

Teaching Excellence at Applied Health Sciences: Peer Evaluation Procedures

Background: Learning from and sharing teaching andragogy/pedagogy, course content, and instructional practices with peers is an important piece of faculty professional development in the College of Applied Health Sciences (AHS) at UIC. Peer observation, consultation, and evaluation offers an important mechanism for building professional development in the area of teaching. During this process, the instructor's developmental trajectory and confidence as a teacher should be prioritized. Because professional development is emphasized over evaluation outcomes, the policy and procedures described in this document outline a requirement for peer evaluation of teaching, as described below.

Though important, peer evaluation should supplement accompanying measures of teaching excellence. It represents one variable adding to the evidence that comprises an entire portfolio defining course quality and instructional ability. Other data that should be considered in an overarching view include faculty teaching self-review statements, evidence of teaching innovation through new course development and course revisions, pedagogical innovation, evidence of teaching leadership through curricular innovation and reform, participation in other teaching-professional-development activities offered at UIC, receipt of teaching recognition and awards, and data from student evaluations of teaching.

Definition: In this policy, **peer evaluation** is defined as a process by which one faculty member with experience in teaching gathers the appropriate data from another teaching-faculty member and meets in-person in order to provide consultation and evaluation. This process should emphasize the faculty member's professional development and confidence-building about teaching. **Evaluation-best practices** may include, but are not limited to, classroom observation, in-person consultation, review of course materials (e.g., syllabi, approaches to the assessment of learning, textbook/reading choices, electronic content and delivery approaches, etc.), and written evaluation. Evaluation of online courses might include reviewing the online content and acting as a participant-observer in the course. Written evaluation is to be used as one variable in the overall assessment of faculty performance that may be included in a faculty member's promotional dossier. A **teaching-faculty member** is defined as any tenure-system or non-tenure-system faculty member in AHS that is teaching at least one course per academic year, with an appointment of $\geq 50\%$ FTE within the college.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to facilitate teaching excellence by way of providing a mechanism for professional development in a variety of instructional designs (e.g., large group lectures, active and interactive learning approaches, small group learning, problem-based learning and flipped approaches, lab instruction, discussion groups, technology-facilitated, hybrid, and fully online learning, etc.). This policy provides general expectations and guidelines for unit executive officers, faculty peer observers, and for those faculty receiving observation, materials review, consultation, and evaluation. For promotion-eligible faculty members, the expectations for evaluation provided by this policy also serve the purpose of fulfilling unit-level, college-level, and university-level informational needs for the promotion and tenure dossier.

Applicability: This policy applies to all tenure-system and non-tenure-system faculty members in AHS that are teaching at least one course per academic year, with an appointment of $\geq 50\%$ FTE within the college.

Accountability and Procedures: Accountability for adherence to this policy resides with the unit executive officer (UEO), who may be the Department Head or Program Director. The UEO is responsible for the following:

1. Ensuring that all eligible faculty receive written peer evaluation according to the following appointment types. All full Professors (non-tenure system and tenure system) are to receive a written peer evaluation a minimum of once every three years. All Associate Professors (non-tenure system and tenure system) are to receive a written peer evaluation a minimum of once every other year. All Assistant Professors (non-tenure system and tenure system), Instructors and Lecturers (including any Senior Instructors and Senior Lecturers) are to receive a minimum of one peer evaluation per academic year for the first five consecutive years of employment at UIC. As of August 15th of the fifth year, a written evaluation for Instructors and Lecturers will be required every other year. As of August 15th of the tenth consecutive year of employment (including the first five year time period), a written evaluation will be required for Lecturers and Instructors every three years. In all of these cases, an academic year begins on August 16th of the current year and ends on August 15th of the following year. The UEO must identify and notify each faculty member who is eligible to receive peer evaluation each year, by August 16th of each academic year.
2. Introducing and explaining the peer evaluation process to any new or existing faculty members to be observed/evaluated. In introducing this process, the UEO should emphasize the relevance of teaching excellence to student success (i.e., retention and graduation), faculty promotion (and tenure), and faculty professional development to the evaluation process. This introductory meeting with the UEO must be scheduled by the UEO and must take place by September 16th of each academic year. During this meeting, the UEO should encourage the faculty member to organize the relevant materials to be presented to the peer observer, and to view the observer as a teaching-professional-development mentor rather than as someone whose sole purpose is to provide evaluation.
3. Assigning responsibility for the peer evaluation of teaching to a faculty member at or above the rank of the faculty member to be observed/evaluated by September 16th of each academic year. The evaluation may be performed by any at-rank or above-rank faculty members, at the discretion of the UEO. Individuals outside of the department or college may also be assigned, when appropriate. The scheduling of any classroom observation(s) should be arranged by the peer evaluator with the candidate, in advance of the observation(s). The UEO should explain the process and expectations to the peer observer/evaluator, referencing this document and any documents that may be developed at the unit level (e.g., a peer evaluation template form or other expectations that are specific to the unit). The peer observer/evaluator should recuse themselves from any assigned review if they have a conflict of interest or dual relationship with the faculty member to be observed/evaluated, or for any other valid reason for declining, where the validity of the reason is determined by the UEO. Additionally, course co-instructors for a given course may not serve as peer evaluators for their co-instructors of that same course. Any changes to the initial assignment of a peer evaluator by the UEO must be petitioned by the assigned reviewer to the UEO promptly, and an approval decision must be made by the UEO within five days of the assignment. If approved, the UEO must assign another peer observer/evaluator to the case within five days of the approval.

4. Notifying the faculty member to be observed/evaluated as to the identity of the peer observer/evaluator. If the faculty member to be observed/evaluated has a valid reason for declining the assigned reviewer, then the faculty member must notify the UEO promptly by providing a detailed written justification for declining. An approval decision must be made by the UEO within five days of the initial notification to the faculty member. If the petition is approved, a different observer/evaluator must be assigned by the UEO within five days of the approval. The UEO is responsible for determining whether the faculty member to be observed/evaluated has a valid reason for declining the assigned reviewer.
5. Allowing the faculty member to be observed/evaluated to select a course to be reviewed, in collaboration with the peer observer/evaluator. The day and time that the course meets must then be communicated to the peer observer/evaluator, and the date of any observations must be communicated back to the faculty member being observed/evaluated. While the decision is up to the faculty member, a richer educational experience may be achieved if newly-developed courses, courses under revision or planned for revision, and/or courses for which the faculty member seeks consultation due to concerns about the course, are prioritized for review.
6. Ensuring via an email check-in with both parties (the faculty member under observation/evaluation and the peer observer/evaluator) that the peer evaluation process is completed by or before August 15th of the academic year in which the evaluation was initiated.
7. Collecting documentation of the written peer evaluations that are conducted on or before August 15th of the academic year during which the evaluation took place. Written evaluations must be signed by both parties (the faculty member undergoing evaluation and the peer observer/evaluator) and sent electronically to the UEO on or before August 15th.

Policy Statement: A peer evaluation must be conducted for all eligible faculty members according to the faculty member's rank and corresponding schedule defined in Point #1 in the "Accountability and Procedures" section. For those faculty eligible for promotion, a minimum of two peer evaluations must be delivered in writing to the UEO for every five-year period during which a teaching-faculty member is employed by UIC and eligible for evaluation, as defined previously. In cases where a faculty member is eligible for a promotion within the tenure system, at least one written peer evaluation must be conducted as part of the mid-probationary review and at least one additional written peer evaluation must be conducted by August 15th of the penultimate year of the probationary period (i.e., usually August 15th of the fifth year in a six-year probationary period). In cases where a faculty member is eligible for a promotion within the non-tenure system, two written peer evaluations must be included in the faculty candidate's promotional dossier for the relevant personnel action period. If the personnel action period extends beyond the five-year period defined by this policy, then the general rule of two written peer evaluations per each relevant five-year period, applies. Thus, for example, if 10 years have passed during a given personnel action period, then four written peer evaluations would be necessary for inclusion in the promotional dossier. If at all possible, the evaluation should be conducted within a course that has an enrollment of at least five students

These peer evaluations should, at a minimum, specifically address the candidate's ability to create learning experiences, present course content and/or skills to students, assess student learning at the appropriate level, provide relevant examples, integrate the course topics, structure the teaching session, communicate with students effectively, equitably, and promptly inside and outside of the classroom, and show congruence between course objectives, learning experiences, and learner

outcomes. Examples of teaching evaluation forms are provided here ([webmaster to insert hypertext](#)) for use by any unit faculty seeking guidance. Please note that these are only examples and units are free to decide regarding the specific details of their own forms and approaches.

Suggestions for Points to Include in a Peer Evaluation of Teaching Report

1. Explanation of course context:

- course level within graduate or undergraduate programs
- required or selective/elective status of the course within degree programs
- any other information that places the course in program or university context

2. Assessment of documented course content, including:

- Review of syllabus and course documents that provide such information as
 - Course title and number
 - Course objectives within the course context described above
 - Quality of course assignments, including readings, required activities, and assessments
 - Quality and organization of course syllabus as a sampling of the field's knowledge base (e.g., readings, professional standards addressed)
 - Information about the course obtained from candidate in pre- or post-observation conversations

3. Description of course conduct on the date(s) of peer observation:

- Date, time, and duration of observation
- General observation procedure, including, e.g., pre- and/or post-conference, pre-reading of course materials, etc.
- Size and student composition of class
- **Instructor performance:** e.g., approach to instruction, interaction with students, evidence of preparedness, uses of technology, etc.
- **Student performance:** e.g., on-time arrival, evidence of preparedness, level of engagement, small group or individual work, etc.
- Other observations that provide evidence of instructor and student interactions relevant to assessing instructional effectiveness, including, but not limited to, choice of learning activities being optimal for achieving outcomes.

4. Evaluative conclusion

- The faculty observer typically provides a summary assessment that is based on the descriptive material in 1-3 and that applies the norms, expectations, and mission of the department and college as an evaluative framework. The observer concludes with a statement about the relative quality of the contribution the candidate's instruction appears to be making to student learning, based on one or more observations.