

## Revisions Related to Student Evaluations of Teaching

*Changes Initiated by the Teaching Effectiveness Committee, Revised and Unanimously Approved by the Faculty Handbook Review Committee, 9/2/2020*

*Note: Only the sections in which revisions are proposed have been reproduced in this document. Additions are in red underlined text, and deletions are in ~~strikethrough~~.*

Summary of changes: These changes clarify and modify the uses of student evaluations of teaching in faculty review, promotion, and tenure processes. Specifically, they mandate the inclusion of open-ended comments from student evaluations of teaching while making optional the inclusion of numeric data. These changes also allow numeric data to be used only for the purposes of illustrating trends or patterns and only when the response rate exceeds 30%. These changes were requested by the Teaching Effectiveness Committee to better align Auburn's use of student evaluations of teaching with the empirical research. These revisions also create a category of "external evaluations" as teaching evidence, which takes up the previous category of letters from students and adds consideration of other kinds of external teaching evidence.

### 3.6.1. Promotion Criteria Considerations

**A. Teaching:** Since a primary activity of the University is the instruction of students, careful evaluation of teaching is essential. Because of the difficulty of evaluating teaching effectiveness, faculty members are urged to consider as many relevant measures as possible in appraising the candidate. These may include consideration of the candidate's knowledge of the subject and their professional growth in the field of specialization; the candidate's own statement of their teaching philosophy; the quality of the candidate's teaching as indicated by peer, ~~and student,~~ or external evaluations and teaching awards; performance of the candidate's students on standardized tests or in subsequent classes; the candidate's contributions to the academic advising of students; the candidate's development of new courses and curricula; the quality of the candidate's direction of dissertations, theses, independent study projects, etc.; and the quality of pedagogical material published by the candidate.

### 3.6.5 Policy and Procedure for Promotion and Tenure

#### C. Information on the Candidate

#### (3) Information to Be Supplied by the Department Head/Chair

##### A. Teaching

1. **Student evaluations.** Include university-administered student evaluations of teaching from at least one class per year for at least the three preceding years according to the following guidelines: In consultation with the candidate, the Department Head/Chair will supply all open-ended student comments using the university-administered survey report or equivalent format. For each class, include a copy of the questions asked and all student comments in unedited form. Consideration of those comments must be limited to patterns or thematic trends in the comments, rather than statements from individual students.

Candidates may also choose to supply numeric responses to the university-administered student evaluation. Numeric data may only be used to illustrate trends and can only be included when the response rate for a course is 30% or higher. When including numeric data, include a copy of all questions asked and a summary of responses including the range of numeric responses. ~~Include all student evaluations from at least one class per year for each of the three preceding years as follows: For each class include a copy of the questions asked, a summary indicating the spread of numerical responses to all questions and all student comments in unedited form. If the University form is submitted, submit information on the required questions only and all student comments in unedited form. Indicate the grade distribution in each of these classes.~~ The candidate must be consulted about which evaluations are to be included. The evaluations should reflect the candidate's teaching in the different kinds of courses they are assigned to teach. The evaluation results should be condensed into as few pages as possible.

2. **Peer evaluations.** Include peer evaluations for at least one class for each of the three preceding years. These should include assessment of syllabi, handouts, and exams, and assessment of the candidate's conduct of the class. Reports based on team teaching are an acceptable form of peer review.
3. **External evaluations.** External sources of feedback including, but 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 may be included if requested by the faculty member. The faculty member may provide any external material to the head/chair or unit head that the faculty member deems appropriate. Faculty employed by the University Libraries may include letters from members of the academic community outside the library.
4. ~~**Letters from thesis/dissertation students.** Faculty employed by the University Libraries may include letters from members of the academic community outside the library. Supporting letters in this category are optional. No more than three letters should be included.~~

### 3.7.1 Faculty Annual Review

All department heads/chairs or unit heads shall conduct at least one annual review before April 30 with each faculty member to evaluate their performance and to discuss their future development. In order to review the faculty member fairly, the head/chair shall request a current vita and any supporting material the head/chair/dean or the faculty member deems appropriate prior to the review. When materials related to student evaluations of teaching effectiveness are requested, requests must follow the requirements set forth in 3.6.5.C.3.A. Specifically, open-ended student comments on the university-administered survey should be used to evaluate thematic patterns and trends. Numeric data from the university-administered surveys may be included at the discretion of the candidate, when the response rate is 30% or higher, and may only be used to identify trends. More frequent reviews may be conducted at the discretion of the faculty member or the department head/chair.

## 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 including, at a minimum, both peer evaluations and data from student ratings of teaching effectiveness, gathered by means of the University’s standard survey instrument or an equivalent survey instrument. This policy mandates the collection of student-generated data on a regular basis, but these data are not to be used as the only mechanism to rank-order faculty; the data must not supplant other ongoing methods of teaching evaluation; and the data should 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 academic administrators in counseling instructors about their teaching.~~
3. 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.
4. 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.
- ~~5. To provide input in judging the teaching component in tenure, promotion and salary determinations.~~

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. ~~or an equivalent instrument.~~ Colleges/schools, departments, and faculty members may use additional evaluation materials in addition to, ~~or in lieu of,~~ 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, ~~in consultation with representative faculty,~~ may change this survey instrument as needed and are responsible for determining the reporting of relevant results. 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.

~~Data drawn from student evaluations along with other assessments of teaching will be used in the annual review of each faculty member by their department head/chair, in the third-year review by the department, and in review for promotion or tenure by the department, and by the school/college and University-level Promotion and Tenure Committees, as described in 3.6.5.C.3.A. In addition, at least annually the academic dean and the provost will receive summary student teaching evaluation data about each department without identifying faculty information.~~

~~Faculty and the various departments are urged to employ additional measures of teaching effectiveness. Possibilities include 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.~~

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.