

Instructions & Guidelines

Peer-Evaluation of Teaching in FHSS

Updated February 2014

Introduction

The purpose of the attached template is to better standardize peer review of teaching within the College of Family, Home and Social Sciences. The template can be used for both formative and summative purposes that are described below (adapted from Nancy Van Note Chism, *Peer Review of Teaching*, p. 3). It is designed to be used by each faculty peer assigned to conduct an independent evaluation of a single course. Multiple courses should be included in formative and summative peer evaluations, and should include upper and lower division classes.

Formative evaluation describes activities designed to provide teachers with information they can use to improve their teaching regardless of their years in the classroom. This information is intended for their personal use. It can also be helpful to administrators in the annual review process for providing commendations and constructive feedback that can assist faculty in making course corrections. For faculty undergoing university rank and status review, careful attention should be paid to formative feedback when writing the self assessment. Where necessary, evidence for improvement and specific ways this has been accomplished and/or is being accomplished should be explicated.

Summative evaluation of teaching in the semester prior to review focuses on the information needed to make decisions about continuing faculty status and rank advancement. Consequently, this information will not be made available to the individual faculty member. Ideally, this evaluation should be an outgrowth of an ongoing formative peer review process conducted for several semesters prior to the final review as recommended in section 3.3.2 of the University R & S document (see also *BYU Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning* <http://fc.byu.edu/topics.htm>). The department/school R & S committee manages the summative peer review process for rank and status in consultation with the chair. Faculty members assigned to provide input to the committee should be those who are in the best position to objectively assess individual courses, but who are also somewhat arms length from the candidate. Because it relies on more than class visiting, the peer review process is crucial for judging rigor, currency, pedagogy, and conformance with course objectives and expected learning outcomes. The review is not meant to address curricular issues in the department, but should focus on the candidate's teaching competencies. The rank and status committee should carefully consider peer review input and also do their own analysis of teaching based on course syllabi, curriculum materials, exams, and student feedback for their report (see section 3.3.2 of the University R & S document).

Background

As its title implies, the *University Policy on Faculty Rank and Status*¹ outlines the procedures to be followed for rank advancement reviews and continuing faculty status. Section 3.3 of that document presents the university perspective on quality teaching, the teaching standard and its assessment. To evaluate faculty teaching, the university encourages departments and colleges to consider the following broad areas.

1. Description of teaching activities and quality, such as an inventory of courses newly developed by the faculty member.
2. Student evaluations and interviews
3. Peer evaluations
4. Description of steps taken to evaluate and improve teaching such as attendance at teacher improvement seminars on campus.

¹ Approved 20 May 2002; Updated 21 July, 2006

5. Products of high quality teaching and mentoring, including scores on achievement tests or admission rates to professional programs.
6. Evaluation of course materials, such as syllabi.

The college template is narrowly designed to facilitate only two of the six broad teaching areas involved in rank and status decisions. Those include peer-evaluation of teaching (3) and the evaluation of course materials (6). Faculty rank and status committees are encouraged to creatively explore means by which the other four areas can be assessed and documented within their own departments. Review committees should also consider how they can best communicate their findings to colleagues at the college and university level who may be unfamiliar with both the nature of teaching in their department and its specific teaching expectations.

Template Purpose

There are many purposes for the template, in addition to those outlined in section 3.3.2 of the University Rank and Status document. It is designed:

1. To improve the quality of teaching both individually and collectively within our college.
2. To increase dialog at all levels in the college about the quality of teaching.
3. To lessen dependence on student evaluations in rank and status decisions.
4. To better articulate the definition of quality teaching and expectations of teaching performance.
5. To facilitate consistency in the rank and status procedure through the adoption of a systematic approach to peer teacher evaluation centered on integrity of the peers, evidence, documentation, and feedback.
6. To provide evidence for teaching awards.
7. To demonstrate our strong college commitment to teaching within the university.

The peer evaluation document is referred to as a template rather than form. The template is designed to not be constraining. For example, it is recognized that some of the prompts may not be applicable to the course, may not be the right question to ask, or even represent the criteria to be judged under some circumstances. Reviewers should feel free to adapt the various sections to their circumstances and consider the broader intent implied by the prompts.

Guiding Principles

As this template was created, there were several guiding principles employed by committee members. Foremost was the belief that peers are the most qualified to do the assessment. While it is recognized that peer evaluation is not perfect, faculty colleagues are the best sources for judging teaching performance. Second, it is believed that reviewers will have the integrity to be carefully reflective, fair, honest, frank, and helpful. Integrity in the reviewers is essential for the process lest it become only *pro forma*. The third guiding principle was also predicated on academic honesty in the process; we believed that documentation, evidence, and feedback to those being reviewed are essential to the fairness of the process.

Formative and Summative evaluation Guidelines

The department chair, in consultation with the review committee, must determine (1) how many of the faculty member's courses to review, and (2) the specific courses and sections. The exact mix of courses will depend on the role of the faculty member in the department. As a general rule, both upper and lower division courses should be represented. In some departments the mix may include a graduate course, a lower-division (perhaps an undergraduate service) course, and an upper-division undergraduate course for majors. Classroom visits should be done by appointment only.

Whether the evaluation is **summative** or **formative**, the first four procedural steps are the same.

1. The department chair selects two or three qualified reviewers after consultation with the teacher and the department review committee.
2. The chair completes the appropriate section (I) on the form.

3. The department chair invites both the reviewers and the teacher into a short meeting to discuss the peer review process, outline responsibilities, time commitments, expectations, and otherwise coordinate the peer review process. The major sections of the form should be explained at this time. Both teacher and reviewers can complete sections (II) and (III) of the form respectively.
4. The reviewers complete an independent assessment of the course as indicated in the teacher evaluation form. As part of this assessment, the teacher will need to deliver example tests, syllabi, reading material, etc. to the reviewers.

It is recommended that the following procedure be used if the process is **summative**.

5. After being oriented by the department chair, the department R & S committee should coordinate and manage the actual peer review process. After completing their independent assessments of the course, the reviewers should meet and discuss their results. Significant differences in their findings should be discussed and resolved. A memo detailing the results of these discussions should be transmitted to the chair of the rank and status committee along with the completed templates themselves. The written reviews should not be copied and returned to the teacher, nor should an opportunity be provided for the teacher to respond to the evaluations. However, the reviewers may ask the faculty member for clarification as appropriate. This step terminates the evaluation procedure.

When the evaluation is **formative**, the procedure is somewhat different.

6. After resolving significant differences of opinion, the reviewers deliver the completed template to the teacher and invite the teacher to make comments in the appropriate places.
7. The teacher and reviewers should discuss the results together in a spirit of helpfulness in order to improve the faculty member's teaching.
8. The faculty member should use the results of the evaluation as part of his or her annual stewardship interview with the department chair. The faculty member is also invited to use the templates as documentation of teaching improvement in their 3rd and 6th year reviews. This step terminates the **formative** evaluation procedure.

As seen on the review form, several sections of teaching performance are being evaluated. These include such things as course design and learning activities. Several questions are posed in each section and are designed to prompt the reviewer's consideration.

Formative and Summative Reviews of Faculty Members with Continuing Status

All faculty members seeking rank and status advancement should be reviewed using the summative guidelines stated. However, whether a summative review should be conducted for reasons other than rank and status should be addressed by the college dean and department chair. The following items may serve as a useful springboard for their consideration.

A. All faculty members, regardless of rank and status, should be subject to periodic summative review of their teaching by faculty peers within the department.

B. In order to ensure equity within the department, summative reviews of all faculty members should be conducted on a regular basis after continuing status is received. Departments should keep a review schedule and advise each faculty member of her or his review at least a year in advance. A period of four to six years between these summative reviews may be reasonable. The summative reviews will become part of the faculty member's permanent file.

- C. In order to identify problems and allow their resolution, at least one formative review should be conducted between the regular summative reviews. This means that all faculty members with continuing status will be reviewed every two to three years
- D. The college dean and department chair reserve the right to initiate a formative or summative review of teaching regardless of the formal review schedule maintained by the department.