

Transition to Online Ratings: The Long Form

CEPP & WGIATL

Faculty Meeting: Committee of the Whole

February 6, 2026

CEPP has been tasked with developing a framework for moving our Student Ratings online in recognition that we are an outlier in our use of paper evaluations, and we now rely on a single vendor to support this practice. This effort has highlighted number of technical challenges, problematic issues, and opportunities for revision in our student ratings. CEPP's task aligns with the focused activities of the [Working Group for Inclusive and Accessible Teaching & Learning](#), which includes assessing the broad scope of our College evaluation procedures within a national discourse of best practices.

This document provides summary materials relevant to a Committee of the Whole planned for the Faculty Meeting of February 6, 2026. Previewing the following additional materials may be useful prior to our discussion:

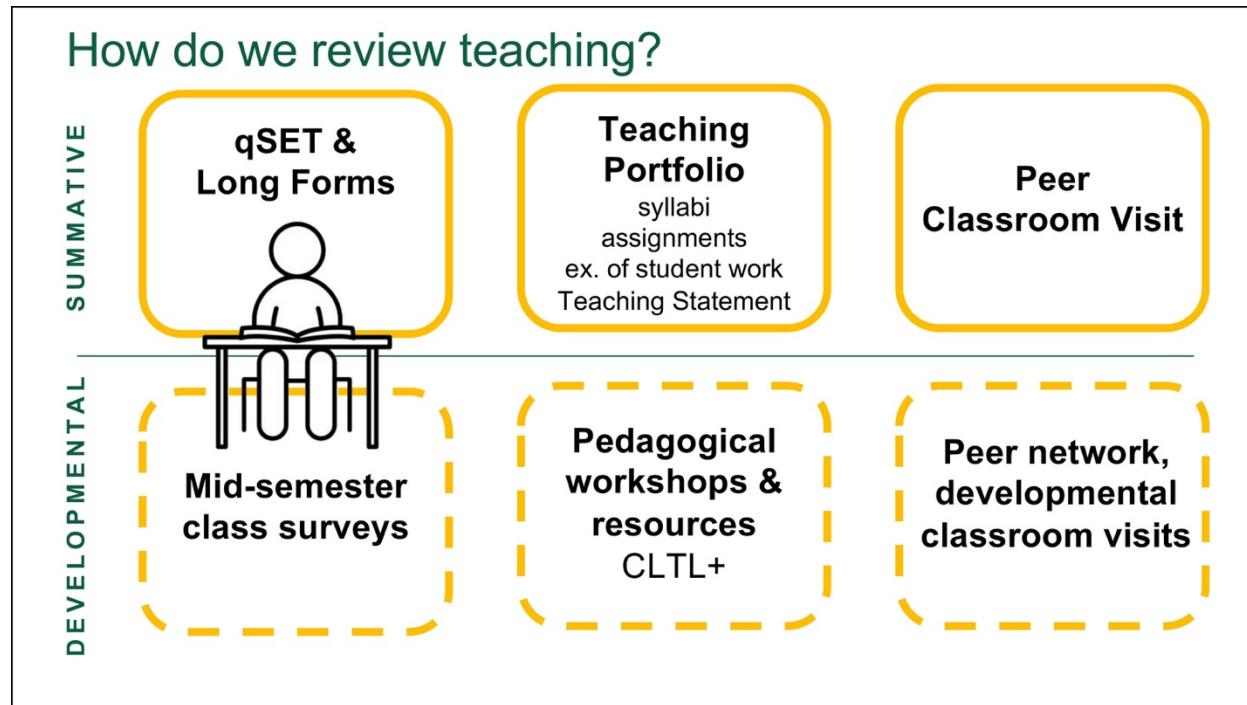
- 1) WGIATL's executive summary: [A Study of Skidmore's Current Systems, Practices and Instruments for the Evaluation of Teaching](#)
- 2) CEPP's summary of the need for transitioning Skidmore's evaluative instruments online and interrelated pieces of this process in [CEPP's faculty report AY24-25](#)
- 3) Useful recent publications on qualitative questions and instruments: [Understanding Implicit Bias and Student Evaluations of Teaching](#) (Chaytor 2025); and [Student Evaluations of Teaching: Best Practices](#) (Snow et al. 2022).

On Friday, we aim to have an inter-departmental/program discussion on qualitative student rating questions, resulting in sharing ideas through a Qualtrics survey. The remainder of this document shares PPT slides prepared to support this discussion (pg. 2-4) and a summary of the paper evaluation trail (pg. 5) as background context for the move online. Finally, anonymized examples of Long Form questions in use at Skidmore have been provided by WGIATL (pg. 6-9).

Thank you.

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Links: (1) <https://www.skidmore.edu/committees/wgiatl/index.php> ;
(2) https://www.skidmore.edu/assessment/steering_committee/documents/wgiatl2024studyevalteach.pdf ;
(3) <https://www.skidmore.edu/cepp/documents/annual-reports/CEPP-Annual-Report-24-25.pdf> ;
(4) <https://www.proquest.com/docview/3226391797?pq-origsite=gscholar&fromopenview=true&sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals> ;
(5) https://acue.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/ACUE-Student-Evaluations-of-Teaching-Best-Practices_092022.pdf

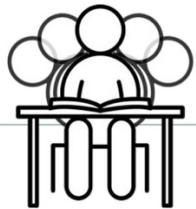


Teaching Review at Skidmore College. Teaching Review has two dimensions: summative review, evaluation materials used in contract renewal, promotion, and tenure decisions; and developmental review, evaluation materials used to improve our own pedagogy, refine our methods, and engage with larger social or disciplinary dialogues in teaching. The three components within each dimension are designed to include a community of skilled practitioners (peer visits), self-reflection and individualized craft (teaching portfolio and pedagogical development), and student perspectives. *None of these is a perfect instrument; however, together they provide evidence and context with which to undertake a summative review at points when required.* The emphasis we place on these various dimensions in terms of where support is allocated and the weight of each as evidence in a formal decision-making process is a choice we have as a community. Periodic review and improvement of our methods for Teaching Review requires us to enter a challenging web of practice and policy.

In creating a framework to move our student ratings online, we have bifurcated the process due to the quantitative/qualitative split of our qSET (All-College) and Long Form (departmental-program based) instruments. The uniqueness of our **Long Form system** is the focus of the present discussion.

Skidmore's Student Rating System

qSET
(All-College)



Inefficiency and potential unfairness are present in our current Long Form system.

Long Form
(Departmental)

Current Practice: A Qualitative Quagmire

- Program & Department evals are not uniform
- Skidmore has more than 43 different Long Forms in use
- WGIATL's extensive review identified that:
 - 1) most qualitative questions are NOT dept/pgm specific, and
 - 2) many Long Forms ask broad, inference-based ?s that are poor instruments for eval.
- Design, distribution, & collection is task of P&Ds
- Many Long Forms are asking 'legacy' questions
- **Current highly individualized Long Form cannot be integrated into an online format**

Why do we need effective questions?

Used in personnel decisions

These responses shape promotion, tenure, and reappointment decisions.



Provides summative report on the course experience

End-of-semester evaluations can offer a cumulative overview of the class that can help chairs and evaluators accurately gauge the strengths of a course or instructor.

Allows students to communicate their course experience

Instead of asking students about techniques or content they aren't experts in, an effective question can help students reflect on their time in the course.

Works to increase feedback related to quality of teaching or course structure

Instead of creating additional opportunities for biased or irrelevant responses, focused questions can shed light on the issues instructors are most concerned with.

Qualitative Student Ratings. (Top) Our current Long Form system lacks standardization among its questions: there are over 43 different Long Forms in use every semester. From the Working Group's in-depth study (link on page 1), the questions that programs and departments are asking are not program specific, and many include broad, inference-based questions that are poor instruments for evaluation and can introduce bias, rather than clear, specific, low-inference questions. From the student perspective, this Long Form variation can be confusing. Inefficiency in distribution, legibility issues, and divorce from contextual questions of student interest/performance compound the problems of the current paper Long Forms.

(Bottom) Qualitative questions can be written to minimize bias and capture dimensions of the student experience that are not represented on the qSET. We can do better in crafting our qualitative questions.

What makes an effective question?

Uses student friendly language

Avoid abstract concepts and institutional jargon.

 *Instead, ask directly and simply.*



Asks about concrete, objective information

Avoid asking students about whether things were “effective” or what they think should have happened.

 *Instead, ask about what did or did not occur.*

Directs students to a specific, focused response

Avoid asking students to “please comment on” a course or one of its elements.

 *Instead, focus on directed questions.*

What does an effective question look like?

Imagine you ordered pizza for dinner and were asked to provide feedback.

Instead of:

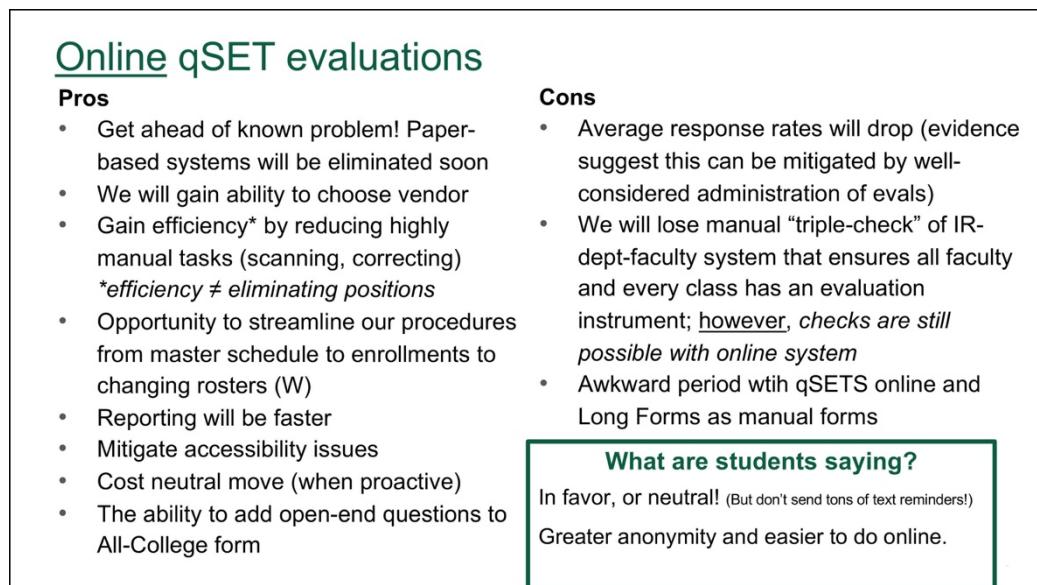
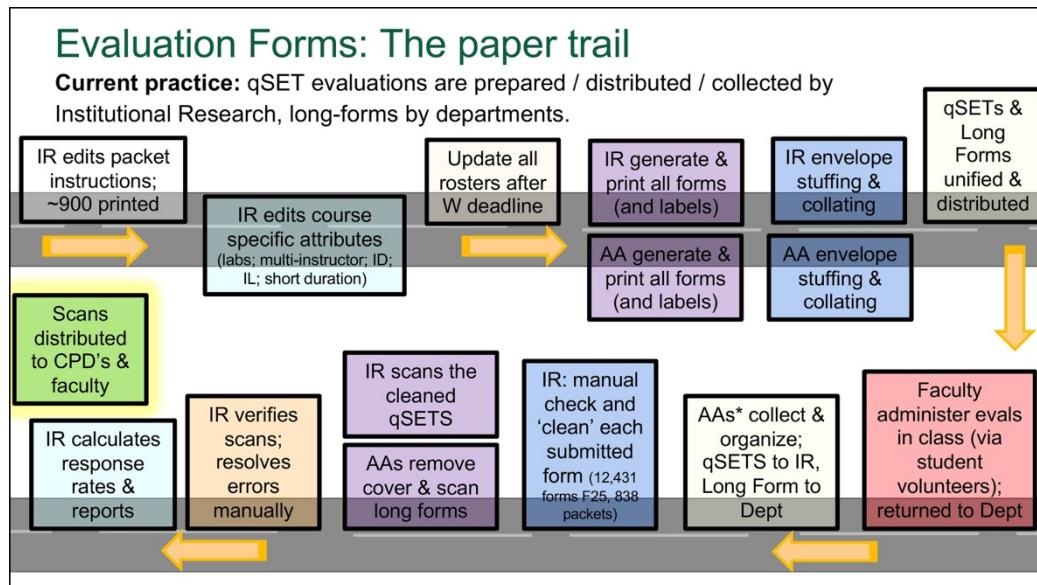
Tell us about your pizza! Was your pizza good? How could the pizza have been improved? What culinary techniques did your pizza chef use, and what could they have done differently?



Try:

Did you receive all the toppings you ordered? Did the pizza arrive on time? If there were mistakes in your order, what did the shop do to respond?

Crafting Better Questions. Based on WGIATL’s study of our current system and engagement in broad discourse on student evaluation practice, we see opportunity to improve our qualitative instruments. These slides provide some guidance regarding “good” versus “poorly” focused questions. In the Committee of the Whole, we will ask faculty to consider: What dimensions of teaching are students well-positioned to describe? What qualitative student feedback would be useful in an evaluation instrument?



Background. (Top) This flow chart (based on Stankovich, Nelson, and ParkeHarrison summary for CEPP) summarizes the touch points of planning, populating, printing, distributing, and collecting paper evaluations of our current system. Note that *each* of these steps has known issues, for example, “printing all forms” has faced issues with paper supply problems, and “faculty administer evals in class” has its own complexities of attendance and monitoring. Significant labor is assumed by IR in verifying each collected qSET and resolving errors to have the most complete set of scanned instruments possible.

(Bottom) CEPP recognizes pros and cons of transitioning to the online qSET. The new online system for qSETs reduces some manual tasks, and IR has identified where it can streamline course attributes and roster review; however, moving online will also involve new issues in integration with our LMS and new practices in administering evaluations. Furthermore, this review highlights we haven an opportune moment for revisiting our instructional materials (currently the sheet on the front of the evaluation envelopes) to clarify how to administer evaluations, educating students regarding how evaluations are used, and recognizing where bias enters and exists within this system.

Examples of current Long Form questions in use at Skidmore

Below are examples of questions from several different departments across the College that have been anonymized by division (prepared by WGIATL, Jan 2026).

Social Science Department 1

The information students provide on these forms is a critical component in personnel evaluations, especially recommendations for reappointment, promotion, and tenure. In addition, instructors use this information to improve their courses. You are free to make any comments you think are appropriate. Some relevant considerations might be:

- Your achievement in the course.
- The organization of the course
- Readings, films, exams, and assignments.
- Your instructor's classroom presentations or conduct of discussions.
- Important strengths or weaknesses in the course.

Fine Arts Department 1

QUESTION	YES	NO	SOMETIMES
Was the instructor well organized in classroom presentations?			
Did the instructor help make the material interesting?			
Did the instructor show openness to more than one viewpoint toward his/her subject(s)?			
Did this course with this instructor stimulate you to do extra reading or other work in the field or in related fields?			
Was the instructor available outside the classroom to discuss his/her course?			
Did you feel the instructor was interested in your individual learning needs?			

Natural Science Department Lab Form

Your Primary Intended or Declared Major (Circle One):

Your Anticipated Grade in This Course (Circle One)

ABOUT THE LAB

Please comment on your perceptions of the effectiveness of the overall structure, content and/or goals of this lab.

ABOUT THE INSTRUCTION

Please comment on your perceptions of the effectiveness of the instruction you received in this lab.

Humanities Department 1

1. What did you hope to learn and accomplish in this course?
2. What progress have you made toward achieving those goals?
3. What do you think is the most important thing you have learned (skill and/or content in this course)?
4. Discuss the most positive aspect of the course and its instruction.
5. Provide suggestions for improving the course or its instruction materials.
6. Please comment on the course itself. In so doing, please discuss, wherever appropriate, some of the following attributes of the instruction for this course:
 - Coherence and organization of the course
 - Choice of texts & assigned reading and other materials
 - Development of student writing and/or research skills
 - Ability to create interest in the subject matter
 - Ability to stimulate critical thinking
 - Ability as a lecturer
 - Skill in leading class discussion
 - Care in responding to questions & comments
 - Constructive feedback and instructor availability
 - Challenging material and assignments

Social Science Department 2

1. What were your goals for this course at the beginning of the term—what did you hope to learn and what did you hope to accomplish?
2. What progress have you made towards achieving your goals?
3. What kind of effort did you put into this course? Please evaluate your preparation for class—reading and writing assignments, your attendance, your participation in discussion, your other work for this class.
4. What new skills have you learned, or what existing skills have you strengthened? What new understandings of American culture have you developed?
5. Please comment on your instructor's contribution to this course (presentation of lectures, leadership of discussions, useful feedback on your work on examinations of papers, approaches to subject matter, etc.).
6. Please comment on the course itself (course organization, readings, film assignments, examinations, papers, lectures, discussions, etc.).
7. What do you think will stay with you from this course?

Natural Science Lecture Form 2

Reason you took this course:

Major or Minor Requirement

Natural Science Requirement

Major or Minor Elective

Other

Describe the effort you put into this course (both in class and out). How does that effort compare with other courses you have taken at Skidmore?

EVALUATION OF COURSE:

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The class sessions were valuable					
The written and electronic resources were useful					
The out of class assignments were helpful					

Please comment on the aspects of the course that contributed to your learning of the material.

EVALUATION OF INSTRUCTOR:

Item	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
The instructor conveyed the course material effectively					
The instructor accepted/encouraged questions					
The instructor was available outside of the classroom					

Please comment on the ways that the instructor contributed to your learning and/or ways he/she could be more effective.

What other resources or improvements could be made that could enhance your learning of the material.

Please include any other comments that you think might be helpful.

Fine Arts Department 2

1. Please comment on the overall effectiveness of the course. Please support comments with specific examples.
2. Please comment on the overall effectiveness of the instructor.
3. Please assess your own participation, learning, improvement and success in the course.

Humanities Department 2

In an effort to gather student opinion about our courses, the XXX Department invites you to write an evaluation of the course you took this semester. We would appreciate concrete and specific information—even including anecdotes, if they help make your point. You might discuss, wherever appropriate, your experience of some of the following aspects of the course and the instruction:

The Students

- Your motivation for taking the course.
- Your effort in the course.
- The contribution of your classmates to this course.

The Instructor

- Ability to create interest in the subject matter and to stimulate thinking.
- Skill in leading class discussion and ability as lecturer.
- Open-mindedness and intelligent acceptance of deviating opinions.
- Apparent command of the subject matter.
- Intellectual honesty in dealing with uncertainty or lack of knowledge.
- Planning of challenging and clear assignments.
- Responsible and valuable use of class time.
- Availability and responsiveness to students.
- Impartiality and fairness in treatment of students.

The Course

- Coherent organization of the course.
- Value of this course within the wider context of your education.
- Something you learned in this course that you believe is especially valuable. This could be a skill, some knowledge, a new author or text, an approach to reading, a set of critical or theoretical questions, writing strategies, etc.

No doubt you will have other criteria that seem to you especially relevant, and these, too, should be included in your evaluation.
