TCE) form for the 1992-1993 academic year. Many colleges and departments/programs adopted the TCE form, but over the years a significant number of units have decided not to use the TCE form in favor of their own evaluation measure, including the Honors Program, Department of Statistics and the Colleges of Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Fine Arts, Architecture. Some of the reasons for why units opted out of using the TCE form included (a) questions not pertinent to a unit, (b) absence of questions pertinent to a unit, (c) rating-scale dissatisfaction (e.g., a 4-point scale was used instead of a 5-point scale), and (d) language that leads to ambiguous responses from students (i.e., “double-barreled” items).

Given the continued lack of university-wide support for the TCE form and following a report by the College of Arts & Sciences on the current teaching evaluation system, the UK Senate Council formed the Teacher Course Evaluation Ad-Hoc Committee in Spring 2014 with the charge of reviewing and proposing a revised evaluation form that should include items evaluating course content (to be approved by Senate) and teacher performance (to be approved by Provost). In addition, the Senate Council charged the Ad-Hoc Committee with assessing college-specific practices, and to include a plan to make a form that is universally accepted and/or offers the opportunity for units to customize an evaluation form.

The Ad-Hoc Committee initially included 18 members and began meeting during the Spring 2014 semester. Initial discussions focused on the large research literature investigating teaching evaluations, the teaching evaluation forms used at various institutions (both large and small) around the country, and how best to conceptualize a new TCE form that can be used across the UK campus. To this end the Ad-Hoc Committee decided that the new TCE form should include three levels of questions:

- (1) limited number of common rating and open-ended questions that can be answered by students in all units (see Appendix)
- (2) additional specific questions developed and asked by each unit
- (3) additional specific questions developed and asked by individual faculty members

The Ad-Hoc Committee viewed this model, and in particular the splitting of common vs. specific questions, as a critical means to gain acceptance of a new TCE form. The model allows UK to have a common instrument that addresses issues related to students’ perceptions of the quality of the course and corresponding instruction. In addition, it ensures that all units and faculty members can assess the quality of the pedagogy within their discipline. We recognize the importance of evaluating pedagogy and discussed it at length, but realized that this committee was not equipped to take on that task for all units, all types of courses, and all class meeting patterns throughout the university curriculum.

With this model agreed upon, the Ad-Hoc Committee continued meeting during the Fall 2014 semester; 13 members agreed to continue to serve on the committee. However, due to scheduling conflicts only 8 members maximum attended meetings. However, all committee members received detailed notes from all meetings and feedback was encouraged. The goal of the Fall 2014 meetings was to determine the common questions that would be asked as well as discuss other TCE form issues. With regard to the former, the proposed 18 rating and open-ended questions are presented in Appendix A.

In addition to developing the TCE form model and the common questions to include in the TCE form, the Ad-Hoc Committee also discussed at length and ultimately made decisions on two other issues. First, a contentious issue over the years with regard to the TCE form has been the nature of the rating scale used to answer questions. The previous version of the TCE form (i.e., prior to 1992) included 5 alternatives, but this was changed to a 4-point scale with the introduction of the current form. The committee could have avoided the issue of the number of points on the answer scale, but we decided to have in-depth discussions on this issue and consulted with researchers on campus about the advantages and disadvantages of each type of scale. In the end, the committee voted to recommend using a 5-point scale to allow for greater score variability and as a way for students to give an “average” rating. We understand that certain units on campus will not agree with our decision. Still, we hope that these units might consider using the new TCE form.

Second, we discussed how the score for each TCE form rating question should be reported. This discussion centered on the problem cited by faculty over the years that current TCE form scores, reported as means, include low-end outliers. These outliers lead to greater variability and lower overall means. The current output for faculty for rating questions does include the standard deviation of the score for each question, but faculty have stated that they do not feel this information is used (let alone understood) by those evaluating TCE form scores. In the end, the committee recommended that the new TCE form should include the total enrolled in a course being evaluated. In addition, the new form should include the response count, median score, mean score, and bar graphs showing the distribution of ratings across the 5-point scale, in that order.

There are still issues related to a new TCE form that must be resolved. However, the Ad-Hoc Committee felt that these issues were too far afield from the specific charges to the committee. These issues include a version of the new TCE form for online courses. We will add with regard to this version that it is likely that most of the current proposed questions can be used or slightly modified to accommodate an online course. Other issues include the name of the new TCE form, appropriate use of the TCE form scores in tenure and promotion cases, incentives to get students to respond online, minimum response rates required for TCE form scores to be reported/used, and greater access to TCE form scores, especially by students.

Appendix A

Student Items

1-S) My classification is _____ (year in school as undergrad, year in school as grad)

2-S) My main reason(s) for taking this course is that it _____.

(is required course, is elective, covers a topic I am interested in)

Note: students will be able to select more than one answer

3-S) My expected grade in the course is a(n) _____.

4-S) Hours I spent per week on the course (excluding class time)

Common Items

Course Organization and Planning

1-C) The course was well organized.

2-C) The instructor was prepared.

Clarity, Communication Skills

3-C) The instructor communicated clearly.

4-C) The instructor responded to questions effectively.

5-C) The pace of the course was appropriate.

Student-Instructor Interaction, Rapport

6-C) The instructor treated students with respect.

7-C) Class meetings contributed to my learning in the course.

8-C) The instructor's verbal interactions (questions and comments) with students helped me learn in the course.

Grading and Examinations, Evaluation

9-C) Grading in the course was fair.

10-C) Assessments (e.g., tests, quizzes, papers, homework, projects, clinical observations) reflected learning activities in the course.

Summary Items

11-C) NAME OF COURSE was a quality course.

12-C) INSTRUCTOR NAME provided quality teaching.

Open-Ended Comments

1-OEC) Which aspects of the course/instructor were most helpful and why?

2-OEC) Which aspects of the course/instructor would you change and why/how?

3-OEC) Other comments?