

Student Evaluations of Teaching

4.2.5 Evaluation of Teaching

(See also Chapter 3, Section 6, “Promotion and Tenure of Tenure-Track Faculty”)

(See also Chapter 3, Section 7, “Evaluations and Reviews”)

The University views the formative and summative evaluation of teaching as an ongoing process that relies on multiple assessment measures. This policy mandates the collection of student-generated data on a regular basis, but these data are not to be used as a mechanism to rank-order faculty. Rather, student generated data will be used for formative evaluation of teaching effectiveness, and the data will be only one of several forms of teaching information gathered on a regular basis to assess teaching effectiveness.

The purposes of gathering student evaluations are:

1. To assist individual instructors in improving their own teaching.
2. To assist faculty in reviewing the overall educational value and effectiveness of the course, especially when such courses are taught in multiple sections by multiple instructors.
3. To assist academic administrators in evaluating courses in general at the University, and especially changes and trends in student perceptions of courses over time.

Every course must undergo student evaluation of instruction each time it is offered. Courses with fewer than five students enrolled are exempt. Courses of an individual nature (e.g., independent study courses, internships, theses, special projects, music studios, etc.) may be exempted from this requirement at the discretion of the department/college. Student participation is mandatory.

Administrative procedures for the survey are explicit and uniform. Surveys are to be administered anonymously, using the University instrument. Colleges/schools, departments, and faculty members may use additional evaluation materials in addition to the University’s survey but must collect anonymous free-response comments from students.

University-sponsored survey instruments used to collect student evaluations of teaching effectiveness should have 8–10 questions, with at least one free-response question, and may have no more than 15 questions. The Teaching Effectiveness Committee of the University Senate will provide 8–10 broadly applicable survey questions for general use. Colleges and departments. Individual units may, at their discretion, include questions on the students’ overall impressions of the course. However, questions about the overall effectiveness of instructors must be avoided due to poor reliability and validity. Furthermore, such ‘global’ questions must never be used in summative evaluations of instructors, including annual review, decisions to continue employment, or decisions regarding promotion and tenure.

Results of student evaluations may not be disclosed to faculty members before graduation for the semester. Faculty members may not contact individual students at any time to discuss survey responses or comments.

The instructor and relevant department chairs, or others so designated by the department (e.g., course coordinators), will receive the results of the evaluation after graduation that semester. These results will include any free-response comments received from the students by means of the survey instrument. Further administrative procedures related to the collection and processing of completed survey forms may be announced from time to time by the Provost's Office.

Results from the free response questions will be used in the annual review, third-year review, and reviews for promotion or tenure, and other employment decisions of instructors. However, care must be taken not to put any evaluative emphasis on isolated positive or negative comments. Comments must only be used to evaluate thematic patterns and trends. Quantitative data drawn from student evaluations may be used in the annual review, third-year review, and in review for promotion or tenure by the department, or by the school/college and University-level Promotion and Tenure Committees at the discretion of the candidate when response rates exceed 30% for a course. Within these guidelines, evaluations should be submitted as described in 3.6.5.C.3.A.

At least annually the academic dean and the provost will receive summary student teaching evaluation data about each department without identifying faculty information.

Teaching is a complex endeavor. To effectively evaluate its effectiveness multiple measures must be employed. Furthermore, these measures must be represented by at least 3 of the following categories: student feedback, peer feedback, self-evaluation, and feedback from external sources. Examples of student feedback include, but are not limited to, student evaluations of teaching, small group instructional feedback (focus groups), student letters, or awards from student groups.

Peer evaluations, mandated by the Board of Trustees, may be achieved in a variety of ways. Faculty members and/or departments should develop an appropriate peer-evaluation strategy or strategies. Evaluation by professional colleagues might include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Evaluation of the faculty member's syllabi, tests, handouts, and other materials used in class.
- Evaluation of the faculty member's preparation of students for subsequent courses in the field.
- Evaluation of the faculty member's work in a team-teaching situation by their partner.
- Comparison of the faculty member's work with that of others teaching the same course.
- Observation of the faculty member's classes.
- Evaluation of a portfolio developed by the faculty member in which they present themselves as a teacher. The portfolio might include a general statement on teaching philosophy; syllabi with detailed information on course content and objectives, teaching methods, reading and homework assignments, and student evaluation procedures; materials that show the extent of student learning, such as scores on standardized tests taken before and after the course, term papers and laboratory manuals, and work from the

best and poorest students; a list of courses taught with enrollment and grade distributions; etc.

Self-evaluation is most commonly expressed as a portfolio consisting of artifacts that exemplify one's teaching and reflections on the strengths and weaknesses thereof. Other examples of self-evaluation may include, but are not limited to, participation in professional development activities, learning improvement initiatives, evaluations of how one's courses fit into program curricula or general education. External sources of feedback may include, but are not limited to, alumni assessments, employer assessments of matriculated students, evaluations from persons or organizations external to the University for which the faculty member consults or provides instructional services of some kind, and administrator assessment of performance. An important method of assessment is evaluation by professional colleagues. Other examples include publications or presentations into the scholarship of teaching and learning.

For the purposes of formal review of faculty, the collection and reporting of evaluative measures will be as described in 3.6.5.C.

To further confirm the University's concern for quality instruction and instructional programs, the Teaching Effectiveness Committee, the Curriculum Committee, and the Core Curriculum and General Education Committee have been established. These committees are charged with carrying out a process of continuing evaluation and enhancement of instructional programs and evaluation of proposed changes in the curriculum.