

# Narrative Evals

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UCSC requires that all students receive narrative evaluations for each course that they complete. The purpose of these evaluations is to provide a medium for evaluating a student's performance beyond A, B, C, D, F. There are no formal requirements for how evaluations should be written (aside from actually writing them), but below is a list of suggestions.

## 1 Eval writing tips

- The department offers a system (excel spreadsheet) for automatically generating evaluations. The user chooses from a list of canned sentences, and excel fills in the appropriate pronouns. This is not necessarily recommended, as it is very easy for students to tell that their evaluations are not personalized. However, looking at the sentence menu might give you some ideas for how to write your own evaluations, and a hybrid approach might be useful (choosing some canned sentences, as well as writing a few personalized comments).

The spreadsheet can be downloaded from :

[http://physics.ucsc.edu/graduate/physicslab\\_evals\\_sheets.xls](http://physics.ucsc.edu/graduate/physicslab_evals_sheets.xls)

- As a lab TA, you will most likely have more interaction with the majority of your students than either the discussion TA or the Instructor for the class. You are therefore the most qualified person to evaluate a student's work, and should take this job seriously. Positive, specific comments about a student's work are a helpful addition to a student's transcript.
- Speaking of which, it is always a good idea to be specific in evaluations. A vague evaluation simply stating that a student "did very well" is not very useful. In fact, it is no different than a grade, as evidenced by the grade to adjective map in Table 1. It is alright to begin an evaluation with such a sentence, but there should be more content than this.

Grade	Adjectives
A	Honors, superb, outstanding, excellent, top-notch
B	Very good, quite good, above average
C	Average, satisfactory, fairly good, passing
D	Below average, marginal
F	Poor, inadequate, inferior, unsatisfactory

Table 1: Mapping grades to adjectives (taken from committee on educational policy).

- You should evaluate based on the "quality and characteristics of the student's work." So, for instance it would not be okay to write "Student A is very bright but did not commit sufficient effort to this course." This is not very useful either to the student or other readers, since it is based on opinion and not on the specifics of the student's work.
- Remember that evaluations are a part of the student's transcript, so please read them over for clarity and run a spell-check.

- One idea that you might try experimenting with is to write drafts of the student's evals some time during the middle of the quarter, and then show them to the students. For a TA taking classes and trying to have a life outside of physics, this may seem overwhelming, but there are a number of benefits. First, the students will be able to use your feedback to improve as the quarter progresses. In the end, this will make less work for you in terms of grading and establishing your expectations during class. Also, it is democratic. You will not have to worry about leaving anyone in the cold without guidance. Most importantly, when your friends are struggling to write their evals while they finish the quarter, take finals, leave for vacation, and what not, you will already be done with the majority of your evaluations, and can relax.
- Write your evals as soon after the end of the quarter as possible! With 40+ people to keep track of, if you wait a month, you will undoubtedly have names you cannot connect with faces. This will make it hard to write a good evaluation, and is not fair to these students.

## 2 Procedure for submitting evals

Below is a summary of the procedure for submitting evaluations. A more detailed description can be found at:

<http://physics.ucsc.edu/graduate/nes.html> Please consult this web site towards the end of the quarter to guide you through the submission process.

- The first step in the process of submitting your evaluations is to obtain your class list. You should have a "myucsc" account, and the class list can be generated by going to the "Manage My Classes" folder. A sub-menu will appear, and the next step is to choose "My Class Rosters." You can then select the quarter and class, and above the list that appears, there should be an option "savable eval data." After choosing this, a window containing the appropriately formatted class list should appear. This is a comma delimited text file.
- After your evaluations are written, the text of the evaluations must appear under the header for each student. This text file can then be pasted into an email, which is sent to

*both* `script@ucsc.edu` and `reiner@cats.ucsc.edu`.

## Sample Evaluations

*(Note/disclaimer: These are not “officially” endorsed models, just what typical evaluations that I write look like. There are no requirements for the length and depth of evaluations, and you should strive to develop your own style.)*

### **A student who performed towards the top of the class:**

The quality of X's work in lab this quarter was very good. She attended all seven of the sections and came to lab prepared to do the experiments as evidenced by her completion of the pre-lab questions. X displayed a great enthusiasm during class for the physics behind the experiments, often initiating discussions that attempted to tie her knowledge from outside the class to the concepts in the lab. In addition, her lab notebooks were consistently well written and clearly conveyed her understanding of the concepts. She certainly understands how to describe and convey the importance of her methods, observations, and conclusions.

### **A student who performed towards the middle of the class:**

Overall, X's performance in this course was above average. He attended all of the sections and completed the majority of the pre-lab exercises. His experimental methods were of good quality, consistently achieving good precision in many of the more challenging labs. While his quality data was clearly recorded in well-organized tables and graphs, he is encouraged to spend more time carefully recording the details of his experimental methods and discussing the significance of his results.

### **A student who performed towards the bottom of the class:**

X performed adequately in lab. He attended seven of the eight sections. The pre-lab work required for this course was rarely completed, and this lack of preparation slowed his lab group down. During the beginning of the quarter X showed improvements in his time management and lab write-ups, with the fourth lab on non-inertial reference frames containing a very clear description of the centrifugal and coriolis forces. However, his performance lagged on the last two lab write-ups, which lacked an adequate description of his experimental methods and the significance of his results.

### **An Excel generated eval:**

X was well prepared for the lab. He was able to use the apparatus well. He showed a good understanding of experimental errors. He demonstrated a good understanding of the physics experiments. X had written reports that were usually well done. He showed improvement in writing as the course progressed. He was one of the better students in this laboratory section. X attended all of the lab sessions.