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TEACHING EVALUATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Standardized Forms At the current time the Slavic Department requires that all instructors who wish to be considered for fellowship support, promotion, tenure, or merit pay increases (therefore, everyone from Associate Instructors to full professors; only externally funded visiting faculty, like Fulbrighters, are excluded) conduct evaluations of their teaching each semester. Shortly before the end of each semester the departmental secretary distributes to each instructor standardized course evaluation forms. These are filled out by the students in the final week(s) of each SLAV course, and they are returned (by a student, never the instructor) directly to the secretary. S/he has the 'bubble sheets' tabulated by machine, and types up any written comments. All results are then copied to the instructor and to the chair; originals are kept on file in the departmental offices, for use in tenure and promotion dossiers. We try to keep the process of evaluation of teaching in the Slavic Department uniform for all instructors and anonymous for all students. It should be noted, however, that instructors are free to add extra questions to their evaluation forms if they wish.

Written Comments Students' written comments are usually far more valuable than the statistical data the forms generate. In part this is a result of the large number of Slavic Department courses that have very small enrollments (at or below the minima established by COAS and the Graduate School); numerical scores on a small base are not particularly meaningful. In part, too, students' written comments often say something about the respondents themselves (not their identity, but, on occasion, their attitude), and this can be helpful in evaluating their suggestions. On the whole, the department takes student evaluations very seriously: for example, we have adjusted salary increments and teaching loads on the basis of student comments. On the other hand, in 1994, when student evaluations seemed about to derail the tenure and promotion of a faculty member the Slavic Department wanted to keep, we fought very hard (and successfully) to have the student evaluations discounted. We did this by undermining them with more thoughtful and detailed student evaluations, especially from individuals who had had this faculty member years before and could therefore respond to him after mature reflection. We also strenuously objected to the statistics compiled from this faculty member's evaluations, since they were often based on only two or three responses per class. Finally, we insisted (and were sustained by the dean) that peer evaluations by other faculty be considered alongside student evaluations. We would say, then, in summary, that while standardized student teaching evaluations are important, they are only one component, and they must be used with a clear understanding of their limits and potential shortcomings.

In addition to student evaluations, teaching in the Slavic Department is evaluated by visits of the chair and other departmental colleagues to the classroom of the colleague being evaluated. Visits are never made by surprise, and the visitors seek to be as unobtrusive as possible (although, given the

small enrollments in our department, this is difficult). The reports of such visits comprise a critical component in tenure and promotion dossiers in the Slavic Department.

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