The evaluation of courses and instructors by students provides a useful view of the quality of teaching from the consumers’ point of view. Only another faculty member expert in a field and its accepted methods of instruction, however, can judge the design of a course, the adequacy of an instructor’s coverage of the material, and the appropriateness of the course syllabus, assignments, and measurements of student learning. Review of a faculty member’s teaching by his/her peers has two distinct purposes. **Formative** reviews are intended to develop or improve teaching; **summative**, or evaluative, reviews are intended for judgments in increment, contract renewal, or promotion processes. Regular conversation among colleagues about teaching should be a hallmark of every department or school’s culture, and formative peer review processes for pre-tenure, non-tenure-track, and tenured faculty should be designed in every department or school to suit that culture. Summative peer-reviews of teaching, on the other hand, are required by the *University Statutes* for the renewal of contracts of non-tenure-track faculty and for the promotion of tenured and tenure-track faculty, and should adhere to the following University guidelines.

**Formative Peer Review of Teaching**

- Formative peer reviews of teaching must be an explicit part of each department/school’s mentoring process for pre-tenure faculty.
- Departments and schools are encouraged to devise formal or informal processes to encourage good teaching by tenured and long-term non-tenure-track faculty using formative peer review of teaching.
- The formative review should follow the same guidelines that the department/school uses for summative peer review.
- The faculty member being reviewed should trust and respect the faculty members performing the formative review.
- Small departments should involve faculty from cognate disciplines in their peer review processes.
- The end of the formative peer review process should be a written report, but it should be for the faculty member’s use alone, and form the basis of a conversation between the faculty member and the reviewer(s) about teaching effectiveness.
Summative Peer Review of Teaching

- Every department/school should develop a summative peer review process that is straightforward, manageable, and clearly described in writing.
- The process should be used for the review of:
  - non-tenure-track faculty at the time of contract renewal; in keeping with the Boston College custom of providing long-term non-tenure-track faculty members a year’s notice that their contracts will not be renewed, this review should take place in the year prior to the end of a contract;
  - the third- or fourth-year review of pre-tenure faculty;
  - the review of faculty candidates for tenure, and for promotion both to associate professor and to full professor;
  - the promotion of non-tenure-track faculty.
- Each year, in anticipation of all teaching reviews, the department/school should discuss its “teaching values,” and the learning outcomes it wishes to achieve in courses of various levels.
- Small departments should involve faculty from cognate disciplines in their peer review processes.
- A summative peer review process should include:
  - The selection of two reviewers senior to the faculty member being reviewed, and at least one of whom is tenured;
  - Pre-observation consultation by the reviewers with the faculty member being reviewed about the nature of the course to be observed;
  - Preferably two class visits, not necessarily in the same semester, by each of the reviewers;
  - Evaluation of teaching materials by the reviewers;
  - Written report.
- The written report of the review will become part of the faculty member’s contract renewal or promotion dossier.

Guidelines for a Peer-Review of Teaching

Pre-observation consultation:
To create a context for the observation, the reviewer should look at the instructor’s syllabus, and then ask the following questions of the instructor:
- How does the class I will visit fit into the syllabus?
- What are the goals of the class?
• What happened in the previous class? What have the students done to prepare for the class?
• What methods and strategies will you use in the class?

The visit:
The reviewer should arrive early, and sit in an inconspicuous part of the room, if possible.

Reviewers should know the teaching method (lecture, discussion, case study/problem solving, etc.) the instructor employs, and evaluate the instructor’s teaching behavior accordingly. During the class, the reviewer should consider the instructor’s:

• Knowledge of the Subject
• Enthusiasm
• Sensitivity toward students
• Preparation and Organization
• Clarity and Understandableness

Evaluation of Teaching Materials:
Reviewers should evaluate course syllabus, readings, distributed material and slides, assignments, examinations, and grading patterns, and judge their:

• Suitability
• Currency
• Alignment with course goals
• Thoroughness
• Creativity

Written report:
Each reviewer should write a report that is, to the extent possible, both comprehensive and comparative. In a formative peer evaluation process, the report should be given to, and discussed with, the instructor. In a summative peer evaluation, the written report becomes part of the faculty member’s contract renewal or promotion dossier.

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Suggestions for Further Reading

http://cte.umdnj.edu/career_development/career_peer_review.cfm


Keig, Larry and Waggoner, Michael D. “Collaborative Peer Review. The Role of Faculty in Improving College Teaching.” ERIC Digest, 1995.

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http://www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning/tlr/peer_obs/index.shtml

Peer Review of Teaching. Center for Teaching and Learning, University of Minnesota.  
http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/peer/index.html

Peer Review of Teaching. Center for Instructional Development and Research, University of Washington.  
http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/consulting/peer-review.html

Peer Review of Teaching. The Teaching Academy, University of Wisconsin-Madison.  
https://tle.wisc.edu/teaching-academy/peer-review-teaching.

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