



June 29, 2021

BENJAMIN HERMALIN
Vice Provost for the Faculty

Subject: Proposed changes in the campus policy on the evaluation of teaching

Dear Ben,

Over the past few years, the Divisional Council (DIVCO) has had extensive discussions about how to improve our evaluation of teaching, in order to better reward excellent teaching, as well as better support faculty in the improvement of their teaching. On February 16, 2021, the Committee on Teaching (COT) summarized proposed changes, building on those discussions as well as suggestions from the Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations (BIR) and your office, among others. The memo with the proposed changes is attached.

DIVCO discussed these proposed changes at three meetings over the course of the spring, and voted on the final changes on May 10, 2021. We apologize sincerely for the delay in getting this memo to you. It should have been completed before the transition in Senate Chairs on June 1, but got lost in the shuffle. Despite the delay, we are delighted to be able to convey to you the support of DIVCO for making these changes, which have been so long and in coming we believe will support the important aim of excellent teaching.

The Committee on Teaching recommended six policy changes, of which DIVCO voted to endorse four, with some substantive and others with modest revisions/amendments, all shown below. Two were declined, simply because the diversity of views about the merits and costs of the proposals was too wide to forge consensus, especially in the context of *Zoom* video conference meetings.

The spirit of all these changes is to make it easier for your office and BIR to fully evaluate teaching in merit reviews, at the same time as providing faculty with useful feedback to improve their teaching. As a campus, we have made great strides in making resources available to faculty who want to learn to become better teachers, as through the Center for Teaching and Learning; these changes of practice in reviewing should complement those resources. The final changes, including all amendments, are as follows:

Policy Change #1: Forwarding Narrative Comments to the Campus – Endorsed with substantive amendment

All student narrative comments should be forwarded to the campus. If a department uses paper-form evaluations, they should be scanned or the narrative comments transcribed, and submitted electronically through APBears.

Policy Change #2: Improve Mandated Questions – Endorsed

The following three questions will replace all currently required questions:

- 1. The instructor's lectures, facilitation of classes, and/or office hours and help sessions enhanced my learning. ("Learning" may include gaining mastery of course content and new skills, exposure to new methodologies and modes of critical thinking, and extending the ability to express oneself on the topics treated in the course).*
- 2. The assignments were well designed to help me understand the course material and gain a deeper perspective on the subject.*
- 3. The instructor created an environment in which I could feel included (for example, encouraged multiple voices/perspectives, welcomed questions and critiques, responded to student feedback).*

These questions will be scored on a seven-point scale with a not-applicable (N/A) option.

Units can use questions in addition to the three listed above. For convenience, they should also be scored on a seven-point scale.

Policy Change #3: Reporting Distribution of Student Scores on Evaluations – Declined

Policy Change #4: Reporting Comparison Distributions – Declined

Policy Change #5: Provision and Assessment of Teaching Dossiers – Endorsed

Candidates are encouraged to provide a teaching dossier consisting of materials that would show evidence of the strengths of their teaching. In particular, we encourage faculty to submit: (i) a self-statement about their teaching and mentoring, innovations made, and steps to improve (e.g., consultations with the Center for Teaching and Learning); (ii) copies of the syllabi for some or all of their courses; and (iii) representative examples of course materials (e.g., assignments, lecture slides, lecture notes, handouts, or similar material). Department chairs, associate deans, deans, or others charged with assessing candidates' records must provide an assessment of this dossier as part of their review of the candidates. Should a candidate fail to provide a dossier, then those assessing the record should do what they can to assess the teaching record based on information beyond the student evaluations.

Policy Change #6: Peer Review of Teaching in Threshold Cases and Certain Other Cases – Endorsed with substantive amendment

For mid-career appraisals and final appraisals (tenure), part of the review shall consist of a faculty peer observing and assessing the candidate teaching. Such an assessment will be part of

the case materials for departmental (school) and campus review. Peer review of teaching should involve a visit to one class session or two at most. Observations must be performed by a faculty member at the same or higher step than the faculty member being observed. The peer observer should be chosen by the Chair, and may be a member of the departmental ad hoc committee. Faculty should have the right to exclude certain colleagues as peer observers. To mitigate against the potential biases in peer evaluation, evaluators should be provided a template to guide their evaluation, one that focuses on a discrete set of concrete factors, along the lines of those developed by the Center for Teaching and Learning in 2013.

As with all assessments, the candidate will be permitted to comment and/or respond to it. Ideally, such observation should occur during the review period, but if circumstances dictate (e.g., a threshold case is triggered by a sudden outside offer), the observation can occur contemporaneously with the rest of the review and assessment process. For small departments for which this requirement may, in a given review cycle, become unduly burdensome, the chair may request of her/his/their dean an observer from another department (presumably one close to the candidate's area). In rare cases, this requirement may be frustrated by circumstances (e.g., the candidate is on sabbatical the year prior to her threshold review); should this requirement be so frustrated, the unit will need to explain why it was frustrated and efforts made to avoid being so frustrated.

We would like to thank Committee on Teaching Chair Glynda Hull for her exceptional work in shepherding this long process toward a fruitful conclusion.

We request that your office work with the Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations to implement these changes. It is our intention to evaluate these four policy changes three years after their full implementation, and we ask the cooperation of your office in that process as well.

Sincerely,



Ronald C. Cohen
Professor of Chemistry
Professor of Earth and Planetary Science
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate (2021-22)



Jennifer Johnson-Hanks
Professor of Demography and Sociology
Chair, Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate (2020-21)

Enclosure

Cc: Leslie Kurke, Chair, Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations
Lok Siu, Chair, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate
Glynda Hull, Chair, Committee on Teaching
Richard Kern, Chair, Undergraduate Council
Sumei Quiggle, Associate Director staffing Undergraduate Council
William Lynch, Manager staffing Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations
Linda Corley, Senate Analyst, Committee on Diversity, Equity, and Campus Climate

Proposed Changes in Campus Policy on the Evaluation of Teaching
in Academic Personnel Reviews (non-Represented Faculty)
(compilation of proposed changes by COT – 02/16/2021)

For a number of years the Academic Senate and campus administration have discussed how to improve the procedures for evaluating teaching as part of personnel reviews. The changes proposed below grew from conversations in 2019-20 among the Vice Provost for the Faculty, Divisional Council, the Chairs of the Arts and Humanities Departments, the Committee on Budget and Interdepartmental Relations, and the Committee on Teaching. The policy changes are meant to address widespread concerns about relying on quantitative student ratings to evaluate teaching, particularly “omnibus” questions that ask students to rate overall teaching effectiveness and course worth. Responses to such questions are subject to gender, age, ethnicity, and disability bias, and don’t serve as valid indicators of a teacher’s effectiveness. Rather than basing the evaluation of teaching in academic personnel reviews only or primarily on quantitative student evaluations on overall teaching effectiveness, the proposal below requires units to provide a range of types of evidence on teaching effectiveness. In addition, the proposal outlines several improvements in the use of quantitative evaluations: the inclusion of narrative comments, better mandated questions, and the reporting of the distributions of scores and comparison distributions.

Policy Change #1: Forwarding Narrative Comments to the Campus

All student narrative comments should be forwarded to the campus for courses in which (a) evaluations are conducted online (electronically) or (b) 50 or fewer evaluations are received for courses using paper forms. For courses in which more than 50 paper-form evaluations are received, a unit has the option of submitting all evaluations or a random sample of them. However, the candidate has the right to insist all evaluations be submitted. If the random sample option is chosen, a random sample consists of 50 evaluations or 25% of the evaluations received, whichever is larger (departments and schools are on their honor to sample randomly). All such paper-form evaluations being submitted should be scanned (or the narrative comments transcribed into a Word file) and submitted electronically through APBears. Departments and schools should put in writing their policy on submission of paper-form evaluations for courses in which there are more than 50 and adhere to that policy for all candidates and all relevant courses during that review cycle.

Policy Change #2: Improved Mandated Questions

Instead of one mandated question on instructor effectiveness, the following three questions will be mandated:

1. The instructor’s lectures, facilitation of classes, and/or office hours and help sessions enhanced my learning. (“Learning” may include gaining mastery of course content and new skills, exposure to new methodologies and modes of critical thinking, and extending the ability to express oneself on the topics treated in the course).
2. The assignments were well designed to help me understand the course material and gain a deeper perspective on the subject.

3. The instructor created an environment in which I could feel included (for example, encouraged multiple voices/perspectives, welcomed questions and critiques, responded to student feedback).

These questions will be scored on a seven-point scale with a not-applicable option:

- 1 — strongly disagree
- 2 — disagree
- 3 — disagree somewhat
- 4 — neutral (neither agree nor disagree)
- 5 — agree somewhat
- 6 — agree
- 7 — strongly agree

Units can use questions in addition to the three listed above. For convenience, they should also be scored on a seven-point scale.

Policy Change #3: Reporting Distribution of Student Scores on Evaluations

Units should report the complete distribution for mandated questions on student evaluations. Specifically, they should report (a) the number of responses and (b) either the percentage or number of students selecting each of the numerical scoring options (e.g., if it is a seven-point scale, then the number or percent of students scoring the instructor 1, the number or percent scoring the instructor 2, and so forth up to the number or percent scoring the instructor 7). Although units can report measures of central tendency (i.e., means, medians, or modes) if they wish, they are not obliged to do so

Policy Change #4: Reporting Comparison Distributions

Units should report comparison distributions for mandated questions on student evaluations; that is, the percentage of students giving an assessment of 1, the percentage giving an assessment of 2, and so forth up to the percentage giving the maximum score. These comparison distributions can be an aggregate of all courses taught in a unit, but would ideally be more refined: specifically, comparison distributions for similar courses (e.g., broken down by lower division, upper division, and graduate level). Because it is understood that units may not have recorded such data in the past, they are permitted to report comparison distributions from data collected starting in the 2018–19 academic year. For the same reason, there is a three-year grace period during which units can still report comparisons against measures of central tendency.

For Policy Change 3 and 4, given that a shift to reporting distributions of students' scores and comparison distributions could require too much additional staff time, an alternative would be to include a discussion of distribution anomalies.

Policy Change #5: Provision and Assessment of Teaching Dossiers

Candidates are asked to provide a teaching dossier consisting of (i) a self-statement about and evaluation of their teaching and mentoring, innovations made, and steps, if any, to improve

(e.g., consultations with the Center for Teaching and Learning); (ii) copies of the syllabi for their courses; and (iii) representative examples of course materials (e.g., assignments, lecture slides, lecture notes, handouts, or similar material). Department chairs, associate deans, deans, or others charged with assessing candidates' records must provide an assessment of this dossier as part of their review of the candidates. Should a candidate fail to provide a dossier, then those assessing the record should do what they can to assess the teaching record based on information beyond the student evaluations.

Policy Change #6: Peer Review of Teaching in Threshold Cases and Certain Other Cases

For threshold reviews, defined as mid-career appraisals, final appraisals (tenure), promotion from Associate Professor to Professor, advancement across the Professor Step-VI threshold, and advancement to Professor Above Scale, part of the review shall consist of a faculty peer observing and assessing the candidate teaching. Such an assessment will be part of the case materials for departmental (school) and campus review. Peer review of teaching should involve a visit to one class session or two at most. Observations must be performed by a faculty member at the same or higher step than the faculty member being observed. The peer observer should be chosen by the Chair, and ideally will be a member of the departmental ad hoc committee. Faculty should have the right to exclude certain colleagues as peer observers. To mitigate against the potential biases in peer evaluation, evaluators should be provided a template to guide their evaluation, one that focuses on a discrete set of concrete factors, along the lines of [those developed by the Center for Teaching and Learning](#) in 2013.

As with all assessments, the candidate will be permitted to comment and/or respond to it. Ideally, such observation should occur during the review period, but if circumstances dictate (e.g., a threshold case is triggered by a sudden outside offer), the observation can occur contemporaneously with the rest of the review and assessment process. For small departments for which this requirement may, in a given review cycle, become unduly burdensome, the chair may request of her/his/their dean an observer from another department (presumably one close to the candidate's area). In rare cases, this requirement may be frustrated by circumstances (e.g., the candidate is on sabbatical the year prior to her threshold review); should this requirement be so frustrated, the unit will need to explain why it was frustrated and efforts made to avoid being so frustrated.

Evaluating the Revised Policy: The revised policy for the evaluation of teaching should be evaluated in three to five years. In addition to examining the effectiveness of the new mandatory questions, it would be helpful to explore the impact of dossiers, including peer observations, on teaching effectiveness and personnel reviews.