

University Senate Recommendation May 15, 2014 Passed Unanimously
The University Senate strongly encourages the Provost to endorse this recommendation and report back to the Senate on this matter during its next meeting.

The CAD has discussed these recommendations, with the attached response. I request that this response be placed on the next Senate agenda.

Academic Quality Committee
Western Kentucky University

Report to Faculty Senate

Date: 28 April 2014 (amended 15 May 2014)

From: Alison Langdon, chair

Committee members in attendance: Alison Langdon; Tammera Race; Kristin Wilson; Freida Russell Curley; Eggleton; Doug McElroy

The Academic Quality Committee met on 28 April 2014 to continue our ongoing discussion concerning SITEs. Faculty have repeatedly expressed frustration with WKU's current method of student evaluation. The university-wide questions on the current instrument are as follows:

1. What is your expected grade in this course?
2. My instructor displays a clear understanding of course topics.
3. My instructor is well-prepared for class.
4. Performance measures (exams, assignments, etc.) are well constructed.
5. My instructor provides helpful feedback.
6. Overall, my instructor is effective.
7. I have learned a lot in this course.
8. My instructor treats me fairly with regard to race, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, and sexual orientation.

Recommendation: The Academic Quality Committee has identified several questions in the current institutional items that we find to be particularly ineffective in evaluating faculty and/or courses; therefore, we recommend the following changes:

- The current questions #2 and #3 ask students to evaluate instructors at the bare minimum of expectations. Moreover, it is questionable whether novice students are able to assess content knowledge. The recommended revised questions ask students to evaluate based on criteria that are both pedagogically important and appropriate.

Current question #2:

My instructor displays a clear understanding of course topics.

Recommended revised question #2:

Expectations for course assignments are clear and specific.

Current question #3:

My instructor is well-prepared for class.

Recommended revised question #3:

This course has effectively challenged me to think.

- Committee members agree that students are generally not in an adequate position to define what “well-constructed” performance measures in fact are. A better question would define this more clearly for students. The recommended revised question provides some context within which students may evaluate performance measures. Furthermore, research suggests that connecting evaluation items to course learning objectives increases the validity of student responses (McKeachie 1997, Zhao & Gallant 2012).

Current question #4:

Performance measures (exams, assignments, etc.) are well constructed.

Recommended revised question #4:

Assignments/exams are coordinated with course learning objectives.

- While the current question #5 addresses an important element of teaching, it could be more precise. The revised language clarifies what we believe constitutes “helpful” feedback.

Current question #5:

My instructor provides helpful feedback.

Recommended revised question #5:

My instructor provides constructive feedback.

Some of the recommended revised questions may overlap with individual department-specific questions, so departments will need to review and revise those questions for redundancy.

CAD Response

On June 18, 2014, the Council of Academic Deans (CAD) discussed the student instructor evaluation recommendations of the Academic Quality Committee. The recommendations to revise questions 2, 4 and 5 were accepted (see questions 3, 4 and 6 in the revised list below), with a minor word change from “coordinated” to “aligned” in question 4. Regarding question 3, the CAD believes that both the existing question and the proposed revision (questions 2 and 5 in the revised list below) are important elements in instructor evaluation, and therefore proposes keeping both questions, so that the number of questions increases from 8 to 9. Finally, the words “gender identity” were added to question 9. The list of questions thus becomes:

1. What is your expected grade in this course?
2. My instructor is well-prepared for class.
3. Expectations for course assignments are clear and specific.
4. Assignments/exams are aligned with course learning objectives.
5. This course has effectively challenged me to think.
6. My instructor provides constructive feedback.
7. Overall, my instructor is effective.
8. I have learned a lot in this course.
9. My instructor treats me fairly with regard to race, age, sex, religion, national origin, disability, gender identity, and sexual orientation.