University of Hartford
Questionnaire Committee Report

Charge

1. To review current forms utilized by the departments and colleges/schools,
2. To review forms utilized by other universities,
3. To consider the merits of a common core of questions that would be asked of all faculty across the University vs. the merits of using different forms by departments and colleges/schools,
4. To determine, if a common core is recommended, the type and format of questions, and
5. To determine, if a common core is recommended, what supplemental data are needed (e.g., elective/required course, level of course, expected grade).

History

The Questionnaire Committee began its work in May, worked throughout the summer, and continues to meet. Initially, the committee was broken into three sub-committees, each with the charge of gathering and reviewing course/teaching evaluations from: (1) All University of Hartford colleges, departments, majors, and programs; (2) peer institutions and other universities noted for teaching excellence; and, (3) commercially available evaluation forms. This process resulted in a total of seventy-eight course/teaching evaluation forms. Next, the committee looked for common areas of evaluation on the forms. Six distinct areas were identified as course evaluation, instructor evaluation, student effort, overall impressions of course and instructor, student demographics, and open-ended questions. The committee, then, listed the specific items designed to assess these areas resulting in a total of seventy-six statements and questions, which were later reduced to forty-seven.

Recommendations

This review process resulted in several recommendations. Initially, a common standardized evaluation form is both desirable and feasible. A review of the literature revealed that upwards of 90% of colleges and universities currently use some form of a standardized evaluation form. Additionally, a review of the forms employed at the University of Hartford revealed a considerable amount of overlap in evaluation forms, suggesting that we are closer to this process than we may think. Faculty members benefit from a standardized form in that they provide a common basis to evaluate teaching effectiveness. Furthermore, a standardized process does not require faculty to hand-calculate their course evaluations; rather, a computer printout will be provided that summarizes course evaluations. Finally, literature consistently finds that students are the most capable of making certain judgments concerning teacher effectiveness (e.g., willingness to meet with students, criteria for assignments, timeliness of feedback, organization
of course and presentation, etc.) in that they are with the instructor for sixteen weeks and are in
the best position to evaluate teacher effectiveness. In fact, some education scholars consider it
arrogant not to elicit student feedback.

A second recommendation concerns the role of a standardized university-wide evaluation. It
is only one of several ways faculty document teaching effectiveness. Faculty can also
demonstrate their effectiveness with alumni evaluations, peer evaluations, external reviews, and
teaching portfolios. Statistical summaries of teaching performance should be supplemented by
qualitative evaluations to provide a fuller description of an educator. A standardized form
simply is one source of documentation of teaching excellence.

Additionally, the committee is recommending a cafeteria style evaluation form, in which “x”
number of core items will be universal to all instructors at the university, “x” number of other
items will be available for colleges, departments, programs, and individual instructors to choose
from, and “x” number of items will be available for a faculty member to add to the form.

Currently, the committee is in the process of identifying those core items that are applicable
to all colleges, all formats of courses, and all subject areas. Another issue that is being discussed
is the content and format of the report that faculty will receive. It is essential that the faculty
report is easy to interpret and is useful for the improvement of teaching and course design. The
committee is also investigating making the course/teaching evaluation form available
electronically. It is the intention of the committee to re-evaluate the form after its first year of
use.

**Faculty Feedback**

The following Course and Instructor Evaluation Form is presented to elicit feedback from the
faculty and instructors at the University of Hartford. The committee’s recommendation is to
have a cafeteria-style evaluation form that consists of core items, additional items that faculty
can choose, and blank spaces that faculty can use to add their own items. We would like your
feedback concerning the designated core items as well as the optional items. We have provided
response options following each of the items. Thank you for your time and effort regarding this
important process.