

University of New Hampshire Policies and Procedures for Student Evaluation of Teaching (2018)

Academic Affairs

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I. PURPOSE

This document sets forth policies and procedures for formal University-wide student evaluation of teaching. The goals of evaluation include:

1. Reinforcing and promoting excellence in teaching throughout the University (adhering to NEASC Standards)
2. Providing input into promotion and tenure decisions, and annual and post-tenure reviews
3. Providing feedback regarding course content and success in meeting curricular goals

This document addresses student evaluation of teaching, its purpose, and the guidelines around its use, however student evaluation is only one of several mechanisms that faculty and administration have to address the goals stated above. Policy and procedures for other such mechanisms are not addressed in this document.

II. POLICY

The University of New Hampshire's policy is to assess the quality of teaching of eligible courses as systemically and objectively as possible, in part by:

1. Obtaining student input on eligible courses and their instructor(s) by means of a University-wide "core" evaluation question set that allows both numerical and narrative responses.
2. Providing the opportunity for supplemental inputs from students through additional numerical or narrative questions offered by programs.
3. Accommodating reasonable exemptions to the core evaluation questions. While consistency in approach across the institution has advantages, some programs may benefit from an alternative evaluation.

III. PROCEDURES

1. Evaluation Planning and Administration

- a. Evaluation method: Academic Technology (AT) will administer University-wide evaluations through the web-based evaluation system

Blue for courses offered through UNH Durham, UNH Manchester, UNH School of Law, and UNH Online.

- b. Evaluation window: The timing of the evaluations should be set to allow students to reflect on the vast majority of the course experience and material. Standard evaluations will run from two weeks before the end of the course date (as listed in Banner) to the day before finals begin. For short duration courses, typical of summer and January terms, a modified evaluation schedule may be set by AT. Associate deans must submit requests for non-standard evaluation windows to AT. Faculty and students receive automated email notifications and reminders throughout the evaluation window.
 - c. Exemptions: Official exemptions and low enrollment exclusions (courses with five or fewer students) will apply. It is the responsibility of the colleges/programs/departments to be sure these changes are applied every evaluation period.
 - d. Data Review: Colleges/programs/departments are responsible for reviewing and verifying the accuracy of the course data in the web-based evaluation system. Colleges/programs/departments are responsible for identifying a representative who has the knowledge, capability and authority to access information, review and verify course data, and make necessary changes such as, but not limited to: incorrect/missing instructor names, course cross listing, enrollments, secondary instructors, lab instructors, teaching assistants, graduate assistants, exemptions/exclusions, inquiry, writing intensive, honors, special course sections, missing courses, incorrectly named courses, etc.
2. Student Input
- Student input is to be sought by means of a standard evaluation process. The administration of these evaluations should comply with/follow these requirements and conditions:
- a. Every student in every course, except courses with an official exemption or low enrollment exclusion, should have the opportunity to complete an evaluation through the standard process.

- b. The default evaluation is an established “core” set of University-wide questions. The core questions are available in the UNH IT KB [here](#). Supplemental question sets may be implemented according to the sections below.
- c. Student identity in evaluation participation must be confidential and not associated with specific evaluation responses or results provided to the instructor.
- d. The timing of the evaluation window should be set to allow students to reflect on the vast majority of the course experience and material.
- e. To ensure the highest possible response rate for web-based evaluations, instructors are strongly encouraged to provide class time to complete the evaluation.
- f. The instructor is not to be present while the evaluation is being completed.
- g. Evaluation results will be released no earlier than the grade submission deadline defined by the Registrar’s Office. The instructor must not view evaluation results until after he/she has submitted the grades for that course. The dean’s offices should reinforce this condition with instructors who are found to be delinquent in grade submissions.
- h. The quantitative summary report of each course’s evaluation is to be made available online for student use in course selection.
- i. The following statement shall be included in the student handbook, undergraduate catalog, and the evaluation instructions provided to students: “Student evaluations are intended to promote excellence in teaching, and are used in tenure, promotion, and salary decisions concerning teaching faculty.”

3. Supplemental Questions

Programs may supplement the core evaluation questions with additional numerical and/or narrative questions. Supplemental questions, which are in addition to the core set of UNH evaluation questions, will be administered by AT within the larger University evaluation periods throughout the year. Each

college and department is permitted to develop its own questions. The Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CEITL) is a resource for effective question development. Where supplemental questions are desired for a University program (e.g., Inquiry courses, UNH Online courses), formal application is to be made to the appropriate college dean with a copy sent to the Academic Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate. The application must include: a) the supplemental questions, b) the rationale for creating a supplemental question set for this particular program, and c) a listing of course(s) for which the supplemental questions will be used. Where supplemental questions are included for a given department or university program, the questions are automatically included for courses under those organizations, i.e., a faculty member cannot opt out of an approved supplemental question set. AT, which maintains the web-based evaluation system, should be consulted to determine how and when the supplemental questions can be incorporated into the web-based evaluation tool.

4. Exemption Procedures

All courses are to use the core evaluation questions, supplementing them as appropriate, unless the course is granted an exemption.

Courses may be granted an **exemption** from standard evaluation by the college dean's office. These courses often include but are not limited to, theses, study abroad, new courses and independent studies. Any alternate or non-standard evaluation given to these courses would need to be manually executed by the department or college outside the web-based evaluation tool.

Low enrollment courses, defined as courses with five or fewer students, are **excluded** from the standard student evaluation of teaching in order to protect student confidentiality in evaluation responses and faculty assessment based on a minimal class size. Colleges that choose to gather student feedback in low enrollment courses are responsible for conducting and compiling the results outside the web-based evaluation tool.

Application for an exemption must be made to the appropriate college dean for approval. The application should include the rationale for the exemption and a listing of courses to which the exemption applies.

Dean's offices are responsible for maintaining a list of active exemptions within their respective colleges. Teaching evaluation coordinators

(designated at the department or college level) should use this list when reviewing course data during evaluation planning activities.

IV. FAIR USE OF STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING

Although a common, numerical evaluation form has several virtues, these might be offset if the results of such evaluations are misused or misinterpreted when comparing teaching performance for salary, tenure and promotion purposes. Consequently, the following guidelines should be observed:

1. Student evaluation of teaching, whether numerical or narrative, should be only one source of feedback on teaching. Other forms of evaluation, such as peer review, should also be taken into account.
2. Although many studies indicate that students' views can be reliable and valid indicators of teaching effectiveness, their reliability and validity increases when a pattern of ratings, involving several courses over several semesters, is considered. When available, ratings from multiple courses and terms should be consulted.
3. The proportion of students participating in the evaluation of each class can affect the reliability of the ratings. Evaluation results based on undersized samples may not be representative of the class as a whole.
4. Factors such as class size and whether the course is taken for a non-major requirement (e.g., Discovery) have been shown to affect student response rates and ratings. Consequently, such factors should be taken into account when attempting comparisons.
5. In many instances, the transition from paper to online evaluations is known to have caused a measurable reduction in quantitative scores. These differences should be taken into consideration insofar as they reflect a change in the tools for assessment rather than a change in faculty performance.

V. RELATED ITEMS

1. Mid-semester Evaluations by Programs

In certain cases, some programs may establish a practice of administering

evaluations mid-semester, such as for new courses or new instructors. A department-chosen evaluation process and evaluation tool must be administered and managed by the college/department/program (UNH School of Law excluded).

2. Self-development

Individual instructors are encouraged to seek additional feedback from peers and students, particularly during the semester, for their own self-development purposes and improvement of the ongoing course. Instructors may consider a variety of feedback methods such as using the core evaluation questions, using their own supplemental questions, inviting a peer to observe classes, or making a video recording of classes. The use of information generated through individual initiative for the purpose of self-development will be controlled by the instructor, not the department chair or college dean. Faculty will be responsible for the administration of self-development questions; self-development questions are not administered by AT or processed in the web-based evaluation tool.

3. Evaluation Archives

The University Archives has, since the early 1970's, retained the paper, and now electronic, copies of teaching evaluation summary sheets and made them available as public documents. Teaching evaluation archives are stored for a length of 25 years with approval from the Faculty Senate Library Committee.

4. Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning

The Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning strives to promote the highest quality of student learning by providing full-time faculty, part-time faculty, and teaching graduate students with the resources they need to implement the best practices in college teaching in their classrooms. CEITL offers a variety of resources to aid in instructional development efforts, including utilization of student evaluation of teaching results.