

SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
Framing a Senate Meeting Discussion of the Narrative Evaluation System

To the Academic Senate, Santa Cruz Division:

In 2000, UCSC adopted a revised student evaluation system that added mandatory letter grades (previously optional) to the existing performance evaluation system. It has now been ten years since that modification. Across the divisions, conversations are occurring, asking for a consideration of the size and scope of written performance evaluations. A group of department chairs in the Humanities Division are on record asking for the elimination of narratives, as are department chairs in Physical and Biological Sciences. While elimination is certainly one option, as is maintaining the current system, there are more options available. Therefore in the spirit of open discussion, the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) offers the following summary of our current situation and some options for consideration.

OUR CURRENT SITUATION

Regulations

The current environment is dictated importantly by the following Senate Regulations:

9.2.1 At the end of the term, each instructor teaching a credit granting course shall prepare a written evaluation for each student who receives a grade of P, A, B, C, or D in his or her class. The narrative evaluation must evaluate the quality and characteristics of the student's performance in the class.

9.2.2 Evaluations are to be filed with the Registrar and the student's college at the time of filing the end-of-term course reports or no later than 15 working days after the close of the term.

16.2.1 Each instructor in a graduate course shall prepare a written evaluation at the end of the term for each graduate student in his or her class who takes the course for credit.

16.3.1 An appeal may be filed if the student is persuaded that the instructor has given a grade notation or narrative evaluation based on:

A. inappropriate criteria such as race, politics, religion, age, sex, or national origin.

B. capricious or arbitrary application of appropriate criteria in a manner not reflective of student performance in relation to course requirements.

Operationally, the current situation is advised by a Committee on Educational Policy (CEP) document, "Advisory Guidelines on Writing Undergraduate Performance (Narrative) Evaluations," (November 2001).

Quoting from that document:

“These (Senate) regulations can be faithfully redacted as follows: *The instructor of record must submit a performance evaluation for each undergraduate student who receives credit for the course. The evaluation must describe, and is limited to, the quality and characteristics of the student's work. It is due 15 working days after the end of the quarter.* (Italics in original)

With the exception of excluding clearly inappropriate material, the only requirement on evaluations content set by Senate Regulations is that they describe the ‘quality and characteristics of the student's work.’ No list of characteristics is provided, nor is there any expectation determining length, thoroughness, or specific content. The decision on how best to describe the quality and characteristics of student work is yours. You may decide to write highly- individual evaluations of each student. You may decide to use a spreadsheet macro to transform your grade sheets into descriptive text or to drive menus and grids. Performance evaluations may simply state the grade received, they may go further and contextualize the grade awarded the student, or they may be more synthetic. It is left to the instructor of record to decide what form of evaluation is most efficient, effective, and appropriate for your course and your students.”

Academic Personnel Policies

The Campus Academic Personnel Manual (CAPM) also has a number of guidelines and policies designed to enforce the completion and timely submission of narrative evaluations by faculty. (See Appendix A.)

Costs

The estimated ongoing costs of Narrative Evaluation System (NES), for Information Technology Services (ITS) administrative support and customer service and for Registrar data entry is approximately \$50,000 (Planning & Budget, May 2009). The costs of narrative evaluation accountability, in department staff time, in department chair time and the Academic Personnel Office (APO) staff (largely in the divisions) is difficult to estimate. Similarly, it is very difficult to estimate the costs of faculty and Teaching Assistant (TA) time in preparing the evaluations.

OPTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

What is clear is that limited resources, most clearly reduced TA support and reduced departmental staff, are putting renewed pressure on faculty time. More pressure on staff workload highlights the time and resources spent on accountability measures within the personnel process. The calls for elimination of narrative evaluations are coming out of this environment.

It is not the purpose of this document to lay out the arguments for and against narrative evaluations. This document seeks only to present a set of options for a campus discussion, amongst faculty, students and alums, of the current system and possible alternatives.

We see a conversation around the following options:

1. Maintain the current NES.
2. Complete elimination of NES.
3. Modify the scope of performance evaluations, such as limiting the requirement to classes under a certain size threshold (perhaps 25), and/or graduate enrollments, and/or upper-division undergraduate elective courses.
4. Make the narrative evaluation system instructor-optional, for a course of any size. Drop the accountability measures in the CAPM.
5. Revise NES so that the catalog description of the course appears automatically and a grade designation is automatically inserted into a simple sentence, such as “First name Last name received a B in this course.” This automatically generated performance evaluation could be added too, optionally, by an instructor wishing to provide additional information. With an automated system, drop the accountability measures in the CAPM.

We invite you to discuss these options and others that may arise at the Senate meeting Wednesday, February 10, 2:30 Stevenson Event Center.

Respectfully submitted,

SENATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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**APPENDIX A:
POLICIES RELATING TO THE NARRATIVE EVALUATION SYSTEM IN THE CURRENT
CAMPUS ACADEMIC PERSONNEL MANUAL:**

006.000 GUIDELINES FOR DELINQUENT NARRATIVE EVALUATIONS

A. POLICY REFERENCE

[Academic Senate Regulation 9.2](#)

B. GENERAL

1. Faculty at UCSC must give, as part of each student's grade in each course, a narrative evaluation of the student's work. Evaluations are required for all courses taken for credit. For undergraduate students, evaluations are required for all passing grades (A,B,C,D,P). Evaluations are not required for I, W, F, or NP grades, although faculty members may write evaluations if they choose. For graduate students, an evaluation is required for any course taken for credit, regardless of the grade received (even a failing grade).
2. Evaluations are due within fifteen working days after the end of the quarter ([Academic Senate Regulation 9.2.2](#)). Delinquency is determined by: 1) timeliness and 2) proportion of total evaluations submitted. Evaluations will be considered substantially delinquent if 10% or more of a class are not received within fifteen working days after the due date (excluding courses with enrollment of one student). Mitigating circumstances such as delayed reports from field supervisors, illness, or other circumstances beyond the control of the faculty member shall be taken into consideration. Should there be a delay, the department chair must judge whether or not the circumstances are such that the faculty member can be considered to be in good-faith compliance with the requirement that the evaluations be written in a timely fashion.
3. Departments can access reports regarding narrative evaluation submission and timeliness via COGNOS. The Timeliness Report provides information on a faculty member's timeliness, but only lists courses for which narratives were submitted. The Outstanding Evaluations Report lists courses for which narratives have not been submitted. Both reports should be used to evaluate a faculty member's timeliness in submitting narrative evaluations.
4. Departments should be aware however that the Outstanding Evaluations Report will only report on those courses for which the faculty member submitted the corresponding grades. Therefore, departments may also wish to check the Missing Grades Report, available in COGNOS, to ensure greater accuracy.

C. ACADEMIC PERSONNEL ACTIONS

1. It is the duty of the department chair to determine whether or not a faculty member has, in good-faith, complied with the requirement that evaluations be written and submitted within fifteen working days after the end of the quarter ([CAPM 312.245](#)).
2. In order to determine compliance, the chair should:

- a) Make a written request to the faculty member for explanations of any missing evaluations and projected completion date.
 - b) If the faculty member replies that s/he has not yet written the evaluations, the chair will determine whether or not the reasons given for the delay are valid.
 - c) If the reasons for the delay are determined to be valid, the chair and the faculty member in question will agree in writing on a new completion date. If the new date for completion is not met, the faculty member must provide reasons why s/he needs another extension, or else be considered to be delinquent on the evaluations.
3. Evaluations submitted via e-mail will be entered into the NES system within 30 days of receipt. However, because of the possibility of delay in processing, department chairs may wish to check with the Registrar's Office to be sure that the evaluations have not been submitted by the faculty member.
 4. The department letter for faculty personnel actions must include an assessment of the timeliness with which student narrative evaluations are completed. Substantially delinquent evaluations must be treated in department letters as a serious deficiency in evaluation of the faculty member's overall teaching record. The extent and duration of the deficiency must be documented in the review file. Failure to comply with narrative evaluation requirements may lead to a denial of salary increase, merit increase, promotion, reappointment, sabbatical or other leave. For Unit 18 titles, because teaching is the main responsibility of lecturer appointments, failure to comply with narrative evaluation requirements in a timely fashion is an especially serious deficiency.

D. DELINQUENT NARRATIVE EVALUATIONS AND ACCESS TO STUDENT EVALUATIONS

Student evaluations of a faculty member's teaching are normally part of the review file for a personnel action. Students are informed that the faculty member cannot have access to the student evaluations until the faculty member has completed the narrative evaluations for the class. If the chair determines that the faculty member has delinquent narrative evaluations at the time the faculty member is to submit materials for the review file, those student evaluations cannot be included in the file. Consequently, the chair will include in the department letter a statement that the student evaluations are not included because of delinquency in completing narrative evaluations for the course. The absence of student evaluations due to delinquent narratives will be considered a major deficiency in the faculty member's teaching record.

E. DELINQUENT NARRATIVE EVALUATIONS AND REQUESTS FOR LEAVE

1. Leave privileges (sabbatical or leave with or without salary) shall not normally be approved for faculty members who are substantially delinquent in submitting evaluations. It is the responsibility of the department chair to insure that delinquent narrative evaluations have been completed before forwarding or approving a leave ([CAPM 312.245](#)).

2. Chairs may recommend individual exceptions to this policy under justifiable circumstances. Authority for approval of exceptions to this policy rests with the individual with the authority to approve the leave.