

BOSTON COLLEGE
PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

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.

*Reviewed by: The University Council on Teaching
October 21, 2011*

*The Provost's Advisory Council
October 27, 2011*

*The Council of Deans
November 10, 2011*

*University Department Chairs
February 28, 2012*

Suggestions for Further Reading

Career-Development – Peer Review of Teaching. Center for Teaching Excellence, University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

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

Chism, Nancy Van Note. *Peer Review of Teaching. A Sourcebook*. 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

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

Peer Observation and Assessment of Teaching. Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership, University of Albany-SUNY.

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>.

With thanks to Professor Ana Martinez Aleman, Department of Educational Administration and Higher Education, Lynch School of Education, Boston College.