

From: Ron Severson
Sent: Wednesday, March 05, 2008 10:19 AM
To: Karen Sprague; Cathy Kraus
Subject: FW: proposed new course evaluation questions

Comments? (Thanks for writing the initial recommendations with rationale, Karen. It was dead week for me, but I'm alive again after submitting the grant proposal.)

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From: Paul van Donkelaar [mailto:paulvd@uoregon.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, March 05, 2008 10:02 AM
To: Ron Severson
Subject: Re: proposed new course evaluation questions

Dear Ron:

Thank you very much for the excellent and thoughtful feedback from the Undergraduate Council regarding the new course evaluation questions. After considerable discussion within our committee we have made the following changes to the questions:

1. The order of questions 1 and 2 have been switched.
2. The statements in parentheses have been removed from questions 3 and 5.
3. In question 6, the term "graded" has been replaced by "evaluated"

As you can gather from this list, we followed some, but not all, of the UGC recommendations. Below, I outline some of our reasoning for why we took this course of action.

Recommendation #1: Placing Q1 ("What was the quality of the instructor's teaching?") last puts it after "How much did you learn in this course?" Research shows that when a general question follows a specific one, the answer to the specific one considerably influences the answer to the general one (in the opposite order, specific -> general, the questions are much less correlated). Though assessing the amount of learning is important, the committee doesn't feel it should directly influence the assessment of teaching quality. This same logic applies to the remaining more specific questions as well. Thus, we have decided to put the original Q1 in second place. This results in the "quality of this course" question coming first because it is the most general, followed by the "quality of the instructor's teaching," because it is the second most general question. Then come all the specific questions that can vary relatively independently from the answers to the general questions.

Recommendation #2: done

Recommendation #3: Rephrasing Q5 to read "How effective was the professor's policy for communicating outside of class?" may create more problems than it will solve. First, it has the potential to cause confusion for the students. In particular, it confounds communication among students with communication between student and instructor. Second, effective policy is not the same as availability. Q5 as it is currently worded is intended to measure the absolute amount of availability outside of class, irrespective of the instructor's preferences. We have an expectation of a certain number of student contact hours, and if instructors are not available for such contact hours outside of class, then that should be directly evaluated.

Recommendation #4: done

I hope this is informative. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions...

Yours,

Paul

On Mar 1, 2008, at 4:48 PM, Ron Severson wrote:

Dear Paul,

The Undergraduate Council had a very constructive conversation about the new evaluation questions. I've attached a summary of that discussion and the Council's 4 recommendations.

On behalf of the Undergraduate Council, we hope your group adopts these carefully thought out recommendations which do not alter the substance of the questions but which, Council members believe, strengthen the spirit of the questions and will elicit more meaningful responses from students.

Please let me know if for any reason you cannot open the attachment.

Thank you,

Ron Severson

Chair, Undergraduate Council

Paul van Donkelaar

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