In December 2004 the Undergraduate Academic Affairs Committee (UAAC) submitted to the Provost a provisional Report on a University-wide Course Evaluation. Since then the UAAC has examined in greater detail several of the issues identified in that report: (a) an all-University rating form, (b) in-class versus online administration, and (c) evaluation of instructors in labs and recitations. A subcommittee reviewed and discussed the White Paper on Student Ratings (Center for Teaching Excellence, 2000), internal rating forms and reports (CAS, Steinhardt, Stern, SCPS), and external information compiled for the subcommittee by CAS (Penn, Harvard, Columbia, Adelphi, Villanova). Its reports were discussed by the full Committee in three separate meetings and serve as the basis for the following recommendations.

**Core Questions.** The UAAC endorses again the principle that all schools evaluate all their courses toward the end of every semester, in order to ascertain their success in promoting student learning and effective teaching at NYU. The only exceptions should be courses in which the format (e.g., independent study) or the size (e.g., five or fewer students) would make data collection problematic. Given the diversity across schools, departments, and programs, the Committee does not recommend that an all-University rating form be developed. Instead, it recommends that the separate forms used in the schools all be adjusted to include several common elements. In particular, it recommends five questions that seek demographic data and four core questions that address the effectiveness of the instructor and the course. They are set forth in the attached Appendix A (“Suggested Common Elements”). In addition to these common questions and also school- or department-specific questions, the forms that individual schools use should include some open-ended questions and also sufficient space for handwritten comments.

**Administration.** The Committee does not recommend University-wide electronic administration of the ratings process at this time. Its chief concerns regarding an online process were a low response rate and a tendency for responses to fall into the extreme ranges. (The Committee took particular note of the decision by Undergraduate Stern to discontinue online administration of course evaluations for precisely these reasons.) It recognizes, however, that individual schools may well decide that the advantages of an online system outweigh these and other drawbacks. Whether administered in class or online, the forms should be processed quickly so that instructors and others can have the benefit of the results as soon as possible. The Committee also suggests that the Office of Institutional Research provide the schools with advice and, if requested, with tangible assistance with technical issues regarding the ratings instrument, the processing of data, and the like. Finally, since a major purpose of the evaluations is the improvement of teaching, the Committee suggests that faculty be made aware (1) that the University has resources to help them become more effective teachers and (2) that the relevant dean or chair should share the results of the evaluation with the faculty member (it is up to the individual school or department to decide whether to share the information more widely).
Lab and Recitation Instructors. In keeping with the recommendation of the recent Self-Study Report on Undergraduate Education for the Middle States Association, the Committee recommends that the forms make it possible for students to rate the performance of their graduate student teaching assistants in schools where graduate students staff recitations or laboratories. The Office of Institutional Research may have to assist in developing a technique for doing this (since currently the course evaluation surveys are keyed to the primary faculty instructor, not the TAs).

Midterm Feedback. The Committee also strongly recommends that, apart from the end-of-semester ratings, schools consider a midterm feedback mechanism, which could serve as a valuable basis for adjustments while courses are still underway.
APPENDIX
SUGGESTED COMMON ELEMENTS

Demographic Questions

1. I am a:
   Freshman    Sophomore    Junior    Senior    Other

2. My major(s) is (are):

3. I took this course to satisfy:
   a) Major field requirements
   b) Minor field requirements
   c) Other specific degree requirements
   d) Elective credits required for a degree
   e) Non-degree requirements
   f) General interest

4. Before I took this course my interest in the subject was:
   1 (very low)  2  3  4  5 (very high)

5. My teaching assistant is (if the course has a recitation or lab):

Course Effectiveness Questions

1. To what extent was the primary instructor effective in helping you learn in this course?
   1 (not at all)  2  3  4  5 (extremely)

2. To what extent were you challenged intellectually by this course?
   1 (not at all)  2  3  4  5 (extremely)

3. To what extent was your knowledge of this course’s subject area increased?
   1 (not at all)  2  3  4  5 (extremely)

4. To what extent would you recommend this course to a friend?
   1 (not at all)  2  3  4  5 (extremely)