

POLICY ON ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

Teaching is central to the mission of the University and, therefore, its effectiveness must be assessed. The dual purpose of the assessment of teaching effectiveness is to provide the individual instructor with specific information to enhance instruction and to provide information for use in personnel actions. The primary responsibility for assessing all aspects of teaching effectiveness rests with the faculty.

This policy establishes the framework for the assessment of teaching effectiveness, including procedures for the two major components of the assessment: (a) reports of classroom visits by peers and (b) student evaluation of instruction.

Although the reports of classroom visits by peers and student evaluation of instruction are the principal components of assessment of teaching effectiveness, additional information such as review of textbooks, course syllabi, representative assignments, examinations, and student projects should be incorporated into the assessment. Care should be taken to examine the number of course preparations, level and type of classes taught (graduate, undergraduate, required, elective, etc.), the instructional format (lecture, discussion, lab, seminar, etc.), time of day and length of class period, and any other factors which may affect teaching effectiveness or its assessment. Individuals involved in the assessment of teaching effectiveness must be most careful to avoid bias based upon race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, pregnancy, age, disability, veteran's status, sexual preference, or sex. Everyone also must be alert to the possibility of such bias on the part of others.

Statistical data must be analyzed in the context of the foregoing paragraphs and with the realization that serious limitations exist relative to the accumulation and analysis of such data. For example, because the precision of most student ranking data is limited, computations such as arithmetic means should be reported only as whole numbers or to the first decimal place. Frequency distributions are an appropriate way of illustrating results of student evaluations and, generally, are less likely to lead to overinterpretation of data than other mathematical computations which may suggest more precision than actually exists. The assessment of statistical data should always attempt to identify and focus upon patterns of performance rather than upon idiosyncratic responses.

Statistical data shall not be the only information considered in evaluating teaching effectiveness. Department faculty are expected to go beyond the examination of numerical data and the comparisons of numerical rankings in their assessment of teaching performance. Qualitative analyses of reports of classroom visits by faculty peers as well as student evaluations and assessment of course materials should provide a non-quantitative component to the overall assessment of teaching effectiveness.

I. The assessment of teaching effectiveness should address at least three basic components of instruction: subject matter, organization, and delivery.

- A. Subject Matter. The assessment of subject matter consists of evaluation of the instructor's knowledge of the subject matter and how this knowledge is reflected in the content of the course. Because of their subject matter expertise, faculty peers are in the strongest position to assess this component; thus, their judgement normally should carry greater weight than student comments.
- B. Organization. The assessment of organization consists of an evaluation of the design of the course as described in the course syllabus and any related materials, the consistency with which class sessions reflect the syllabus, and the organization of individual class sessions. Although faculty peers are better prepared to evaluate the overall organization of a course, students may be better able to assess the organization and interrelationship of class sessions. Thus, both faculty and student evaluations normally should have substantial weight.
- C. Delivery. The assessment of delivery consists of an evaluation of the instructor's ability to transfer knowledge, to motivate students, and to encourage inquiry. Because students are in a position to evaluate delivery over the entire semester, their comments normally should be given substantial weight. Faculty peer observations provide additional information for the assessment of delivery.

II. Peer Visit Forms and Student Evaluation Questionnaires

- A. Schools and/or departments shall adopt forms for classroom visits by peers and for the student evaluation of instruction. The forms, at a minimum, shall provide for the assessment of subject matter, organization, and delivery as described above. The forms shall be submitted to the School Dean for approval. Upon approval the forms shall be used by all faculty in the department or school. Peer visitation forms shall be signed by the evaluator.
- B. Student evaluation questionnaires normally shall consist of both quantitative and open-ended questions. Questions shall focus primarily upon aspects of organization and delivery. (See Section I.) Questionnaires shall not consist only of open-ended questions. The questionnaires shall be unsigned.

III. Frequency of Implementation

A. Reports of Classroom Visits By Peers

1. Each department or school shall establish a written policy which describes the frequency and scheduling of classroom visits by peers. The following minimum frequency shall apply:
 - a. For part-time temporary faculty, the first time a course is taught by the instructor and, thereafter, at least one course every other year of employment regardless of a break in service;
 - b. For full-time temporary faculty, two courses each semester for the first year and two courses each academic year thereafter.
 - c. For probationary faculty, two classes (to include as many courses as possible) every semester.
 - d. For tenured faculty, one course each academic year on a rotating basis such that during a five year period the maximum number of different courses is evaluated.
2. Additional classroom visits by peers may be requested by the instructor or required by the Dean or Vice President for Academic Affairs.

B. Student Evaluation of Instruction

1. Each department or school should establish a written policy which describes the frequency and scheduling of student evaluation of instruction. The following minimum frequency shall apply:
 - a. For full-time and part-time temporary faculty, two representative classes per academic year. However, each course shall be evaluated the first two times it is taught by an individual;
 - b. For probationary faculty, every class every semester; and
 - c. For tenured faculty, two representative classes per academic year on a rotating basis such that during a five year period the maximum number of different courses is evaluated.
2. Additional student evaluations may be requested by the instructor or required by the Dean or Vice President for Academic Affairs.

IV. Confidentiality

Information obtained from peer visitation reports and/or student evaluation questionnaires shall be confidential. Possession or use of this information shall be restricted to:

- A. The instructor, who may at his/her discretion, make such information available to others;
- B. Those charged with conducting evaluations or administering this policy;
- C. Those with access to the Open Personnel File.

V. Administration of Reports of Classroom Visits By Peers**A. Conducting Classroom Visits By Peers**

- 1. Only tenured and probationary faculty shall conduct classroom visits by peers. Although participants in the Faculty Early Retirement Program and tenured faculty being considered for promotion may not participate in personnel actions, they may conduct classroom visits pursuant to this policy.
- 2. Prior to the classroom visit(s), the evaluator and the faculty member should discuss a plan for the evaluation, including the examination of relevant materials such as textbooks, syllabi, representative materials, and examinations.
- 3. The evaluator should avoid any unnecessary disruptions of normal classroom activities.
- 4. Multiple classroom visits by one or more evaluators are expected in order to provide a more complete perspective of classroom performance.
- 5. Evaluators shall not interview students before, during or after the class session. (Any information placed in the Open Personnel File must be identified by source.)

B. Reports of Classroom Visits

- 1. Using the approved departmental or school format, a written report on each classroom visit should be prepared by the evaluator. Multiple visits by the same evaluator may be combined into a single

report. The report should include specific classroom observations upon which the assessment is based and, minimally, reference should be made to subject matter, organization, and delivery (see above).

2. The evaluator and the faculty member should discuss the visit prior to the submission of the written report to the department chair.
3. Each report shall be signed by the evaluator and submitted to the department chair for placement in the Open Personnel File following appropriate notification.

VI. Administration of Questionnaires for Student Evaluation of Instruction

A. Administration of Questionnaires

1. Questionnaires shall be administered under the direction of the school dean. The dean will issue written instructions which identify the individuals who will administer the student evaluations and the written and/or oral instructions to be given to the students.
2. At a minimum, the instructions shall include:
 - a. Advising the students that the dual purpose of the evaluations is to enhance teaching effectiveness and to provide information for use in personnel actions (if any).
 - b. Informing the students of the procedures for using the questionnaires.
 - c. Informing the students that the original or a copy of the original of the comments (if any) will be given to the instructor.
 - d. Assuring the students that the evaluation results will not be made available to the instructor until after final grades have been turned in.
3. The instructor being evaluated may not be present in the classroom during the administration of the questionnaire.
4. The person administering the questionnaire shall not interview students before, during or after the class session.
5. The evaluations shall occur within the last four weeks of the semester.

B. Analysis of Student Evaluation Data

1. *Quantitative Results*

- a. A written interpretation of the quantitative results of the student evaluation shall be prepared by the department. This interpretation shall be known as the Summary Report.
- b. Each Summary Report should include an explanation of how the questionnaire results support the generalizations, interpretations and conclusions made.
- c. The quantitative portion of the questionnaire shall be assessed in the Summary Report with comparisons to appropriate data (means, modes, medians, etc.) for the department.

Quantitative computations should be reported only to the first decimal place and differences of a few tenths between scores should be considered insignificant item frequency distribution of student responses are an appropriate way to display results.

- d. The instructor should receive a copy of the quantitative data and a copy of the Summary Report. In the interest of instructional improvement and fairness to retention/tenure/promotion candidates, these copies should be provided to the instructor as soon as possible after final grades are turned in. Candidates for retention/ tenure/ promotion should have priority over temporary and tenured faculty in the receipt of this information.
- e. After final grades are turned in by the instructor, the Summary Report shall be placed in the Open Personnel File.

2. *Open-Ended Comments*

- a. The department may require that a written summary of the open-ended student comments be prepared for each instructor for inclusion in the Summary Report. The summary of open-ended comments should be a generalization of the comments and should neither focus upon isolated remarks nor be simply a listing or typed iteration of the individual comments.

- b. The instructor shall receive the original or a photo copy of the original open-ended comments. (The copy of the Summary Report provided to the instructor will include the summary of the open-ended student comments.)

In the interest of instructional improvement and fairness to retention/tenure/promotion candidates, these copies should be provided to the instructor as soon as possible after final grades are turned in. Candidates for retention/ tenure/ promotion should have priority over temporary and tenured faculty in the receipt of this information.

VII. Preparation of an Overall Evaluation of Teaching Performance

For recommendations regarding personnel actions, the written reports of classroom visits by peers and the Summary Reports of student evaluations along with other appropriate information in the Open Personnel File shall be assessed to identify patterns and trends of teaching performance and effectiveness. These assessments, at a minimum, shall include discussions of subject matter, organization, and delivery as outlined in Section I above.

VIII. Summary of Needed Department/School Policy Decisions

In accord with the foregoing provisions, departments or schools should adopt questionnaires and forms for student evaluations and classroom visits by peers and develop written policies/procedures which describe:

- A. The frequency (if the minimum described above is to be exceeded) and scheduling of student evaluations and classroom visits by peers.
- B. Whether or not the instructor will be notified beforehand of the date(s) for classroom visits by peers.
- C. Whether or not a summary of open-ended comments will be included in the Summary Report.
- D. How faculty peers will be selected to make the classroom visits.
- E. How faculty peers will be selected to prepare the Summary Reports.

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