

IDEAS AND BEST PRACTICES FOR EVALUATING FACULTY TEACHING

Goals and Approach for the Review of Teaching

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is dedicated to excellence in teaching. Excellence means effectively providing learning experiences that prepare students for the challenges of a complex, ever-changing, and diverse workplace and society. The goals of a review process are to: (1) improve the quality and importance of teaching across the campus, (2) recognize excellence in teaching with positive incentives, (3) demonstrate faculty accountability within and outside the University, (4) promote the scholarship of teaching, (5) encourage the connection between teaching and research, (6) provide means for protecting intellectual freedom, and (7) foster an ethical university community.

The approach to annual and cumulative review of teaching should be multi-faceted, including inputs from both the faculty member being reviewed and his or her students. The review may also include peer reviews. The various departments across the University are quite diverse in function and size. Therefore, details of the review process will vary considerably at the departmental level to accommodate diversity in teaching techniques and content. This process of teaching assessment and evaluation should minimize burdens for faculty, administrators, and students.

Assessment of Teaching

Assessment is a critical step for constructively improving the quality and role of teaching on this campus. For the purposes of this document, assessment of faculty teaching is feedback about strengths and areas for improvement based on inputs from the faculty member being reviewed, students, and peer reviews if conducted. Faculty members should gain an understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement through self-examination, constructive dialogue with peers, and feedback from students.

Self Assessment

Self assessment allows faculty members to reflect on their teaching both for their benefit and to facilitate constructive dialogue about their teaching with others. A minimum output from this process would be a document about the person's teaching philosophy and may include, but not be limited to, peer reviews, teaching goals, methods for achieving these goals, and plans for achieving teaching excellence. The document may be supported by a teaching portfolio that illustrates implementations or successes of the philosophy, documents activities such as short courses that improved teaching skills, considers alternative teaching objectives and methods, or possibly other aspects of teaching for the faculty member being reviewed.

Peer Assessment

Peer assessment can provide faculty members with useful feedback that identifies their strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching. A peer teaching review should be conducted at the request of the faculty member wishing to be reviewed, and may be a required evaluative tool at the department level, according to the bylaws of the individual department.

If called for, the peer review team should consist of three tenured faculty members. One is selected by the faculty member, one by the department head, and the third is agreed upon by the two. Departments are encouraged to have at least one faculty member from outside the department included in peer review teams.

The peer review team should offer feedback that: (1) considers whether the courses of the faculty member have appropriate content and offer students sufficient opportunity to acquire appropriate skills; (2) considers whether the grading system and evaluation/assessment tools are consistent with course content and student skill development; (3) examines the teaching methods of the faculty member for effectiveness; and (4) recognizes the risks and successes inherent in innovative teaching methods. Feedback is facilitated by the peer review team meetings with the faculty member to discuss teaching before, after, and otherwise as needed or requested during the review process. Feedback will be based on: (1) examination of materials for the course (e.g.,

handouts, tests, web pages, etc.); and (2) observation in the classroom or instructional setting for at least one course being taught during the semester of the peer assessment. Each team member should visit at least one class meeting. More visits are encouraged for peers to gain a better understanding of the teaching methods of the faculty member, but are not required. At the end of the semester, the peer review team will produce a report that is discussed with the faculty member being reviewed and that presents the strengths and areas for improvement for the teaching of the faculty member.

Student Assessment

Student review of teaching is mandated. To increase the feedback component of the student reviews, written student comments should be solicited in addition to any mandatory questionnaire. Results of the open-ended student comments would be returned to the faculty member after grades are sent to the central administration. While student reviews occur each semester, they should not receive greater weight than self or peer assessments during faculty evaluation processes.

Consultation about Teaching: Services through the Walker Teaching Resource Center

Any Faculty wishing to engage in self-assessment, or any department wishing to engage in peer-assessment should contact the Walker Teaching Resource Center for consultation on best practices for assessment. Staff from the Walker Teaching Resource Center are also available for instructional observation in order to provide faculty with confidential, independent feedback about teaching through the following formats: small group instructional diagnosis, peer evaluation, and classroom observation. Call the Walker Teaching Resource Center (x4026) for more information on any of these services.

Evaluation of Teaching

Evaluation is an indicator of whether a faculty member's teaching exceeds, meets, or fails to meet a specified standard. The evaluation and the resulting performance measure are necessary for enhancing excellence in teaching through incentives and for achieving the objectives of the Board of Trustee's faculty review process. Evaluation will be the responsibility of the department head and will result in a specific performance measure, which synthesizes the results from the self-assessment, student reviews, and peer reviews if conducted.

Three criteria should be used to evaluate teaching and to assign a performance measure with a narrative that explains each measure. The criteria are:

1. Assuming that a department has agreed to the roles of its courses, do courses of the faculty member have appropriate content and are students given opportunity to acquire the appropriate skills?
2. Are the grading system and evaluation/assessment tools consistent with course content and student skill development?
3. Are the teaching methods of the faculty member effective?

The standards for the evaluation of these criteria are to be constructed by each department, and the results will be documented by the department head in terms of the standards established by the faculty of that department and using the campus-level system of performance categories.