

# Peer Observation for *Formative Assessment of* Teaching in the College of Pharmacy



**Policy Statement:**

Policy/process for peer review of teaching.

**Effective:** *Fall, 2014*

**Last Updated:** March, 2014<sup>1</sup>

**Reason for Policy:**

To detail the policy/process for conducting mandatory peer reviews of faculty teaching.

**Responsible University Officer:**

*Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs*

**Procedures:**

Faculty identify peer evaluators who are contacted and follow the procedures described herein.

**Policy Owner:**

*Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs  
Chair, College Executive Committee*

**Forms/Instructions:**

Peer evaluation form

**Policy Contact:**

*Patrick Davis*

**Related UT Policy:**

Guidelines for Tenure Track Faculty:

<http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/evaluation/>

<http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/evaluation/tenure/>

Guidelines for Non-Tenure Track Faculty

<http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/evaluation/>

<http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/evaluation/tenure/>

Annual Review

[http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/annual\\_review/](http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/annual_review/)

Comprehensive and periodic Review

[http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/post\\_tenure/](http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/post_tenure/)

**Related College Policy:**

Policy on Teaching Evaluations

**Additional Contacts:**

Debra Madden

**Mandatory Review Timeline:**

As needed

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<sup>1</sup> Note: This version was revised 6/13/11 based on a vote of the Executive Committee to require that all peer reviews conducted be included when formal evaluations of teaching are done, consistent with University policy (“Related UT Policy” link above). Other narrative/editorial changes were made to make this policy consistent with the College’s adopted Teaching Evaluation Policy. Modifications suggested in Teaching Conversations, February 2014 concern evolution in the policy that have occurred since its implementation, plus the major change to make a final, reflective summary the official documentation associated with the review. The proposal was endorsed by the Faculty Development Committee, then by the Deans Cabinet, and approved by the Executive Committee on 6/18/2014

# Policy Statement

This policy was developed to create within the College a structured process for peer observation of teaching, first and foremost as a mechanism for supporting faculty development (at all ranks), but also to provide one mechanism to satisfy College and University requirements for peer review of teaching for promotion, annual review, and comprehensive and periodic review (formerly post-tenure review).<sup>2</sup> The proposal originated with the College's "Teaching Conversations" group in Fall-04 as a structured mechanism for both formative and summative peer assessment of teaching,<sup>3</sup> and as a substantial policy change on peer assessment for the College. The proposed policy reviewed and revised by the Faculty Development Committee and implemented as a voluntary process for peer review in May, 2005. One year after implementation (May, 2006), the Executive Committee approved making this the College policy for mandatory peer observation. Discussions in the Teaching Conversation Group in February 2014 led to modifications based on changes in practice that have occurred since implementation of the policy, in response to the UT System 2014 mandate for peer observation as an essential component for faculty development, and to implement a final reflective component that serves as the official documentation for the faculty member's dossier.

## Guidelines and Procedure

**"Peer Observation" for Teaching Assessment** – The College list of "Peer Observers" will consist of faculty volunteers (tenure track, non-tenure track, any rank) who are willing to serve in the support of the faculty development of their colleagues. *Formative* feedback for any faculty member could be provided by any of these volunteers, that the faculty member being evaluated desires, but faculty may choose to invite other observers, provided they comply with the four-component process described herein. [Note: This is a point for further deliberation; some feel these should come from the list of volunteers (since they are 'agreeing' to the criteria below), others feel faculty should have the freedom to pick anyone they want, on or off the list]. The availability of this process as a College resource to help faculty improve teaching in no way precludes any faculty member from seeking additional methods they feel appropriate for obtaining *formative* feedback on their teaching. Selection of a Peer Observer can be made by the individual faculty member (by consulting the list of faculty volunteers), by selecting another faculty member of their choosing, or with the assistance of the Senior Associate Dean for

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.utexas.edu/provost/policies/evaluation/tenure>

<sup>3</sup> The term 'formative' is used in this proposal to represent collegial input with the intent of helping faculty improve his/her teaching through the iterative process of peer observation and feedback, reflection on that feedback, and implementation of improved teaching strategies or methods. The term 'summative' assessment, *which is not the intent of this proposal*, implies a capstone assessment of the faculty member's teaching, and would thus be expected to reflect improved teaching through use of the formative process.

Academic Affairs. However, final selection of a Peer Observer must be approved by the Division Head prior to the peer review.

**Criteria for Peer Observers** – Faculty members who are willing to be identified with the College list of “Peer Observers” would be expected to commit to the following:

1. Willingness to observe teaching when called upon, and willingness to have their teaching observed by the same process.
2. Willingness to meet with the faculty member *prior to* the peer observation to discuss the focus of the desired observation and relevant background material.
3. Willingness to use a standardized form to provide feedback following the observation.
4. Willingness to provide the candidate the completed form and a verbal, timely review following the observation
5. Willingness to review and concur with or address the candidate’s written reflection on the overall process.

While it is the faculty member’s prerogative to choose a reviewer not on the College list, the Division Head must still approve that reviewer (prior to the review), and that reviewer must also follow the College-approved four-component process described below.

**Components of the Review** – The four components of the College’s Peer Observation Process are as follows:

1. **The “Pre-Meeting”** in which the focus and scope of the peer observation will be discussed. Potential elements for the observation may include:
  - a) Review of handouts/notes to be used in the lecture/lab coverage.
  - b) Review of the objectives related to the lecture/lab coverage.
  - c) Review of the faculty member’s understanding of their lecture/lab “in context” of the rest of the course (i.e., what came before; what comes after).
  - d) Review of support materials provided students for the lecture/lab (Blackboard®, tutorials, problem sets, etc).
  - e) Review of previous peer observations.
  - f) Review of previous student evaluations.
  - g) Specific elements that the faculty member would like to have feedback in the peer review (e.g., new innovations, format, etc).

In addition, the faculty member may want to ask the Peer Observer (as well as their assigned Teaching Mentor) to review other components of their developing teaching portfolio, including (but not limited to):

- a) Review of exam questions related to the lecture/lab coverage.
- b) Review of exam stats and student performance related to lecture/lab coverage.
- c) The faculty member’s current teaching philosophy statement and how it has evolved based on his/her experiences, as well as student and peer feedback.

- d) A list of peer classes faculty have attended to explore the approaches used by his/her colleagues. Junior faculty members are encouraged to attend other faculty members' lectures/labs, not only to improve their own teaching by observing their colleagues, but to participate in the peer review process (see #16 below).
  - e) Evaluation of course packet(s) or handouts including course (or lecture) objectives.
  - f) Program evaluations relating to the course.
  - g) Other efforts by the faculty member to improve his/her teaching (e.g., attendance at workshops, conferences, self-assessment and reflection, including peer feedback from such presentations);
  - h) Efforts by the faculty member to help improve the *teaching of colleagues* (e.g., serving as a member on the peer assessment team, CTL presentations at the New Faculty and at the Experienced Faculty Annual Workshops, etc.).
2. ***The "Observation"*** in which the peer observer attends the faculty lecture (or other teaching event), and using the standardized observation form, assesses the major elements of course organization, content and deliver, and provides narrative on areas of strength and areas in need of improvement.
  3. ***The 'Debriefing Meeting'*** in which the results of the peer observation are discussed with the faculty member.
  4. ***The Written 'Reflection'*** in which the faculty conveys his/her perspective on what was learned from the entirety of the peer observation, and next steps to be taken for improvement. It is expected that the peer observer will provide a countersignature to reflect agreement, but will also have the opportunity to provide additional notes if there is disagreement.

### **Addressing Categories of Teaching**

While the majority of 'peer review literature (including the CTE document "Preparing for Peer Observation" that we relied on) focuses on didactic teaching (lecturing), it is recognized that a variety of teaching modalities are utilized in the College within the professional curriculum and graduate instruction (e.g., lectures, facilitated case-based laboratories, practice laboratories, etc.). While precepting students and individualized supervision of graduate students are clearly important components of College's teaching mission, peer assessment in these types of environments was considered to be outside the scope of this proposal, and should be addressed separately.

Thus, although the term 'lecture/lab' is used above, it is expected that the assessment components listed could be modified to provide the most appropriate review of the teaching approach being evaluated.

### **Incorporation into the Teaching Portfolio<sup>4</sup>**

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<sup>4</sup> NOTE; Peer observations are a requirement exclusive of (i.e. separate from) the Teaching Portfolio . However, the faculty member can (and should) include in their teaching portfolio

As a formative process for faculty development, documentation associated with a single observation is simply not sufficient. University guidelines for promotion and tenure and for post-tenure review *require* a teaching portfolio of all faculty members being considered for promotion and tenure, and for comprehensive and periodic and review, Review of that portfolio by the College's Executive Committee is an essential part of the review process. That portfolio would be improved by inclusion of a number of observations over time to show the progression of improvement in teaching through reflection based on peer review and student teaching evaluations. Indeed, the College policy mandating the frequency of peer observations (reiterated below) and student evaluations of teaching are entirely consistent with this philosophy.

In addition to the process outlined herein, faculty members should avail themselves of the extensive services provided by the Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL), including in-class assessment, formative teaching observation and feedback. Faculty should feel free to secure any additional feedback from colleagues, including informal feedback, for inclusion in their portfolio and to help improve their teaching.

**Frequency and Rank Requirements for Peer Observations** - As specified in the Colleges comprehensive Teaching Evaluation Policy, Assistant Professor (tenure and non-tenure track or equivalent) should have a minimum of one peer observation per year (every year) utilizing this process on formative peer review, The first year should include an observer from Center for Teaching and Learning Associate Professors (tenured and non-tenure track or equivalent) should have a minimum of one peer observation every two years, and Full Professors (tenured and non-tenure track or equivalent) should have a minimum of one peer observation every post-tenure review period. The Guidelines for Annual Review of Faculty<sup>5</sup> specify that any peer observations conducted be included in that year's annual report.

**Reports** – For the *formative* peer assessment, observers are expected to provide the faculty member the completed standardized form and conduct a 'completion interview' in which the entire process & results are discussed.

The faculty member, in turn, will prepare a narrative report summarizing what they learned from the peer observation process and changes they anticipate making in response. It is anticipated that the observer will simply countersign this narrative, unless there is also need for the observer to provide additional comments where disagreement exists. It is this faculty-generated narrative that is the official document for the faculty member's review, and the reflective narratives from all peer observations are intended to reflect the longitudinal record of progressive improvement. All peer observations conducted in rank must be included in any evaluation of teaching (e.g., annual reviews, promotion considerations, post-tenure review), and must include both the Peer

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narrative how peer observations, teaching evaluations, and self-reflection have informed their development as a teacher

<sup>5</sup> 2012-13 Guidelines for Annual Review of Faculty, as required by Regents's Rules 30501, 31102, and HOP 2-2150.

Observation Form (Part 3 of the process) and the reflective narrative (Part 4 of the process).

All Peer Observers are required to maintain confidentiality of their findings.

**Use of This Process for Summative Reviews** – As stated above, members of the Peer Observers are volunteering their time to conduct *formative*, collegial evaluations of teaching for the purpose of faculty development. That effort mandates *candid, constructive feedback*. By following the policies above regarding frequency of assessment, the faculty member should have a longitudinal series of peer observations documenting progressive improvement in teaching that should serve as a *summative* assessment of teaching (e.g., at promotion consideration).

