

**Additional Recommendations on Use of Course Evaluations in Fall 2020**

Addendum to the Ad Hoc Group on Course Evaluations 10/6/2020 Report (10/23/2020)

**Members:** Sara Blair, Lisa Emery, Matt Kaplan, Jonathan Massey, Tim McKay, Lynn Videka, Michael Wellman

Additional Recommendation on Use of Course Evaluations for Fall 2020

1. The Ad Hoc Group recommends use of Fall, 2020 course evaluations in teaching personnel considerations including annual review and promotion and tenure considerations **with appropriate care and context and with the following principles:**
  - a. Academic units should be mindful and explicit about the context of the term, including consideration of the pandemic's effects overall and on the individual's teaching situation, including the fluidity of the semester, the special needs and circumstances of individual or groups of students and faculty, the effects of technology limitations and other relevant matters. In particular, the shift to remote and hybrid teaching has required faculty to spend considerably more time than is typical rethinking their pedagogy and connecting with their students. In addition, the pandemic and racist violence have had differential impacts on some groups to devote this additional time to their teaching. For example, family care has disproportionately affected women faculty, while service demands on many faculty of color have increased as a result of calls to explore ways the university can implement anti-racist policies and practices.
  - b. The evaluation of teaching should be based on multiple indicators. It is never sufficient to use student ratings as the single indicator of teaching performance. Suggested teaching performance indicators other than student evaluations include peer review of syllabi and pedagogical tools, peer observations of teaching, and the instructor's teaching statement.
  - c. Innovations in teaching methods are more important than ever during these uncertain pandemic times. It should be recognized that innovations will have variable results, but are important for long-term knowledge development about effective teaching methods under extreme and disruptive conditions such as a pandemic.
  
2. While this falls outside of our official charge, the Ad Hoc Group on Course Evaluations suggests that the university conduct systematic studies of bias in student evaluations, including bias based on instructor identities such as gender, race, age, and other salient factors. This will produce better evidence for the university's future considerations of the information provided by student ratings of courses.

There are multiple faculty across campus who have the expertise to inform and conduct such a study. Because there is already research evidence that racial, gender, and other characteristics influence student ratings of teachers, we can create a better anti-bias strategy in use of student course evaluations with data on the status of our campus, taken in context with the broader research findings.

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**Report to APG: Ad Hoc Group on Course Evaluations**

October 6, 2020

Discussed at APG, Oct. 7, 2020

**Charge**

Susan would appreciate your recommendations on what modifications should be included in the course evaluations to take account of the hybrid nature of our semester.

**Committee Members**

Sara Blair, Provost's Office

Lisa Emery, Registrar's Office

Matthew Kaplan, CRLT

Jonathan Massey. Taubman

Tim McKay, LSA

Lynn Videka, Social Work, Chair

Michael Wellman, Engineering

**Meetings**

The committee met twice. Members concluded that the Winter, 2020 additional questions were informative at the campus and the School levels. Therefore, it makes sense to ask questions about this public health protected hybrid Fall, 2020 term in order to plan for continuous improvement of course delivery during the anticipated hybrid Winter, 2021 term.

The committee also discussed the usefulness of gathering faculty input, either from a survey or in focus groups. After consultation with the provost, this idea was tabled due to the many data gathering efforts planned for faculty input this fall.

**Recommended Fall 2020 Term Additional Questions**

***How did you participate in this course?***

*Attended most sessions synchronously online (e.g., in a zoom meeting)*

*Attended most sessions asynchronously online (e.g., completing modules/videos)*

*Attended most sessions in person*

*Attended about half of class sessions in person and half online*

***Given the format of the course (e.g., fully online, in-person, etc.), what teaching methods worked well?***

***What were the greatest challenges to your learning in this course format?***

### **Additional Questions and Suggestions from the Committee**

1. It will be important to get stakeholder (faculty and student) input on the questions if the APG and provost decide to go forward with them. The registrar's office has a student advisory group and can pilot the questions with these students. We recommend that faculty input be obtained too.

Update, 10/23/2020: Student pre-testing suggests modifying some wording of the new semester-specific questions. Terms such as "most sessions," and "teaching methods," were not clear to students.

2. Should we open up the university-wide quantitative questions to allow for supplemental comments?

In the Winter 2020 course evaluations a comment box was added to the university-wide quantitative questions. This allowed students to include comments with their answers. This feature was not widely used, but it would be easy enough to add it to the questionnaires for those students who would like to take advantage of it.

Update, 10/23/2020: Since the comment boxes for all questions were seldom used, they are likely to be dropped for Fall, 2020.