

January 15, 2020

Divisional Deans
Department Chairs
Department Managers

RE: Student Experiences of Teaching (SETs) and the Evaluation of Teaching in Personnel Review

Dear Colleagues,

As the chairs of the Committees on Academic Personnel (CAP) and Teaching (COT), we are writing to clarify the ongoing changes regarding Student Experiences of Teaching (or SETs), and to address some confusion that has been expressed regarding the implications of these changes for the evaluation of faculty teaching in the personnel review process.

Over the last several years, COT has worked closely with the Center for Innovations in Teaching and Learning (CITL) to rethink the purposes of SETs and to revise the items used in these surveys. One revision made to UCSC's SETs was to remove the global items that ask students to evaluate the "overall effectiveness" of the instructor and the course. This revision is based on research findings suggesting that such overall evaluative items can be open to bias and problematic when interpreted as unitary measures of teaching.

Our campus began using the new version of the SETs this year, and we are in a transitional period during which COT will be consulting with faculty and students to evaluate the changes.

The new SETs are relevant to evaluation of teaching as carried out by every level of personnel review, including departments, deans, CAP, and other administrators. Because we have been using summaries of students' ratings of the global teaching effectiveness item in teaching tables, this practice is also in transition. When a new SET platform has been put in place that can auto-generate the teaching tables, a series of questions from the new SETs will be used in the table to assist reviewing bodies in their overall holistic review of teaching. No single question is an ideal indicator of teaching effectiveness. However, in order to reduce support staff workload during this time of transition, **the table for classes using the new SETs will temporarily include only one question - Question #6, "The instructor communicated and explained concepts clearly."** Please note that a review file that includes courses with the old SETs and courses with the new SETs will need to include two teaching tables: one table for the courses with the old SETs should report on the "overall effectiveness" data, and a second table for courses with the new SETs should include data on "communicated and explained concepts clearly."

CAP and COT will continue to work together to consider and implement new strategies for evaluating and improving teaching effectiveness, with the student responses to SETs questions as one part of the personnel review process. We recognize the amount of work that goes into creating these teaching tables for all levels of review, and we have petitioned for a SET platform that will auto-generate these tables. We will be in touch with chairs and department managers as we move forward with this process.

Sincerely,



Maureen Callanan, Chair
Committee on Teaching



Lynn Westerkamp, Chair
Committee on Academic Personnel

cc: Herbie Lee, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Jody Greene, Associate Vice Provost for Teaching and Learning
Rebecca Peet, System Analyst, Information Technology Services