

# EVALUATION OF TEACHING PRINCIPLES

## Recommendations to Units for Developing Policy and Procedures

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### The Importance of Teaching

The [Academic Plan](#) states the University's aspiration to become one of the world's great public research and teaching universities. To achieve this goal, The Ohio State University has committed to providing an enhanced teaching and learning environment to its students. The Academic Plan acknowledges that "we will never be a great university without dramatically enhancing the reality and perception of our teaching and learning as well as our research and scholarship." The Plan also identifies "being universally recognized for the quality of the learning experience we offer to our students" as one of the four core elements upon which the University seeks to focus.

One of the richest assets of The Ohio State University is the teaching experience and expertise of our faculty and graduate teaching associates. If the University is to meet the goals of the Academic Plan to be universally recognized as a truly outstanding university, it must do more to assure that its faculty—at all ranks—and graduate teaching associates have every opportunity to become more reflective and scholarly in their teaching practices. The University must recognize its faculty when their achievements in teaching rise to an outstanding level and enable them to share their expertise with the entire campus community.

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### Purposes of Evaluation

It is not enough simply to collect data on teaching effectiveness, e.g., [SEI \(Student Evaluation of Instruction\)](#) reports, peer observation reports, external letters from former students. This data must be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Scholarly literature on assessment often differentiates the purposes of evaluation of teaching into formative feedback collected for the use of instructors in improving their teaching practice and summative evaluation used to support personnel decisions.

Most of the evaluation of teaching policies recently reviewed, indeed most of the discussion of evaluation of teaching at Ohio State, focus on the summative purposes of evaluation. Many of the Patterns of Administration do not even mention the possibility of formative feedback. This is a crucial problem in our institution's basic definition of the issue. It is important to assure that data collected by and for an individual faculty member for formative purposes remain confidential and not be commandeered for summative purposes. However, it is equally necessary to assert that any evaluation of teaching that is solely summative fails to address a basic obligation of the University to its students and other stakeholders to insure that teaching is not only excellent but also that the University constantly seeks to improve teaching. The institution must ensure that data are available to faculty for improving teaching practice (formative feedback). Without this formative element, the University cannot begin to enhance the "reality and perception of our teaching and learning" to become "universally recognized for the quality of the learning experience we offer our students" ([Academic Plan](#)).

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### Principles

The November 7, 2000 report of the [Committee on Peer Review of Teaching \(CPRT\)](#) articulated the following principles and philosophy which apply to the evaluation of teaching in general:

- Evaluation of the quality of university teaching is a *complex, multifaceted process* that should include student, peer, administrative and self-evaluation;
- Both the criteria and the appropriate procedures for judging the quality of teaching must be *embedded in disciplinary cultures and informed by departmental missions*;
- The evaluation of instruction is first and foremost a *responsibility of the faculty*; therefore, development and implementation of specific criteria and procedures is a faculty role and responsibility;
- *Models* of effective and responsible evaluation plans, both within Ohio State and in peer and benchmark institutions exist; *research* on these practices and a scholarly awareness of these models and this body of research can assist Ohio State in designing effective programs of peer review;
- The University must *define the purpose(s) and goals* of peer review of teaching;
- The University must articulate more clearly *the relationship between student evaluation and peer review of teaching* [as well as other sources of data];
- Tenure initiating units (TIUs) must provide opportunities for and mechanisms that support *both formative and evaluative* responses to teaching;
- TIUs must not only *establish rules* governing evaluation of instruction but also *abide by those rules*, applying them evenly and without prejudice.

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### Broadening the Scope

Limiting the discussion of evaluation of the quality of teaching to peer review or student evaluation is problematic. Because evaluation of the quality of university teaching is a complex, multifaceted process, we must broaden the scope of evaluation of instruction to include a wide range of aspects of teaching and to collect data from at least four distinct sources.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1

**— It is important for the faculty members of every tenure initiating unit (TIU) to discuss openly the range of teaching practices that they wish to include in evaluations of teaching and to develop criteria by which those practices will be judged.**

Teaching encompasses such aspects as classroom instruction; course and curriculum development; supervision of independent study including direction of graduate research, theses, and dissertations; advising, development of instructional materials ranging from handouts to textbooks and web sites; and scholarship on university teaching and learning. All of these practices are open to evaluation and any of them might be appropriate parts of any individual faculty member's teaching profile.

#### RECOMMENDATION 2

**— Evaluation of teaching should not rest on any single source of data, nor on a single point of data from any one source. Also, the data collected for various sources must be appropriately interpreted.**

The quality of the various components of faculty teaching can be adequately evaluated by students, peers, and administrators, and by faculty members themselves. Each of these sources is situated to

provide information about different aspects of teaching. Each has its strengths and weaknesses; however, to leave out any of these sources risks missing or misinterpreting the data available.

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## Students

### RECOMMENDATION 3

**— The faculty of each tenure initiating unit should discuss and adopt student feedback instruments that are appropriate to the teaching styles and situations most common in their courses, while consulting with the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA), Faculty and TA Development (FTAD), or other experts to insure that the instruments adopted are both valid and reliable.**

Feedback from students is widely solicited; current University rules and policies require that faculty collect comment from students in every course taught. The [Ad Hoc Committee on the Evaluation of Teaching](#) recognizes the value of soliciting commentary from students on their experiences in the classroom, especially as it relates to their perceptions about such elements as a teacher's accessibility, ability to establish a conducive learning environment, timeliness of and quality of responses to student work. At the same time, review of [A, P & T \(Appointments, Promotion & Tenure\) documents](#) and reports from faculty suggest that it is widely believed that tenure initiating units rely far too heavily on student responses to courses and instruction in their assessment of the quality of a faculty member's teaching. In some units, for example, the [SEI \(Student Evaluation of Instruction\)](#) report constitutes the whole of the evaluation of instruction, with assessment determined solely on whether a faculty member does or does not meet or exceed the college or University mean in the cumulative average on the SEI.

Moreover, the SEI gathers information about a small set of teaching behaviors that do not fit all teaching styles or situations equally well. The **Ad Hoc Committee** therefore recognizes the value of such instruments as [Feedback on Your Instruction \(FYI\)](#), which provide faculty with a flexible evaluation instrument that can gather data on those aspects of teaching on which they are most interested in getting feedback.

While the SEI is broadly and easily available, it is not the required instrument for gathering data on teaching from Ohio State students. No one method of soliciting student response to teaching is appropriate across or even within units; TIUs may develop and implement appropriate policies for implementing and procedures for interpreting data collected from students.

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## Peers

### RECOMMENDATION 4

**— The faculty of each tenure initiating unit should discuss and adopt policies that define the following:**

- **who will conduct peer review of teaching;**
- **on what schedule the review will be conducted;**
- **what elements of teaching will be evaluated and by what criteria;**
- **how such evaluation will be documented and interpreted;**
- **what system of preparation and support will be offered to reviewers.**

Classroom observations alone or reliance on the SEI are neither appropriate nor comprehensive methods of evaluating teaching effectiveness. Successful peer review entails a commitment of time and resources as units train peer reviewers and develop and implement revised policies and procedures. The **Ad Hoc Committee** recognizes that revision of existing practices requires investments of faculty time and other departmental resources for which college- and/or University-level administrative units must provide fiscal support.

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### Administrators

#### RECOMMENDATION 5

**— Departmental and college administrators should be responsible for providing significant elements of the context within which data on faculty teaching are to be interpreted.**

Department chairs and school directors play a particularly important role in the definition, development, and implementation of appropriate practices of peer review of teaching. On the most basic level, chairs and directors are charged in Section (C)(14) of Faculty Rule 3335-3-35: "To promote improvement of instruction by providing for the evaluation of each course when offered, including written evaluation by students of the course and instructors, and periodic course review by faculty." The **Ad Hoc Committee** recognizes that chairs and directors, given their roles as administrators, cannot function effectively as peer reviewers or mentors (e.g., serving on mentoring committees, reviewing classroom materials). At the same time, chairs and directors can:

- provide important corroborating evidence related to the quality of teaching by faculty in a department or school;
- identify particular teaching contributions of the faculty to the teaching mission and mandates of the unit;
- interpret the recommendations of peer review reports;
- speak to the effectiveness of extra-classroom teaching of faculty.

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### Self-Assessment

#### RECOMMENDATION 6

**— The self-evaluation of faculty members should be treated seriously and looked to for an understanding of the specific context of their teaching practice. Individual faculty members should be given every opportunity to:**

- **explain the goals and intentions of their courses and assignment designs;**
- **describe the philosophy of teaching and learning that informs their practice;**
- **interpret the relationship between student ratings and classroom events;**
- **reflect on evaluative information to improve their teaching.**

Reflective practice and self-assessment by faculty members themselves are necessary components of any legitimate systematic evaluation of instruction. Of course, self-assessment cannot be the only source of data for making credible personnel decisions, but the personal narrative that provides an

explanation of a faculty member's teaching career is a valuable source for tenure and promotion decisions.

First the faculty member articulates a thoughtful, reflective, philosophical statement about his/her own teaching. The teaching philosophy and goals of the unit provide guidance to its faculty as to who should provide peer review, in what courses and teaching environments, and under what pre-established circumstances. The faculty member then is encouraged to use the feedback from student and peer review to revise courses and adapt his/her teaching styles and methods. The faculty member also uses the feedback to refine and expand his/her own teaching goals. This systematic use of teaching evaluation as a source of teaching growth is documented in the dossier.

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### Integration and Interpretation

#### RECOMMENDATION 7

**— Data from all sources must be *integrated and interpreted* within the context of the discipline and the department and *used* both to evaluate faculty work and to improve instruction.**

Each department and college is responsible for developing a system to integrate and interpret data derived from all of the relevant sources, to arrive at criteria for judging teaching excellence in an open and collegial manner, and to implement these procedures in a fair and responsible way. Systems of evaluation must make both summative judgments about the quality of teaching and provide timely and formative feedback and the opportunity for faculty members to use this feedback to improve instruction of Ohio State students.