

Senate Council  
February 16, 2015

Teacher-Course Evaluation (TCE) Comments from February 9 University Senate Meeting  
(grouped by topic)

About the TCE questions:

- Why is there no question about critical thinking? *Response from Golding: The Committee expects individual units and instructors to create such as questions as those entities deem appropriate.*
- Why is there no question about assignments being distributed evenly across the semester? *Response from Golding: Not all courses have assignments that can be evenly distributed across the semester.*
- Why isn't there a common question regarding critical thinking? *Response from Golding: The Committee expects individual units and instructors to create such as questions as those entities deem appropriate.*
- If a student scores a professor low on course pace, it is impossible to tell if the course pace was too slow or too fast. One recommendation for a fix was to have the scale for that question be "Much too fast," "Too fast," "Just right," "Too slow," and "Much too slow."
- It is possible that the question about "instructor communicated effectively" could open up faculty to negative comments about verbal accents because UK is a Midwestern university with a multicultural campus.
- The question about the course being a "quality course" is too subjective. *Response from Golding: the Committee tried various ways to get at the inherent question. One option was to ask if the instructor fulfilled all the teaching objectives of the course, which could define quality, but the Committee thought that was too specific a question for the common core and expressed concern that some students may not know what the learning outcomes were. The Committee opted for a more general, common question with the assumption that individual entities will add more specific questions.*
- The form may not work for team-taught courses in the College of Medicine (ME). If a course has 20 or 25 instructors, which is routine in ME, how does a student answer questions about "the instructor." *Response from Golding: Individual colleges will need to add additional questions to address unique pedagogical activities, such as team teaching.*
- The concerns about quality and pace can be addressed by the students writing out their specific concerns in the open-ended questions.
- The question about quality in a course could be replaced by asking if a student found the course to be transformative. While "quality" means many things to many people, "transformative" has a limited definition.

#### About the TCE questions, cont'd:

- It is somewhat concerning that UK is attempting to make one form fit so many types of courses. In some clinical courses, students meet with the instructor once at the beginning of the semester but then spend the remainder of their time with a preceptor. It would be very difficult for a student to answer the question that asks whether class meetings contributed to their learning in the course. The questions simply will not apply to many students and faculty, so the information that comes out the TCE in these situations will not offer useful information. *Response from Golding: That is a good point. There will have to be a way to exempt some types of courses, but the question is how many? UK now has multiple TCE evaluation instruments and the provost specifically wanted a common set of questions.*
- What is the purpose of asking a student to note their expected grade? *Response from Golding: That type of question is on many universities' forms. The draft TCE presumes the student will have an idea of what their grade will be because the TCE is filled out towards the end of the semester. It may offer an insight into whether only high- performing students are filling out the forms.*
- The TCE could benefit from a question that asks if the student feels they learned anything. The draft TCE assumes a traditional classroom structure with lectures and a deviation from that could be negatively reflected in the TCE. *Response from Golding: That type of question did come up in Committee, but there was concern that it would not offer sufficient information. Any entity can add such a question to their TCE if they see fit, however.*

#### About the implementation/authority:

- Who will be responsible for ensuring entity-specific questions are added to the TCE?
- Who will be responsible for ensuring entity-specific questions are appropriate?
- Is there anyone on campus who will have the authority to censor what questions an entity adds to the TCE? Would entire colleges need to approve college-level questions? *Response from Golding: The Committee assumed that a department [or school] or college would have final say.*
- The question of quality could be replaced with asking if the student thought the course was worth their time and effort.

#### About the use:

- What happens to the data that is collected? *Response from Golding: The Provost's office will need to determine that, as it was the Provost's office that requested the TCE redesign effort.*
- The form needs to be more objective because administrators use it to address the quality of teaching. *Response from Golding: Promotion and tenure committees must recognize the TCE is a small part of evaluating teaching. Administrators must take a more objective look at teaching; most faculty agree the TCE forms have too much power.*
- Creating a form prior to settling policy issues surrounding use of the form is akin to putting the cart before the horse.

#### About the use (cont'd):

- If the TCE will be used by tenure and promotion committees, or for salary raises, faculty need to have a better understanding of how the TCE will be used in these decisions. If the TCE will be used in these situations, then it should be tailored to these situations. If, on the other hand, the TCE is used to provide meaningful feedback for a faculty member who is teaching and is only used by a professor to learn and improve their teaching, then the current TCE and draft TCE are quite good. If administrators plan to use these forms, faculty should have an understanding of how they will be used.

#### About exemptions:

- What is the policy for exemptions based on class size? For example, an evaluation by one student in a class size of one could not be anonymous. *Response from Golding: During implementation, there will need to be consideration of whether or not to require TCE in classes with very small enrollments.*
- Did the Committee consider making the TCE optional, or is it mandatory? *Response from Golding: The provost can say that everyone has to do it and there is no opting out, except for a few exemptions. The other options are to require that everyone uses it, or everyone does not use it. The Committee assumed the majority of entities would have to use it, but that a decision would be made after the Committee's work was completed.*

#### Other comments:

- The Committee's charge was far too narrow and left out important issues. For example, the Committee should have been asked to make a statement on the insignificance of five students turning in a TCE out of a class size of 40. The Committee should also have been asked to address how outlier information is evaluated. Finally, the Committee should have been able to look at how to better educate students on filling out TCE – too many comments about physical appearance are submitted but the TCE is used for promotion and tenure decisions. *Response from Golding: These are very good points.*
- The revised TCE is a huge improvement over what UK currently uses. The TCE does not measure the quality of the course, but rather measures student impressions of the course. *Response from Golding: The TCE is one piece of the evaluation process, that of student satisfaction; the TCE is not an objective measure.*
- There is a massive published body of research on TCE which any faculty member could locate. When the College of Arts and Sciences (AS) reviewed the current TCE, it was determined the TCE was a bit of a monstrosity and was not very good at getting to the information faculty want to see. AS recommended reducing the size and focusing the questions, which could go a long way towards rectifying the problems with TCE, because specific questions will be less likely to lead to inappropriate answers. Although the TCE are subjective comments from students, the TCE offer students a clear voice and way of evaluating their instruction. The draft TCE is a clear attempt to move towards a better instrument to improve student responses.