

July 9, 2021

To: AP Department Business Officers and Staff

From: June Betancourt, Director Academic Personnel

Re: UCSB Teaching Evaluation Workgroup Report

The appended memo has been distributed to CAP, Deans, Department Chairs and Business Officers. It is an interim report with advice from the Spring 2021 campus-wide Teaching Evaluation Workgroup. Although not a formal policy statement, it summarizes current policies and practices and makes useful suggestions for departments as we enter into a new academic year.

July 2, 2021

TO: Ruth Finkelstein, Chair, Committee on Academic Personnel  
Omar Saleh, Vice Chair, Committee on Academic Personnel  
Mary Hancock, Interim Dean, Division of Humanities and Fine Arts  
Charles Hale, Dean, Division of Social Sciences  
Pierre Wiltzius, Dean, Division of Mathematical, Life, and Physical Sciences  
Rod Alferness, Dean, College of Engineering  
Gerardo Aldana, Dean, College of Creative Studies  
Steven Gaines, Dean, Bren School of Environmental Science and Management  
Jeffrey Milem, Dean, Gevirtz Graduate School of Education  
Department Chairs  
Business Officers  
Academic Personnel Analysts

FROM: Linda Adler-Kassner, Co-Chair, Teaching Evaluation Workgroup  
Rita Raley, Co-Chair, Teaching Evaluation Workgroup

**RE: Recommendations for Reviewing Agencies  
UCSB Teaching Evaluation Workgroup, Spring 2021**

The Teaching Evaluation Workgroup (TEW) was constituted by EVC Marshall and Academic Senate Chair Scott in Spring 2021. The charge to the committee of 17 members was to improve the current system for evaluating instruction on campus. We have accordingly divided our work into short- and long-term tasks and have begun identifying what longer-term actions might be taken to reform the instruments for student evaluation of teaching (SET), with a particular emphasis on revising the current survey known as ESCI.

But we also recognize the more immediate need to communicate with the campus about how best to work within the *current* system for evaluating instruction, particularly during merit and promotion reviews. To that end, we have focused our initial efforts this quarter on (a) improving the communication with students and instructors about the evaluation process and (b) offering recommendations to department chairs, personnel committees, and reviewing agencies about how to contextualize and possibly amend the ESCIs, as well as about secondary forms of evidence of teaching effectiveness. We have completed our work for (a) and this memo addresses the latter (b).

The suggestions made in this document are based on reports from [the UCSB Senate ESCI Ad Hoc Committee](#) (2018-2020) and the [UC Teaching and Learning Centers Committee for Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness](#); consultation with campus reviewing agencies; and current research on design and use of student evaluations of teaching (SETs). Our recommendations are organized in three parts: (1) contextualizing the use of ESCI scores; (2) department actions; and (3) additional teaching materials that may be submitted as part of a case.

### **(1) Contextualizing ESCI scores**

The [Centers for Teaching and Learning report](#) recommends that “Divisional Committees on Academic Personnel should be educated about the systemic problems in student course evaluations including inappropriate comments and bias in the scores for women and faculty from underrepresented groups.” To that end, we note that researchers have identified multiple issues with opinion-based SETs like the campus ESCI. The latest such study, a review of more than 100 published papers, summarizes the research: scores may be influenced by student perceptions of instructor accent, gender and sexual identity, ethnicity, national origin, and disability status ([Kreitzer and Sweet-Cushman 2021](#)). Measurement bias also occurs because of other “variables unrelated to teaching” such as course size and type, the time of day it is taught, and even the timing of SET administration.<sup>1</sup> Overall, researchers have concluded that SETs do not measure teaching effectiveness because of their broad and often ill-defined focus.<sup>2</sup>

It is not feasible to control for these and other factors that may affect the validity and reliability of ESCI scores in the current system. But offering context for these scores will allow for a more holistic review of teaching. *Contextualizing* refers to the need to provide reviewers outside of the department, particularly members of the Committee on Academic Personnel (CAP) and divisional deans, with information about the course as follows:

- Course size and type. Identify the course in question as large lecture, seminar, gateway course, capstone, colloquium, elective, major requirement, and/or one that fulfills one or more General Education (GE) requirements. Context here might also include the situation of the course in the overall curriculum: for example, are there prerequisites or is it itself a prerequisite?
- Modes of teaching. For courses taught during the COVID pandemic, it should be noted whether instruction was offered in person or through Zoom or another platform, whether the course was taught synchronously or asynchronously, and whether it was in meeting or webinar format.
- Teaching innovations. These can include new course materials, methods of instruction, use of new platforms or technologies, and techniques for facilitating student participation.
- Response rates. What are the trends in response rates for the course, as well as the department, in that quarter as well as over time?
- Instructor record. This may include addressing questions such as whether this is the first time the instructor has offered the course; how evaluation scores compare with the instructor’s prior teaching; lead time for preparation; or patterns and anomalies in the instructor’s record during the quarter and/or over time.

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<sup>1</sup> Kreitzer and Sweet-Cushman. Research shows students in large courses and courses outside of the major generally assign lower scores on SETs (Liao, Groszold, and Porter 2017; Ching 2018). Some data suggest that scores on SETs administered “a few weeks before final exams” may be higher than those administered during a final exam period (Braskemp et al 1984; Ching 2018).

<sup>2</sup> The [Report of the Senate Ad Hoc ESCI Committee](#) and the [UC Teaching and Learning Centers Recommendations for Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness](#) provide a more extensive summary of these issues, as well as bibliographies of relevant research.

Concrete information such as this will help reviewers situate and interpret data associated with teaching effectiveness. At all stages of the process, those writing reviews (whether faculty member, departmental committee, department chair, or dean) should seek to provide audiences who are not familiar with the instructor or their discipline with as much context as possible. As a result, a fuller picture of the instructor's teaching will be the basis for review.

## **(2) Department actions: consult the ESCI office about comparative data and supplemental questions**

Departments can take proactive steps that take some of the limitations of ESCIs into account, even as the workgroup continues its analysis. We recommend that departments identify their departmental ESCI contact and/or appoint a faculty liaison who can communicate with ESCI staff as follows:

- Consult with the [ESCI office](#) to identify the best categories for comparative analysis. Currently, most departments use the defaults and situate courses relative to the department, division, and campus. In some cases, subdividing into different categories as defined by the department (i.e., small vs. large courses, lower-division vs. upper-division, electives vs. required courses) may facilitate more meaningful comparative analysis. Note that all subdivisions should result in robust categories that will preserve the anonymity of instructors. Departments seeking to make changes to the defaults should consult with the ESCI office by week two of a given quarter. Note that any changes to the comparative groups must be implemented for all instructors in a department and cannot be tailored for individual faculty members.
- Consult the ESCI [databank of vetted questions](#) to identify questions that might be added to departmental ESCI questionnaires. For example, students might be asked about the difficulty of the course material or to evaluate their own efforts. Keep in mind, however, that overly long surveys are less likely to be completed. Again, any changes to the surveys will be implemented for all instructors in the department and requests must be made to the [ESCI office](#) at least six weeks in advance of the administration of ESCIs for a given quarter.

## **(3) Additional forms of evidence**

APM 210.d.1 emphasizes the need for “more than one kind of evidence” attesting to teaching effectiveness for merit reviews. We thus strongly recommend that Departments and Deans educate their faculty about the limitations of ESCI scores and submit both ESCI student narrative comments and other evidence of teaching effectiveness. Additional forms of evidence may include but are not limited to the following instruments, each of which provides a different perspective on teaching (Brookfield 1995).

*Please note that the guiding principle for all should be concision.*

- Teaching self-assessments. All faculty should be encouraged to write a teaching statement to support the analysis of their teaching effectiveness. Note that UCSB's CAP has provided [guidelines to candidates for teaching self-assessments](#). CITRAL and Instructional Development have also described [possible elements of teaching statements](#). After campus-wide consultation, the TEW in summary recommends that teaching statements (a) provide a thoughtful *analysis* of students' narrative feedback (via ESCI or supplemental evaluations), with particular attention to

any negative comments; (b) address areas of success or challenge during the review period; and (c) respond to the evaluation of teaching in prior reviews and provide an analysis of trends over time.

- Additional materials. To inform reviewers' analyses of teaching, faculty may want to submit syllabi and assignments, grading of student work, documentation of course redesign, evidence of participation in teacher training (workshops, certifications), and/or teaching inventories based on research-based practices.<sup>3</sup> Supplemental materials should be annotated so that reviewers understand their context and significance. Department reviewers can adapt [UCSB's Teaching Evaluation Framework](#) to guide external analysis of teaching effectiveness.

## **Conclusion**

Until the campus ESCI system is revised or replaced, the recommendations outlined in this document should contribute to more holistic assessments of teaching during personnel review. In sum, the TEW encourages (1) better contextualization of ESCI data, particularly with an eye toward reviewers outside of the department and discipline; (2) consultation with the ESCI office about customizing departmental norm groups and survey questions; and (3) more expansive, while still economical, teaching portfolios, which would include multiple forms of evidence of teaching effectiveness. Going forward, we expect that reviewing agencies at all levels will continue both to refine their illustrations of model documents and to provide clear guidance to faculty about institutional expectations.

## **Teaching Evaluation Workgroup Membership**

Linda Adler-Kassner, Undergraduate Education (Writing Program), Co-Chair

Rita Raley, Academic Senate (English), Co-Chair

Tarek Azzam (Education)

Lisa Berry (Instructional Development)

June Randrup Betancourt (Academic Personnel)

Amanda Brey (Program Review and Accreditation)

Hector Cenicerros (Mathematics)

Alenda Chang (Film and Media Studies)

Maria Charles (Sociology)

Shelly Gable (Psychological and Brain Sciences)

John Gilbert (Computer Science)

Trevor Hayton (Chemistry and Biochemistry)

Christopher McAuley (Black Studies)

Wendy Meiring (Statistics and Applied Probability)

Carole Paul (History of Art and Architecture)

Shasta Delp (Academic Senate)

Toby Lazarowitz (Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor)

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, [CET Course Design Syllabus Review Checklist: USC Center for Excellence in Teaching](#); [CET Classroom Teaching Observation Checklist: USC Center for Excellence in Teaching](#); or the [CWSEI Teaching Practices Inventory](#).