

S.98-123

Report on Teaching Evaluations

Professor H.G. Murray presented the Report on the Review of the New University-Wide Teaching Evaluation Form. In June 1996, Senate approved a new Instructor and Course Evaluation form for university-wide use in undergraduate courses beginning in the 1996-97 academic year, with the stipulation that the form be reviewed within one year. The review conducted by the Provost's Advisory Committee on Teaching and Learning (PACTL) was divided into three parts: survey of student opinion, survey of faculty opinion, and statistical analysis of selected aspects of reliability and validity.

- Research literature indicates that student evaluation of teaching provides reliable and valid information on teaching effectiveness, and leads to improvement in the quality of teaching. Western students appear to be generally satisfied with the new teaching evaluation form, although they are concerned that insufficient emphasis is placed on student evaluation of teaching in faculty personnel decisions and in teaching improvement.
- Despite some reservations, UWO faculty members appear to be generally satisfied with the new teaching evaluation form. Faculty are, however, concerned about abusive written comments from students and they want earlier feedback of evaluation results and comparative norms to aid interpretation of student evaluations.
- Statistical analyses indicate that the new teaching evaluation form shows reliability and validity data similar to that reported in the research literature.

Professor B. Garcia voiced concern about the issue of faculty intimidation caused by abusive comments by students. Professor Murray stated that the only way to address this issue would be to look at the comments as they appear on the evaluation form. This was not done, however, for reasons of confidentiality. Professor Murray agreed that PACTL should find a way to conduct such an analysis. As part of the task of educating students about student evaluation of teaching, faculty should emphasize that teaching is important to them and that students should avoid abusive, obscene comments that do not belong in a teaching evaluation form.

Professor Murray confirmed that none of the data collected in the review was done in graduate courses since the evaluation form is intended for undergraduate courses.

Professor Wood questioned the cost and value of having comments transcribed rather than photocopied, noting that the number of typographical errors made the anecdotal comments inappropriate for teaching dossiers. Dr. Moran explained that photocopying would have been equally expensive since only one set of comments contained on the page were intended to be seen by the instructors. Photocopying would have entailed covering portions of the page. He suggested that typographical errors were the result of transcribers having difficulty reading the students' handwriting.