



MEMORANDUM

To: USC Faculty

From: Elizabeth A. Graddy 
Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs

Ginger Clark 
Assistant Vice Provost for Academic and Faculty Affairs

Date: April 10, 2018

Subject: New Learning Experience Evaluation Coming Spring 2018

We are pleased to announce that at the end of this Spring academic term the university will be implementing a new student evaluation, replacing the “Student Course Evaluation”. This new evaluation, featuring revised questionnaire items directly tied to USC’s Definition of Excellence in Teaching, is a “Learning Experience Evaluation.”

Use of Learning Experience Evaluation

As outlined in our April 2nd memo, schools and their faculty are encouraged to use the new evaluation as a measure of student learning experiences. This information is crucial to our efforts toward teaching excellence, as student feedback informs our understanding of their experiences with instructors and courses. The evaluations can help faculty make choices about how to best engage their students, present material, and cultivate an inclusive learning environment, among other things. As evidence shows that student evaluations do not provide a valid measure of teaching effectiveness, peer review (as outlined in a forthcoming memo) should be the primary mode of evaluating teaching going forward.

New Items

The Learning Experience Evaluation was developed through an extensive process of item development and statistical analyses, the goals of which were to develop items that: 1) measure student learning experiences, 2) have high validity and reliability, and 3) minimize potential for biased responses. The new evaluation provides information on five components of students’ learning experiences: Course Design, Instructional Practices, Inclusion Practices, Assessment Practices, and Course Impact. Students will assess each component using a 4-point Likert scale. In addition to rating their learning experiences, students will also be asked to evaluate their own investment in the course, to describe the most and least valuable aspects of the course, and to provide constructive suggestions for improving the course. *Please see the attached “Learning Experience Evaluation Items.”*

(Note: If schools wish to add additional items to the evaluation, they should submit a proposal to Ginger Clark reporting their validity and reliability, and steps taken to minimize biased responses and ensure evaluation of student learning experiences and not teaching effectiveness.)

New Protocol

The Learning Experience Evaluation will be conducted online. The response rate needed for the results to be valid will vary by class size; however, it is recommended that an 80% response rate be the approximate target for most classes. To increase student response rates, a new protocol for administering the evaluation will be implemented. Faculty and students will receive an email notification that the evaluation is open nine days before final exams begin, instructing them to complete the evaluation in class. Faculty can choose which class within those nine days they wish to have students complete the evaluation. The new protocol will be the same proctored process required in previous paper-and-pencil versions of the Student Course Evaluations. Faculty will select a student proctor to read a statement orienting students to the evaluation while faculty step out of the room. The student proctor will observe students complete the online evaluation, ensuring its integrity. At the point it appears most students have completed the evaluation, the proctor will poll students through a raise of hands to assess how many have completed the evaluation. Once approximately 80% of students in the class indicate they have completed, the proctor will notify the instructor, and class can resume. Alternatively, faculty may check evaluation response rates online in real time, through Blackboard, before returning to class, and encourage their students to complete their evaluations if the desired rate is not achieved. *Please see the attached “Learning Experience Evaluation Protocol.”*

New Data Report

Faculty will now receive a robust and comprehensive report summarizing the results of each of the five components (subscales) of the Learning Experience Evaluation, as well as the individual items within each subscale. Descriptive information about the type and amount of students’ engagement in the course will also be provided. Qualitative comments made by students will be provided to faculty as before. *Please see the attached “Report Examples” for an illustration of the types of data that may be available to you.*

Feedback was solicited from faculty through the Academic Senate, as well as from select graduate and undergraduate students on the initial item development. Now that the evaluation is being fully implemented, we welcome feedback from all faculty. While data analysis is guiding decisions about modifications to items, faculty feedback will enable examination of any concerns or anomalies that arise, and allow for comparison of those reports against the data. Please send your feedback about the evaluation to Ginger Clark at ginger.clark@usc.edu.

We hope these changes address the concerns faculty have voiced about our student evaluation process, particularly with regard to making the instrument more valid and using the results for the appropriate purpose. We will be sending additional memos outlining resources for peer review evaluation of teaching performance.

cc: Michael Quick
Provost’s Cabinet