

Date: May 4, 2020

From: Chuck Taber, Provost and Executive Vice President

To: Academic Deans, Department Heads, and Faculty

RE: Impact of COVID on Faculty Teaching Evaluations

This communication is intended to serve as a reminder of the anomalous situation created by the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on faculty teaching during the spring 2020 semester. This letter should be placed into the personnel file for all faculty members to be referenced in future annual evaluations, reappointments, and promotion and tenure decisions. In essence, faculty members have the option of including or excluding their spring 2020 student evaluations from any and all types of evaluations in the future. If they choose to exclude the evaluations, they shall not be subject to any negative consequences from the department head, evaluation committee, senior faculty, or dean.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis in the spring semester 2020, all faculty members were required to move their classes to an online/remote delivery format. Faculty had only two weeks to make the change.

This process required much from faculty members, including, but not limited to:

- Rearranging their class schedules to accommodate the shortened semester
- Adjusting to Zoom or video for delivering lectures to be viewed live or online
- Restructuring their graded work and creating alternative assessment methods
- Adjusting to limited face time with students, which many consider as energizing and motivating in their teaching
- Recreating their mode of class discussion through Zoom or asynchronous discussion boards on Canvas
- Converting live labs to demonstrations or other methods to simulate students' hands-on experiences
- Working from home with family obligations, whether looking after small children, providing home-school delivery for school-aged children, caring for aging family members, etc.

Even those instructors already teaching online courses had to adjust their pedagogical strategies to grapple with personal disruptions listed above, and to meet the needs of students grappling with COVID-19 adjustments.

Students' academic experiences were subject to severe disruption which affected their class experiences across the board. Students had to adjust to:

- Taking online courses for the first time
- Moving from their campus living situation to their permanent residences
- Slow or nonexistent access to internet services
- inadequate or poor-quality technology

- Family distractions and care giving, whether parents, siblings, or their own school-aged children
- Limited opportunities to personally interact with instructors

In the midst of all of these pedagogical adjustments, faculty and students have been experiencing the COVID-19 crisis itself, through daily news updates, government stay home orders, policies surrounding interacting in their local communities, and potential illness among one's circle of family and friends.

These disruptions have created a challenging environment for even the best teachers. University policy emphasizes the importance of the students' voice in teaching and requires that student evaluations be administered in all classes at K-State. That policy was not relaxed in the spring 2020 semester.

Given all of these adjustments, there is a strong probability that scores and comments on TEVALS from the spring 2020 semester will look different from any faculty member's usual averages or trends.

For the purposes of any future evaluation – including annual evaluations, reappointments, promotion and tenure decisions, and professorial performance awards – student evaluation scores from the spring 2020 should not be used unless explicitly provided by the faculty member. Faculty preparing their documents should add “COVID-19” to the affected semesters unless they choose to add their scores or comments. Likewise, department heads should make the cause of any teaching and productivity disruptions related to the pandemic clear in their cover-letters and internal evaluations by including the following language: “Kansas State University collected TEVALS but did not require TEVAL scores from its faculty during the COVID-19 crisis.” Any COVID-19 disruptions should be clearly delineated for, and accommodations made by, all those party to such decisions, from department heads, relevant faculty, personnel committees, advisory committees, deans, and anyone else who might be engaged in those processes.

If there are any questions on this communication, please contact the Provost Office for more information.