

PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

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Staff to the committee: Karen Zentner Bacig, Associate to the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs

I. Executive Summary

Convened by Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs Arlene Carney, this advisory group was charged specifically with recommending best practices for the peer review of teaching. After initial discussion, the advisory group agreed to approach their work in three distinct phases with three working groups – defining peer review of teaching, developing best-practice rubrics for major aspects of the peer review of teaching, and finally, recommending the use of peer review of teaching in formative and summative assessments of faculty teaching and a format for reporting peer review of teaching data in tenure and promotion dossiers.

Over a period of 18 months, these three working groups completed their work. Recommendations will be presented in the sections that follow.

II. Recommendations

a. Definition of Peer Review of Teaching

The following draft definition of the peer review of teaching has been developed:

Peer review of instruction is a systematic process of examining and evaluating colleagues' teaching for purposes including professional development, performance appraisal, and/ or promotion and tenure.

This review should include:

- *Review of statement of teaching philosophy*
- *Review of educational materials, e.g. syllabi and other materials in various media (including course web sites) prepared for instructional use.*
- *Review of class websites*
- *Review of student work*
- *Review of instructional delivery. This review should be conducted by more than one colleague and should involve more than one observation of classes in a course.*

b. Rubrics for Peer Review of Teaching

The working group that developed best-practice rubrics for aspects of peer review began by crafting a “preamble” to bound their recommendations:

Peer review of instruction is a systematic process of examining and evaluating colleagues' teaching for purposes including professional development, performance appraisal, and/ or promotion and tenure. Peer review of teaching is required by the administrative policy - Evaluation of Teaching (see <http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/TEACHINGEVALUATION.html>). A committee was charged by the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic affairs at the University of Minnesota to recommend a set of best practices on peer review for use across campus. The committee recommends that peer review include review of syllabi, assignments and assessments, student performance, professional growth and development, and observation of teaching. A format has been designed for reviewing these five aspects of teaching and is included below.

Believing that multiple sources of information provide the most valid and reliable set of peer review data, the working group developed rubrics for five major areas of the peer review of teaching: course assignments and assessments; observation of teaching; professional growth and development; examples of student performance; and syllabi. For each area a rubric was developed that can be adapted as departments or college deem necessary to meet their specific needs, though the working group developed each rubric with transferability across disciplines in mind. These rubrics can be found in Appendix A.

The working group's goal was to provide rubrics that were simple enough to be used without unnecessary difficulty or complication while still providing robust information regarding peer assessments of the various aspects of one's teaching.

c. Peer Review of Teaching Data for Promotion and Tenure

The working group that developed recommendations for the presentation of peer review of teaching data in the promotion and tenure dossier believes that the promotion and tenure dossier should present a progression of a faculty member's teaching over the time period being evaluated. Summary peer review rubrics should be included in the supplementary materials of the dossier (see Appendix B), and the focus should be on a robust peer review of key aspects of courses for which the faculty member has primary responsibility (see list in II.b.).

The members of this working group believe that both formative and summative peer reviews of teaching ought to take place in the period leading up to a faculty member's tenure and/or promotion. At a minimum, two summative reviews are recommended prior to review for tenure and/or promotion. Statements about the peer review of teaching should be included as well in a probationary faculty member's annual review form, the President's Form 12.

Suggested progressions for peer review are:

*Probationary Faculty**

- Year One (of teaching courses): Peer Review of Syllabi for all courses taught
- Year Two (of teaching courses): Peer Review of Assignments and Assessments
- Years Two & Three (of teaching courses): Peer Review of Teaching (classroom observations) – minimum of one course per year by different peers
- Year Four: Peer Review of Student Performance and of Professional Development
- Year Five: Peer Review of Teaching – minimum of two courses by at least two different peers

*Modeled after a six-year tenure clock; can be modified for units with longer tenure clocks.

At any stage, the timing of formative and summative reviews can be determined by the faculty member and his/her department chair/head. There should be at least *two* summative reviews before going up for tenure and promotion.

Tenured Associate Professor

Evidence of peer review in each year after receiving tenure should be demonstrated. Each aspect of peer review (review of syllabi, review of assignments and assessments, review of teaching [observations], review of professional development, review of student performance) should be evidenced in the promotion and tenure dossier.

At any stage, the timing of formative and summative reviews can be determined by the faculty member and his/her department chair/head. There should be at least two summative reviews before going up for promotion to full professor.

Full Professor

Peer review of teaching should take place every year. Within a three to five-year window, all aspects of peer review should be conducted on a rotating basis, as determined mutually by the faculty member and his/her department head/chair. Evidence from peer reviews should be included in the annual review process for merit and salary adjustment.

d. Definitions

The working group believes a set of definitions for the dimensions of peer review would be helpful. The following definitions are offered:

Syllabus – As directed by Senate policy (see http://www.policy.umn.edu/Policies/Education/Education/SYLLABUSREQUIREMENT_S.html), all instructors are required to “...develop a course syllabus for each offering of a course and communicate the syllabus to students...”

Assignments/Assessments – includes any kind of artifact assigned by an instructor that requires a student to demonstrate his/her learning and/or by which an instructor will evaluate a student’s learning and/or performance.

Teaching – can take many forms in many different environments.

Student Performance – how students are performing on assignments and/or assessments and whether this performance is as would be expected.

Professional Development – activities undertaken by an instructor to improve his/her teaching. These activities can include, but are not limited to, participation in conferences or workshops, consultation with staff from the Center for Teaching and Learning, or trying new approaches to teaching.

These definitions would be included with other resources, as described below.

e. Resources

This working group recommends that web resources for the peer review of teaching be established on the Provost’s web page. These resources can include linking to peer review resources on the Center for Teaching and Learning’s web site, as well as the rubrics, definitions of the various aspects

of the peer review of teaching, links to Senate policy regarding the evaluation of teaching, and scholarly articles on the peer review of teaching. In-person workshops, and dissemination of information about the evaluation of teaching should also be included in New Faculty Orientation and in programs for new department heads and chairs.

f. Display in Promotion and Tenure Dossiers

It is recommended that the same data display be used for both probationary faculty and associate professor dossiers. The material included in dossiers for the peer review of teaching should represent all five areas of peer review, as outlined in this report. The working group recommends that faculty use the rubrics as the format for what is included in dossiers, accompanied by a narrative from the department chair or head that synthesizes the peer review evidence.

III. Conclusion

Peer review of teaching, as outlined in Senate policy, is an important aspect, along with course evaluations, in both the formative and summative assessment of teaching. This report provides best-practice recommendations for key aspects of peer review, including rubrics for use when conducting peer reviews of teaching. The Teaching Evaluation Advisory Group presents these recommendations to the Vice Provost for Faculty and Academic Affairs for consideration for implementation.

Appendix A
Rubrics for Peer Review of Teaching
Annual Reviews

Peer Review of Class Assignments and Assessments

4=Strongly Agree

3=Agree

2=Disagree

1=Strongly Disagree

NA=Not Applicable

Areas	Best Practices	4	3	2	1	NA
Class Assignments						
	The assignments probe different student skill sets.					
	Assignments are clearly aligned with course objectives.					
	Assignments are spread appropriately across the semester.					
	The difficulty of assignments across the semester is appropriate for the course level.					
	The workload required by the assignments is appropriate to the credit load for the course.					
	The instructions for these assignments are clear.					
Assessments						
	The assessments probe different student skill sets.					
	Assessments are clearly aligned with course objectives.					
	The difficulty of assessments is appropriate for the course.					
	The instructions for these assessments are clear.					
	Criteria for each assessment are clearly delineated, including grading.					

Comments:

Peer Observation of Teaching Protocol

Context or Background Information: Describe the setting in which the lessons took place, relevant information about the makeup of the class(es), and any other descriptive characteristics that would provide appropriate context to the observation(s).

Description:

Observation Area 1: Instructor Goals/Intentions for Class Session

Focus your comments on whether the goals were: 1) clearly stated or portrayed in an obvious fashion, 2) appropriate to the focus of the course, 3) explicitly connected to the flow of previous or future classes.

Comments:

Observation Area 2: Significance of the class activities, topics, or issues

Focus your comments on whether the tasks performed by students or the topics being discussed 1) are relevant to the focus of the course, 2) require an appropriate investment of student time or effort.

Comments:

Observation Area 3: Student engagement with the subject matter

Examine the degree to which student engagement occurred 1) over a substantial portion of the class meeting times, 2) by a broad segment of students attending the classes, 3) in appropriate forms such as discussion, listening/processing, performing, reading, reflecting, speaking, or writing.

Comments:

Observation Area 4: Examination of student achievement of goals

Focus your comments on how the instructor developed an understanding of student achievement of goals by methods such as 1) questioning students on course material, 2) observing student performance(s), 3) student-student discussion, 4) informal assessment techniques, 5) quizzes, or 6) other methods.

Comments:

Peer Review of Professional Growth and Development

Peer review of a faculty member's professional growth as a teacher may include evidence such as:

1. A record of regular participation in development activities
2. A description of changes in teaching strategies in a course and the resulting changes in student learning
3. Evidence of exploring new avenues for assessing student learning
4. Incorporation of appropriate technology into one or more courses and reflection on its value for the course
5. Changes in syllabi for a single course over the years that reflect appropriate course redesign
6. A teaching statement that demonstrates an ongoing attempt to critically examine knowledge, beliefs, and actions as a teacher

Provide an assessment of the evidence presented in relation to professional growth and development.

Peer Review of Syllabus

4=Strongly Agree

3=Agree

2=Disagree

1=Strongly Disagree

NA=Not Applicable

Syllabi Areas **Best Practices** **4** **3** **2** **1** **NA**

Course Information	The objectives are appropriate to the course.					
	Class materials are appropriate to the course.					
	The syllabus provides clear roadmaps for the course.					
	Course Policies are clearly stated (e.g., criteria for grading, makeup exams).					
	Required university statements are present (e.g., academic misconduct).					
	Criteria for grading are clearly delineated.					
Instructor Information	The percentage of the grade for course assignments and exams is clearly stated.					

Comments:

Appendix B

Rubric for Inclusion in Promotion and Tenure Dossiers

1. Peer Review of Class Assignments and Assessments

4=Strongly Agree

3=Agree

2=Disagree

1=Strongly Disagree

NA=Not Applicable

Areas	Best Practices	4	3	2	1	NA
Class Assignments						
	The assignments probe different student skill sets.					
	Assignments are clearly aligned with course objectives.					
	Assignments are spread appropriately across the semester.					
	The difficulty of assignments across the semester is appropriate for the course level.					
	The workload required by the assignments is appropriate to the credit load for the course.					
	The instructions for assignments are clear.					
Assessments						
	The assessments probe different student skill sets.					
	Assessments are clearly aligned with course objectives.					
	The difficulty of assessments is appropriate for the courses.					
	The instructions for assessments are clear.					
	Criteria for each assessment are clearly delineated.					
Overall Rating	Based on review of all peer reviews of assignments and assessments across classes.					

Comments:

2. Peer Observation of Teaching Protocol

1=Highly satisfactory 2=Satisfactory 3=Could use improvement 4=Unsatisfactory

Overall Rating of Observed Teaching: _____

Context or Background Information: Describe the setting in which the lessons took place, relevant information about the makeup of the classes, and any other descriptive characteristics that would provide appropriate context to the observations.

Description:

Observation Area 1: Instructor Goals/Intentions for Class Session

Focus your comments on whether the goals were: 1) clearly stated or portrayed in an obvious fashion, 2) appropriate to the focus of the courses, 3) explicitly connected to the flow of previous or future classes.

Comments:

Observation Area 2: Significance of the class activities, topics, or issues

Focus your comments on whether the tasks performed by students or the topics being discussed 1) are relevant to the focus of the courses, 2) require an appropriate investment of student time or effort.

Comments:

Observation Area 3: Student engagement with the subject matter

Examine the degree to which student engagement occurred 1) over a substantial portion of the class meeting times, 2) by a broad segment of students attending the classes, 3) in appropriate forms such as discussion, listening/processing, performing, reading, reflecting, speaking, or writing.

Comments:

Observation Area 4: Examination of student achievement of goals

Focus your comments on how the instructor developed an understanding of student achievement of goals by methods such as 1) questioning students on course material, 2) observing student performance(s), 3) student-student discussion, 4) informal assessment techniques, 5) quizzes, or 6) other methods.

Comments:

3. Peer Review of Professional Growth and Development

Peer review of a faculty member's professional growth as a teacher can involve issues such as:

1. A record of regular participation in development activities
2. A description of changes in teaching strategies in a course and the resulting changes in student learning
3. Evidence of exploring new avenues for assessing student learning
4. Incorporation of appropriate technology into one or more courses and reflection on its value for the course
5. Changes in syllabi for a single course over the years that reflect appropriate course redesign
6. A teaching statement that demonstrates an ongoing attempt to critically examine knowledge, beliefs, and actions as a teacher

1=Highly satisfactory 2=Satisfactory 3=Could use improvement 4=Unsatisfactory

Overall Rating of Professional Growth and Development: _____

Provide an overall assessment of the evidence presented in relation to professional growth and development.

4. Peer Review on Examples of Student Performance

4=Strongly Agree

3=Agree

2=Disagree

1=Strongly Disagree

NA=Not Applicable

Areas	Best Practices	4	3	2	1	NA
Scope of Student Work	The full set of artifacts represents a range of different student work required in the courses.					
	The artifacts represent relevant student work for the courses.					
Student Learning	Student learning is evident in the artifacts presented.					
Teacher Feedback	Teacher feedback on student work is constructive.					
	Teacher feedback on student work demonstrates high standards for student achievement.					
Grade Distribution	The percentage of the grade for course assignments and exams is clearly stated.					
Overall Rating	Based on review of all peer reviews of examples of student performance.					

Comments:

5. Peer Review of Syllabus

4=Strongly Agree

3=Agree

2=Disagree

1=Strongly Disagree

NA=Not Applicable

Syllabi Areas	Best Practices	4	3	2	1	NA
Course Information	The objectives are appropriate to the courses.					
	Class materials are appropriate to the courses.					
	The syllabi provide clear roadmaps for the courses.					
	Course Policies are clearly stated (e.g., criteria for grading, makeup exams).					
	Required university statements are present (e.g., academic misconduct).					
	Criteria for grading are clearly delineated.					
Instructor Information	The percentage of the grade for course assignments and exams is clearly stated.					
	The instructor provides contact information.					
Overall Rating	Based on review of all peer reviews of examples of course syllabi.					

Comments: