

# **Recommendations on Modifying the Student Evaluation of Teaching Form at the University of Minnesota**

Final Report of the Ad Hoc SCEP/SCFA Subcommittee  
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### Executive Summary

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy and the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs requested that an ad hoc committee address the efficacy of the current Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) form used by the University of Minnesota. Ten meetings and numerous e-mail exchanges occurred between early October 2006 and February 28, 2007. The changes suggested below represent a first step toward ongoing improvement of the student rating system.

1. Six core statements are suggested for all courses:
  - A. The instructor was well prepared for class.
  - B. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.
  - C. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.
  - D. The instructor treated me with respect.
  - E. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.
  - F. My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.

The research support for these statements is provided in Table 3. A bank of additional statements is undergoing development and can be used by an instructor to tailor the rating system to a particular course.

2. Learning-centered as well as traditional teacher-centered statements are used. The use of both statements stresses the joint responsibility of students and teachers for student learning.
3. The University's Student Learning Outcomes should serve as a conceptual framework to a) provide a structure for the rating items, and b) emphasize a deliberate connection between instructional performance and student learning. In addition, aggregated rating scores across departments or colleges can also represent one method for ongoing, campus-wide assessment of student learning outcomes.
4. The well-known but controversial statement #1 from the SET form (How would you rate the instructor's overall teaching ability?) is eliminated from the proposed form. Instead, we recommend that "overall" instructor performance be based on the mean (average) of the core statements, a more defensible approach to examine the broad effects of instruction on student learning.
5. A six-level, balanced measurement scale is proposed for the rating form. The scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree) provides a marker statement at each point compared to the current SET form.
6. A strong diagnostic approach to teacher development is emphasized. We believe that a student rating system should be expressly connected to professional development in order to improve instructional performance.
7. The proposed title of the form (*Student Rating of Teaching*) emphasizes that students are providing a rating score that will be subsequently judged or *evaluated* by personnel committees and administrators.

### **Intent, Need, and Objectives**

The Senate Committee on Educational Policy and the Senate Committee on Faculty Affairs requested that an ad hoc committee address the efficacy of the current Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) form used by the University of Minnesota. The essential structure of the SET form has remained intact for more than a decade despite periodic attempts at revision. The current form can benefit from a deeper analysis of its strengths and limitations.

The objectives to be achieved by the committee were the following:

- a. Analyze the current SET form in light of research on teaching and learning and principles of good practice on evaluation
- b. Revise the current form or construct a new form based on scholarship in teaching and learning
- c. Construct or adopt a conceptual framework of teaching and learning to provide a coherent structure to the items used in the rating form.
- d. Deliberate on the value of student ratings as a source of information about effective teaching compared to other methods to evaluate teaching

The report is divided into three broad sections that also comprise the deliverables for this committee:

- a. the approach used to conduct the review
- b. a proposed rating form for SCEP/SCFA review
- c. a position statement on the appropriate interpretation of student rating forms in light of a more comprehensive system to assess teaching

### **Committee Approach**

#### **Step 1: Outline the strengths and limitations of the current SET form(s)**

A critical examination of the SET form yields the following conclusions:

##### **A. Strengths:**

1. The form is designed with a set of “core” items (items required across all rating forms at the University), a sound approach advocated by experts in teaching evaluation (Arreola, 2006).

2. The form includes space for additional (optional) questions as well as written comments, expanding the assessment beyond the four core statements.

##### **B. Limitations:**

1. The form lacks coherence, i.e., a guiding conceptual framework that rationalizes how teaching and learning relate to one another.

2. A large number of alternative forms exist, a sign of discontent with the goals or intent of the standard SET form.

3. The student’s responsibility for learning is not strongly emphasized. The core statements and many optional statements place direct attention on the pedagogical acts of the instructor but not on the student learning that should result from these acts.

4. Core item 1 (“How would you rate the instructor’s overall teaching ability?”) is a common example of a global item seen on other rating forms. The advantage of these items

simultaneously points to their major disadvantage. While the score of one global item can result in an efficient evaluation for personnel committees, the item tends to be relied upon as a single proxy measure of instructional performance. In addition, the general focus of this item makes it difficult to determine what “overall teaching ability” means to different students. Finally, there is little to no diagnostic value for a teacher who scores medium to low on this item compared to items that measure specific aspects of teaching (Arreola, 2006).

5. Core item 2 (“How would you rate the instructor’s knowledge of the subject matter?”) is a question that is more appropriate for peer (faculty) assessment (Arreola, 2006; Eder, 2006).

6. Core item 3 (“How would you rate the instructor’s respect and concern for students?”) conflates two constructs (respect and concern) within a single item.

7. The seven point scale does not have verbal markers on each item, reducing the reliability of the overall scale.

8. The current form is not connected with a systematic process for instructional improvement.

### Step 2: Outline appropriate options to meet the goals of the review

The committee considered the following options:

| Option  | Committee Response   |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Retain the current SET form or provide minor adjustments in wording</b>                       | <b>Rejected.</b> It is widely acknowledged that the current form needs major adjustments (e.g., different items) that are consistent with solid research and good practice. The previous section also rationalizes the committee’s decision to reject this option. |
| <b>2. Obtain a commercial instrument</b>  | <b>Rejected.</b> New ongoing costs to the University and the strictly “teacher-centered” orientation of most instruments were important considerations in rejecting this option.   |
| <b>3. Adopt best practices used by other universities</b>   | <b>Partially accepted.</b> Universities tend to adopt commercial forms or construct their own approaches. Methods that are central to good practice were reviewed but are better accommodated under Option 4.  |
| <b>4. Construct a new form based on scholarly literature and the unique needs of the University</b> | <b>Accepted.</b> A new form was built based on a scholarly review of the literature and the flexibility needed to address the wide range of instructional formats at the university.   |

### Step 3: Establish criteria to generate a new instrument

Based in part on recommendations from Arreola (2006), an effective student rating form should:

1. acknowledge the joint responsibility of teachers and students for student learning
2. address teaching practices known to promote student engagement with the content
3. reflect a conceptual framework of teaching and learning
4. be connected to larger issues in higher education and with current initiatives on campus
5. focus on both summative and formative aspects of teaching

6. be flexible/adaptable to allow for appropriate use by diverse courses
7. use language that is specific, direct, short, and understandable for the reader
8. include a strong diagnostic feedback element to address instructional improvement
9. apply to both classroom and online environments if possible

#### **Step 4: Delineate the essential differences between teacher-centered and learning-centered rating forms**

Numerous calls have been made to re-examine traditional approaches to teaching in higher education settings (Bain, 2004; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Bok, 2006; Fink, 2003). Barr and Tagg's classic article called for a shift from the belief that a college is an institution that "exists to provide instruction" to an institution that "exists to produce learning" (p. 13). Specific to student rating of instruction, Bok (2006) indicated that professors seldom receive clear evidence on how much students believe they have learned in a course. Instead, student rating forms usually focus on whether the instructor was knowledgeable, accessible, or other teacher characteristics.

Appropriate changes in the wording of a rating statement, however, can help students examine their role as learners at the end of the semester. Table 1 compares the basic differences between teacher-centered statements and learning-centered statements. Because student learning is a joint responsibility of the student and the instructor, the core items reflect both types of statements.

#### **Step 5: Adopt a conceptual framework to categorize rating items**

The committee examined eight frameworks that bear on the relationship between teaching and learning. The conceptual framework chosen reflects the proposed University of Minnesota Student Learning Outcomes (2007; see Table 2). These outcomes indicate that upon reception of a bachelor's degree, students

1. can identify, define, and solve problems
2. have the ability to locate and evaluate information critically
3. have mastered a body of knowledge and mode of inquiry
4. understand diverse philosophies and cultures in a global society
5. have the ability to communicate effectively
6. understand the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across the disciplines
7. have acquired skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning

#### Rationale for the Framework

A well-publicized report from the U. S. Department of Education (2006) contends that the majority of U.S. colleges and universities have not been held accountable for measuring student learning outcomes. A unique approach to respond to this charge is to use the University's Student Learning Outcomes as a tool for assessing instructional performance. In essence, the seven outcomes can serve as categories for aligning student rating statements. Two valued ends are simultaneously achieved through this approach: a) instructional performance is deliberately tied to student learning, and b) rating scores represent one form of a systematic, campus-wide assessment of student learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes for graduate students have not been developed at most U. S. universities. As presently conceived, however, the proposed rating system can accommodate the goals of most graduate education coursework. In particular, outcomes 1-4 and 6 are highly relevant to the structure of most graduate courses.

**Step 6: Determine the scope of statements that are appropriate for student assessment in the rating form**

Arreola (2006), Eder (2006), and Theall (personal communication) suggest that students can be considered reliable and first hand judges of the following:

1. Teacher/student relationships (including rapport, respect for students, etc)
2. Creation of a supportive classroom environment and the management of that environment
3. Instructional delivery variables (e.g., usefulness of feedback, clarity of language)
4. Issues on the level of student engagement (e.g., amount of effort expended, time spent on studying, workload, and difficulty)
5. Congruence between assessment measures (tests) and what was taught in the course
6. Level of access to the instructor
7. Extent to which the syllabus served as a reliable guide for the course

In contrast, faculty peers are considered reliable judges of:

1. Content expertise of the faculty member
2. Relationship of the course to the overall curriculum or program
3. Course design issues such as
  - A. Appropriateness and currency of the content
  - B. Appropriateness of course objectives
  - C. Appropriateness of teaching methodology in relation to course goals
  - D. Overall organization and logic behind the course structure

The guidelines listed above were used to derive appropriate statements for the proposed rating form.

**Step 7: Account for additional parameters to meet Senate policy on teaching**

The current Senate policy on the evaluation of teaching outlines the three-fold purpose of the form: (1) to improve instruction, (2) to provide information for (a) salary and promotion decisions based on merit and (b) faculty tenure decisions, and (3) to assist students in course selection. The proposed forms (early-semester and end-of-semester) focus on meeting these three purposes. Instructional improvement is primarily examined on the early semester assessment. Because the six core items are meant to be universal across courses, these items seem most appropriate for comparisons that are important for personnel committees. Finally, course selection items are addressed through the recommended student release questions.

### **Step 8: Determine core items that are appropriate across different instructional formats and establish their research basis**

Our goals for item selection focused on resolving two questions: 1) What items are most likely to be universal across different instructional formats? 2) Is there a research basis to connect each item to principles of effective teaching and learning? Both criteria provided strong constraints on the pool of potential items. After extensive deliberation among committee members representing diverse disciplines, six items were chosen:

1. The instructor was well prepared for class.
2. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.
3. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.
4. The instructor treated me with respect.
5. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.
6. My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.

A learning-centered and teacher-centered focus is evident in the stems for these items. Table 3 provides the research support for placing these items on the end of semester rating form and connects the items to the focus and intent of three undergraduate learning outcomes.

One important limitation of using a minimal number of core items is that while each item measures a specific characteristic (e.g., clarity), the reliability of an item to measure that characteristic usually requires a minimum of three items and appropriate factor loadings through factor analysis (Arreola, 2006). Thus, the reliability of the form would be strengthened with a larger number of core items associated with a given characteristic of teaching.

Finally, all end-of-semester forms also include space for written comments from the students. Two written options are listed in the Table: a) What did the instructor do that most helped your learning, and b) What could you have done to be a better learner? Both statements provide a valuable, learning-focused response to the instructor, and the second comment points specifically to student responsibility for learning. Instructors are not restricted to the two questions provided and are welcome to add their course-specific questions.

### **Step 9: Develop a balanced and defensible measurement scale.**

The current SET form has a seven level scale with verbal markers at the beginning, middle, and end. The length of the scale and the lack of markers for each number in the scale impact the reliability of the responses.

A good measurement scale is balanced, i.e., parallel values above and below the center point (Arreola, 2006). Many different terms are possible for the scale, but a common approach is to examine the level of agreement or disagreement with an item. Scales with four, five, or six levels were considered. The terms chosen and associated point values were Strongly Agree (6), Agree (5), Somewhat Agree (4), Somewhat Disagree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The six point scale is expected to appropriately discriminate between qualitatively different levels of

teaching expertise as rated by students. Each point has a verbal marker, in contrast to the current SET form.

Based on this proposed scale, a final score report returned to instructors could involve (as a minimum) the mean score on each of the six items listed under Step 8 and a seventh score (the mean of the core items). This seventh score represents an appropriate reporting of “overall effectiveness” since it is based on data assumed to capture the essential elements of instruction. If instructors add additional items for student ratings (see Step 12), we recommend that the measure of overall effectiveness be constrained to the core items for consistency across the university.

### **Step 10: Initiate development of a bank of statements that are aligned with the framework**

A bank of optional statements is under development for instructor use, and the statements are being specifically aligned with the undergraduate learning outcomes. Different courses are likely to focus on specific learning outcomes, and the bank will allow instructors to make item selections in relation to the goals of a particular course. Second, if departments and colleges choose to aggregate results across courses, the university has a unique method to assess how well undergraduate students are meeting the outcomes on a regular basis.

It is strongly recommended that any new items should address the criteria outlined in Step 3 from this report. In addition, since new items need to be incorporated into scoring and reporting programs, a review committee (including representatives from the Office of Measurement Services and the Center for Teaching and Learning) can help ensure minimal item duplication across different colleges and ensure that additional diagnostic information is developed to address the focus of these items.

### **Step 11: Provide suggestions for student release statements**

Student release statements have been a staple in the modicum of rating forms at the University in the recent past. Their purpose has been to assist students with course selection in subsequent semesters, though it is not known to what degree students use this information judiciously. The current student release statements (recently revised but not yet in practice) include 18 items associated with effort, difficulty, and many teacher characteristics.

Table 4 is a proposed and reduced set of student release statements that may assist students in course selection. The statements focus on broad issues of student concern such as workload, grading, instructional standards, and whether the course can be recommended to incoming students. We recommend that appropriate University factions examine this reduced list in light of other information sources that students currently use to gauge course appropriateness. For example, the Class Search function on One Stop (followed by clicking on the Course Guide) allows the user to examine an extensive description of the course, percentage of class time in lecture or discussion, reading and writing workload, percentage of grade associated with a particular assessment form, and exam format. The proposed course release statements should serve to augment this website in addressing student questions about course selection.

Current Senate policy prohibits the release of these statements unless faculty provide approval. While we concur with this policy, we encourage faculty to strongly consider the usefulness of the four proposed statements for students as well as the information value that can be gleaned for teacher development.

### **Step 12: Provide an (optional) early semester form focused on instructional development and early feedback**

Table 5 is an optional, early semester form that includes the six core items and five open-ended statements for written commentary by students. The six core items have minor rewordings to reflect the current status of the course within the semester. The focus of the early semester form is instructional development; inclusion of the six core items provides an opportunity to examine progress in relation to the final semester form. In addition, the five open-ended statements provide faculty with valuable insights into student learning issues that can be addressed in the remaining weeks of the semester.

We strongly encourage faculty and instructional staff to use the early semester form in weeks 4-6 as opposed to mid-semester (week 8). In particular, early feedback on the core items may well allow the instructor to adjust instructional strategies to impact the ratings provided on the final semester form. As indicated by current Senate policy, results of the early semester form are confidential and are strictly meant for instructor use.

### **Comparisons Between the Student Rating of Teaching, University Policy, and SET Form**

Table 6 compares the proposed form with university policy on the evaluation of teaching. Examination of this Table indicates that the intent and goals of the University policy are maintained in the SRT with minor modifications associated with the nuances of the form.

Because a number of versions of the SET form currently exist, Table 7 compares the SRT with the core items found on all SET forms. The differences between the forms are clearly outlined as well as the commonality of using open written comments, although actual wording differs.

### **Improving Scores on the Core Items: A Professional Development Program**

It is commonplace to view the results of student rating form for a single purpose: review of teaching performance for reappointment, promotion, tenure, and salary decisions. Yet changes in the core rating scores over time would necessarily reflect changes in teacher practices. Regardless of the intent of particular items for influencing personnel decisions, the focus of both the core and optional items suggest many possibilities for workshops, consultations, and other means to develop a more informed approach to pedagogy.

There are a number of teacher development programs and services that can be developed for the strict purpose of impacting the core student rating items. For example, the Center for Teaching and Learning can develop a manual that focuses on specific pedagogical interventions associated with the intent of the six core items. Customized workshops can also be developed that are associated with each of the items, and the August Teaching Enrichment Series and New Faculty Orientation

could also have workshops on improving faculty performance on the core items. Additional work in conjunction with the Office of Measurement Services can also be developed to provide appropriate diagnostic feedback for instructional development.

### **Interpreting the Results of Student Rating Systems: Comments and Recommendations**

Debates about student rating systems often center on issues of validity and reliability. A large body of evidence indicates that rating systems can provide useful information to faculty, administrators, and students if they are properly constructed, properly administered, appropriately analyzed, and used as an element of a more comprehensive evaluation system (Marsh, 1987). Nevertheless, the debate continues because the issue of validity “has more to do with process and day-to-day practice than with the psychometric properties of the instruments used” (Theall, 2005, p. 1). In particular, faculty often express concern with the over-emphasis of student rating results in assessing their instructional performance.

Despite the cautions that have been raised about using student rating results in formulating personnel decisions (Arreola, 2006), it is unlikely that administrators and personnel committees will ignore these data. Our recommendations are provided in the spirit of reducing the “high stakes” value placed on student ratings within (far too many) departments and colleges at the university.

1. Avoid having the student rating scores serve as the sole measure of teaching performance. Student ratings are not an absolute measure of the quality of teaching. Use multiple measures of teaching performance, in particular a more robust peer review system.
2. When rating scores are presented, place the scores in perspective. Regardless of the scale or rubric, there may be little difference in functional teaching performance with scores that are one standard deviation or less apart. As well, do not minimize real differences; scores that are two or more standard deviations apart should garner closer scrutiny by the instructor.
3. Assume a progressive pattern of development for new faculty. New faculty need time to develop their own sense of comfort and style with teaching. View each year’s scores as next steps in building a foundation for outstanding teaching.
4. Encourage a strong instructional development component for all faculty in the department. Every teacher needs ongoing development. Allow faculty to experiment with new pedagogies or new course designs without fear of being penalized if (initially) low rating scores are the result. Faculty and instructional staff will make appropriate decisions about instructional development given time, opportunity, and useful feedback.
5. Reconsider the interpretation of scores that are at or slightly below the department mean. If the department mean on all core items is reasonably high, values slightly below the mean are hardly clear demarcations of incompetence. Use alternative methods of reporting scores (see Step 9, paragraph 3) as well as other approaches such as peer review to place these values in perspective with the overall assessment of teaching expertise.

6. Consider alternative formats for displaying comparative performance. It is important to note that score reporting on a given item does not need to be confined to mean scores. A useful scheme commonly employed is to report the percentage of scores that show agreement or strong agreement with a given item. For example, reporting a result for an item as “76% of the students agree or strongly agree with item 1” provides a useful heuristic for understanding actual student attitudes toward item 1. We suggest that the university consider alternative ways of reporting student scores beyond the mean to avoid artificial distinctions in the quality of teaching that are assumed with (relatively) minor differences in mean scores.

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**Table 1. Examples of Teacher-Centered and Learning-Centered Statements**

| Teacher-Centered  | Learning-Centered  |
|---|--|
| 1. The instructor provided useful feedback about my class performance.                          | I was able to effectively use teacher feedback to improve my class performance.  |
| 2. The instructor motivated me to do my best work.  | I set high expectations for my achievement in this class.  |
| 3. The instructor presented assignments that focused on solving difficult problems.             | I am better able to solve difficult problems based on my experience in this course.  |
| 4. The instructor showed enthusiasm when teaching.  | I developed enthusiasm and interest to learn more about the subject matter.<br>OR<br>I was inspired to learn more about course topics because of the instructor. |
| 5. The instructor covered a wide array of content in this course.                               | I learned a great deal of factual material in this class.  |
| 6. The instructor encouraged student involvement in class discussions.                          | I was an active participant in class discussions.  |
| 7. The instructor used real-life problems to help students understand class content.            | I was able to relate the assignments to real problems that I expect to encounter in my profession.   |
| 8. The instructor encouraged students to express their point of view in class.                  | I felt comfortable expressing my point of view in class.   |
| 9. The instructor provided useful information sources to learn the subject matter.              | I learned to identify credible information sources to complete class assignments.  |
| 10. Overall, the instructor was effective in helping students learn the content of this course. | I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter compared to the beginning of the course.   |

**University of Minnesota Student Learning Outcomes**

Learning Outcome

At the time of receiving a bachelor's degree, students:

Elaboration

(Examples of related statements logically connected to each outcome; final statements undergoing development)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>1. can identify, define, and solve problems</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. have developed analytical thinking skills necessary for problem solving</li> <li>b. can identify significant problems that characterize a field of study</li> </ul>   |
| <b>2. can locate and critically evaluate information</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. can access information from a variety of information sources</li> <li>b. know how to work effectively with modern information technologies</li> <li>c. can interpret the value of different information sources in meeting class assignments</li> </ul>   |
| <b>3. have mastered a body of knowledge and mode of inquiry</b>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. know the facts, theories, and concepts that are central to a discipline</li> <li>b. understand the scientific method and other methodologies for developing knowledge</li> </ul>  |
| <b>4. understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. have insight into the beliefs, values, and attitudes of people from different cultures</li> <li>b. demonstrate tolerance and respect for individuals from diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and disciplines</li> </ul>   |
| <b>5. can communicate effectively</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. communicate ideas and information effectively in appropriate formats</li> <li>b. engage in constructive discussion of course content</li> </ul>   |
| <b>6. understand the role of creativity, innovation, discovery, and expression across disciplines</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. understand the impact of various research findings on daily life</li> <li>b. understand how knowledge results from creative and innovative thinking</li> <li>c. understand how research serves as the basis for developing knowledge in a discipline</li> <li>d. appreciate the impact of the creative arts on society</li> </ul> |
| <b>7. have acquired skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. understand the nature and importance of responsible citizenship</li> <li>b. display intellectual curiosity and flexibility</li> <li>c. can reflect upon and articulate personal values</li> <li>d. understand and practice professional and ethical behavior</li> </ul>   |

**Core Items and Research Support**

| Core Item  | Research Support  | Student Learning Outcome |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| 1. The instructor was well prepared for class.                                     | Research has confirmed the high correlation between class preparation/organization and student achievement (Feldman, 1989; Weimer, 1991).                                   | 3                        |
| 2. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.                            | Clarity in a teacher's instruction and explanations has a powerful impact on student understanding of content (Boex, 2000; Feldman, 1989).                                  | 3                        |
| 3. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.     | Providing appropriate and timely feedback to students has a long tradition as a necessary teacher practice that impacts student learning (Brophy & Good, 1986; Light, 2001) | 3                        |
| 4. The instructor treated me with respect.   | Productive teacher/student relationships are vital for continued student growth as a learner (Baxter-Magolda, 2001; Palmer, 1998).  | 4                        |
| 5. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course. | Mastery of content allows students to transfer knowledge to new settings and to place knowledge in appropriate frameworks (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000).              | 3                        |
| 6. My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.                | "Interest" (motivation) drives our desire to become competent when we approach new topics (Bain, 2004; Ryan & Deci, 2000).  | 7                        |

Open Ended Student Comment Statements

1. What did the instructor do that most helped your learning?
  
2. What could you have done to be a better learner?
  
3. Additional comments

**Table 4. Recommendations for Student Release Statements**

6-Strongly Agree 5-Agree 4-Somewhat Agree 3-Somewhat Disagree 2-Disagree 1-Strongly Disagree

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I put significant effort into learning the subject matter from this course. | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. I was challenged to do my best work to meet the instructor's standards.     | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. The grading methods for this course were fair and reasonable.               | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. I would recommend this course to other students.                            | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**Table 5. Early Semester (Optional) Sample Form****University of Minnesota Student Rating of Teaching**

INSTRUCTOR \_\_\_\_\_ TERM \_\_\_\_\_ CURRENT YEAR \_\_\_\_\_

DEPARTMENT \_\_\_\_\_ COURSE # \_\_\_\_\_ SECTION \_\_\_\_\_

Carefully read each statement and select a response based on the following:

6-Strongly Agree 5-Agree 4-Somewhat Agree 3-Somewhat Disagree 2-Disagree  
1-Strongly Disagree**CORE ITEMS**

At this point in the course:

|  |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The instructor has been well prepared for class.                                | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 2. The instructor has presented the subject matter clearly.                        | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 3. The instructor has provided feedback intended to improve my course performance. | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 4. The instructor has treated me with respect.                                     | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 5. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter.                            | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
| 6. My interest in the subject matter has been stimulated.                          | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

**WRITTEN COMMENTS**

I learn best when the instructor:

I am most engaged in class when:

I have difficulty learning in class when:

To improve my performance in this course, I need to:

To help me improve, the instructor could:

**Table 6. Connecting Student Rating of Teaching with University Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching**

| <u>Issue in University Policy Document</u>  | <u>Accommodation from the SRT</u>  |
|---|--|
| <b>PREAMBLE</b>   |  |
| <b>Purpose of Evaluation</b>  |  |
| <p>“There are at least three reasons to evaluate instruction: (1) to improve instruction, (2) to provide information for (a) salary and promotion decisions based on merit and (b) faculty tenure decisions, and (3) to assist students in course selection. This policy and protocol is intended to meet all three objectives”</p>   | <p><b>Maintained.</b> In particular:</p> <p>I. Statements on the improvement of instruction can be found in the early semester form and should be evident in the proposed bank of statements to be accessed by instructors for the end-of-semester form.</p> <p>II. As before, the core statements are considered appropriate for personnel decisions.</p> <p>III. Course selection information is accommodated through new proposed student release statements.</p> |
| <p>“A small number of questions, common to all courses throughout the University, will be used in the student evaluations of instruction.”</p>  | <p><b>Maintained.</b> Six items are used as core statements for the SRT.</p>   |
| <b>POLICY</b>   |  |
| <p>“For tenured and tenure-track faculty, faculty peers must evaluate course objectives and syllabi, handouts, assignments and tests, theses and dissertations, and examples of graded student work in order to measure their quality and appropriateness.... Peers must also assess the instructor's knowledge of the subject matter, contributions to departmental teaching efforts, and any other teaching contributions, such as development of new courses or innovative instructional materials”.</p> | <p><b>Maintained.</b> Research indicates that faculty peers are the best judges of certain aspects of a course. We have avoided placing statements in the student rating form that are better aligned with faculty (peer) perspectives.</p>  |
| <b>PROTOCOL</b>   |  |
| <p>“All student rating forms shall have spaces for two questions permitting open-ended comments: "Describe things about the course that you found helpful" and "What suggestions do you have for improving the course?"</p>   | <p><b>Maintained.</b> Open ended questions will continue in the present form. Five statements are recommended for the early semester form at present.</p>  |
| <p>“The student evaluation form shall also include</p>  | <p><b>Modified.</b> A recommended set of student</p>   |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>the following questions, the responses to which shall, with the consent of the instructor, be made available to students.[9] The responses to these questions may not be used in any reappointment, promotion, salary, or (for tenure-track faculty) tenure decisions” [NOTE: <b>The Senate has delegated to the Senate Committee on Educational Policy final authority to approve new questions to be used; they will be inserted here.</b>]</p>  | <p>release statements is provided in the current form. We suggest that students consider the advantages of course selection information found on the university’s One Stop website (see Step 11).</p>  |
| <p>“In addition to the questions required by the preceding sections of this policy, a question bank will be provided for the student evaluation process.[10] The questions would be supplemental to the required questions, would be selected by the instructor, and would be used primarily for improving teaching.”</p>   | <p><b>Maintained and modified.</b> The concept of a supplemental question bank is maintained but a new approach categorizes the statements into the seven learning outcomes. From these categories, instructors can locate statements that are best connected to a particular course type.</p> |
| <p>“Data from questions that are to be used only for improving teaching should not be released by the University to anyone other than the instructor”</p>   | <p><b>Maintained and affirmed.</b> The committee has full agreement on this issue.</p>   |
| <p>“Departments shall develop and make available to instructors a written policy that defines (1) which data from student rating forms will be used for personnel decisions and available to department heads and committees charged with reviewing instructor performance, and (2) which data will be made available to curriculum committees for improving courses and programs. (It is assumed that all information from the four required questions will be used for personnel decisions; the written policy required by this section refers to any additional questions that a unit may require on the evaluation forms.)”</p> | <p><b>Maintained and affirmed.</b> We strongly suggest that departments continue with the policy of revealing the use of particular statements for personnel decisions and course improvements.</p>  |
| <p>“To make comparative analysis more meaningful, there will also be comparisons on the basis of class type (e.g., large lecture, small discussion, laboratory, upper or lower division, elective, needed to meet university or major requirements)”.</p>   | <p><b>Maintained.</b> Departments and colleges are free to perform appropriate comparisons between courses along any standard deemed to be fair and reasonable.</p>  |
| <p>“Instructors are encouraged to adopt a mid-semester course evaluation process so that the course can be improved as it is delivered”.</p>  | <p><b>Maintained and affirmed.</b> The value of the early semester form for instructional development is affirmed in the present document.</p>   |

**Table 7: Comparisons Between Basic SET Form and Student Rating of Teaching**

| Current SET Form  | Student Rating of Teaching (SRT)   |
|---|--|
| <b>Number of Core Statements</b>  |  |
| 1. Four core statements   | 1. Six core statements   |
| <b>Nature of Core Statements</b>  |  |
| 1. Teacher centered focus   | 1. Both teacher centered and learning centered statements  |
| 2. Q1: “How would you rate the instructor’s overall teaching ability?”  | 2. No overall statement is included. Instead, we recommend that the mean (average) score on all core items serve as an indicator of an “overall” rating.   |
| 3. Q2: “How would you rate the instructor’s knowledge of the subject matter?”   | 3. No statement on instructor knowledge is included, based on research (and the assertions of the Senate Policy) that indicates faculty peers are more capable of judging the subject matter expertise of the instructor.                              |
| 4. Q3: “How would you rate the instructor’s respect and concern for students?”  | 4. <b>Modified</b> , with word changes that point to only one construct (respect).   |
| 5. Q4: “How much would you say you learned in this course?”   | 5. No specific statement of this type is included in the proposed form. Instead, learning-centered statements in the SRT (particularly item 3 below) and optional statements in the proposed question bank are written with a learning-centered focus. |
|   | <b>Recommended Core Statements</b>   |
|   | 1. The instructor was well prepared for class.   |
|   | 2. The instructor presented the subject matter clearly.  |
|   | 3. The instructor provided feedback intended to improve my course performance.   |
|   | 4. The instructor treated me with respect.   |
|   | 5. I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.   |
|   | 6. My interest in the subject matter was stimulated by this course.  |
| <b>Optional Statements</b>  |  |
| A number of variants of the SET form exist with the express purpose of individualizing statements toward the goals of a given course. | <b>Maintained.</b> A new question bank is under development for assisting faculty with individualizing the form.   |
| <b>Measurement Scale</b>  |  |
| Seven levels, with three points defined.  | Six levels: Strongly Agree, Agree, Somewhat Agree, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree  |
| <b>Written Student Comments</b>   |  |
| Open ended statements are currently allowed in the SET form.  | <b>Maintained.</b> The end of semester form provides suggested statements for written comments by students (see Table 3).  |