

Sample Course Evaluation ...

... Ottawa University

Task Force Report On Course Evaluation

When J. Percy Smith wrote "Teach-or get lost", he underscored, although he had something else in mind, a perceptible shift in the understanding of the idea of a University and the academic's rôle in that community. Teaching, or the kind of research and learning that is initiated and encouraged in classroom situations, is an important aspect of the academic's professional activities. As this is recognized and sanctioned, it becomes necessary to have reliable and accepted means of assessing and improving the quality of teaching. One of the more widely used means of improving teaching is student ratings or course evaluation.

This report presents an overview of the question of course evaluation - its possibility, its purposes, its limitations and recommends implementation of a two phase programme of course evaluation at the University of Ottawa.

FORMATION OF THE TASK FORCE

In September of 1969, the Academic Vice-Rector invited the Professor's Association and the Students' Union to name representatives to a task force whose primary goal would be to study the question of course evaluation and develop a programme of student course evaluation at the University of Ottawa. The APUG named professors H. Edwards (Psychology), V. Mendenhall (Philosophy) and S. Van de Maele (Arts). The representatives from the Students' Union were F. Carriere (Arts), T. O'Hara (Psychology) and H. Segal (Arts). C. McInnis served as a member of the task force representing Dr. L. Dayhaw who had been consulted as a methodological specialist. T. O'Hara served as secretary and research officer

while V. Mendenhall acted as chairman of the task force. The task force was to report from time to time to the Academic Vice-Rector, an APUG committee and the SUUO and submit a final report to these groups. The task force met semimonthly from September to November and weekly thereafter. All meetings were open and various representatives from the University community attended from time to time.

PROCEDURES AND ASSUMPTIONS

At its initial meetings, the task force agreed to proceed by: (a) surveying the research literature in order to determine the purposes, signification and limitations of course evaluation; (b) determining the principles and elements common to all teaching situations; and (c) developing a programme of course evaluation for the University of Ottawa.

These procedures rested upon certain assumptions about teaching and learning, about the professor and his rôle in the university and about the university itself. These assumptions may be set out as follows:

- teaching is one aspect (perhaps the primary one) of the professor's duties and functions;
- teaching plays an important rôle in the realization of the University's academic goals;
- teaching and learning are so related that improved teaching may lead to improved learning;
- there are certain principles and elements common to all teaching-learning situations.

CONCLUSIONS

The task force's survey and analysis of the research literature indicates that student course evaluation can be "a useful, convenient, reliable and valid means of self-improvement and self-supervision for the teacher". As such, course evaluation can provide formalized

"feedback" to the professor about the effectiveness of his teaching. Moreover, the survey and analysis indicates that it is possible to construct generalized evaluation tools when they are based on a rigorous empirical determination of the items to be surveyed in the teaching and learning situations. Finally, research indicates that student course evaluation programmes have been successful whenever professors and students co-operated and collaborated in the elaboration of the programme and whenever continuity of administration, interpretation and improvement of the programme was assured.

On the basis of preliminary surveys at the University of Ottawa, the task force modified the Purdue Rating Scale for Instructors for experimental use at the University of Ottawa. The Purdue rating scale has been in use since 1927 and has a demonstrated validity. The modified form or the University of Ottawa Course and Instructor Evaluation form, however, must be validated at the University.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force recommends that a two phase programme of course evaluation be undertaken at the University of Ottawa. The first, or experimental phase, is intended to validate the preliminary course evaluation tool, provide data for its revision and amelioration and provide information about the possible uses and limits of the tool. The second, or implementation phase involves the formulation of a policy on course evaluation. This phase depends on the results of the first phase where the possible uses of the tool will be identified and validated.

In order to undertake and carry out a pilot study of the University of Ottawa Course and Instructor Evaluation Form and obtain meaningful data, it is recommended that:

- the study be carried out by a qualified autonomous researcher or research team responsible to a committee on University Teaching (see below);
- all professors and students participate in this study;
- during the pilot study, the results of individual course and instructor evaluations be used for purposes of "feedback" to the professor;
- during the pilot study, the results of individual course and instructor evaluations be made available only to the professor and the researcher or research team.

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TO PAGE 5

please turn to page 5

Extension Courses Expand

People in most areas of New Brunswick will be able to watch at home or gather in front of viewing facilities at work to take a University of New Brunswick extension course this winter. Unique in the Maritimes and probably in Canada, the course in business administration is a degree credit course offered on a privately owned television station.

The course, "Management of the Enterprise," will be given by Professor Patrick T. Kehoe, chairman of the UNB business administration department. It will consist of 30 half-hour television lectures covering a description and analysis of the planning, policy-making, decision-making and control processes in all areas of the organization. The lectures will be produced and shown through the facilities of CHSJ (channel 4 in Saint John-Fredericton) and its rebroadcasting associates in Edmundston (channel 6) and Moncton (channel 7).

UNB president, Dr. J.O. Dineen said of the course, "the university is extremely pleased by the interest and cooperation of CHSJ TV in making its facilities available for Professor Patrick Kehoe to offer his course...We are also grateful to Professor Kehoe for the extra effort and attention which is

required to offer a course through this medium.

"We hope that this course will prove to be highly successful and that it is the forerunner of other programs of community interest which the university may be able to offer in seeking to expand its usefulness to the public."

Dr. Dineen noted, "this is the first time that UNB has had an opportunity to offer a portion of its academic program through a commercial television broadcasting station. We know that we will reach many people who would not otherwise have an opportunity to experience university level instruction."

Viewing time for all television lectures will be on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 8 to 8:30 am. A preview program will introduce the course on Tuesday, January 26 (repeated on Thursday, January 28) and the first lecture is scheduled for Tuesday, February 2. For some of the lectures, leading executives representing industry, government and military will be interviewed by Professor Kehoe and asked to comment on the topic presented in view of their first-hand organizational experience.

Another important feature of the course will be the discussion classes. Students who

register for the course will have an opportunity to participate more fully by attending three Saturday morning seminars (9-1 pm) at four discussion centres located in Saint John, Moncton, Fredericton and Woodstock. Here, participants will explore topics of interest and questions related to the

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