

Peer Observations

In 1993, the UNC General Administration issued Memorandum 338 which directed all constituent institutions to design and implement procedures for peer review of teaching. In 1996, the Carolina Colloquy for University Teaching received a grant from UNC-GA to design and sponsor an Intercampus Dialogue on Peer Review of Teaching. Fifty-six faculty members from UNC universities, including eight Faculty Assembly delegates, assembled to exchange information on the current status of their efforts in this regard. One of the basic recommendations that came out of the Intercampus Dialogue was that of conducting peer observations of classroom teaching for summative purposes. Recommendations also were made for formative evaluations. Additionally, the recommendation was made that peer observation processes be reviewed occasionally.

The College of Education at UNC-Charlotte began the development of their peer observation process in 1994 and peer observations of untenured faculty members have been conducted since the process was developed. The process was re-examined and revised in 1998 and 2003. The most recent revision in 2012 includes a process for supporting the development of effective teaching for non-tenure eligible and part-time faculty.

Peer Observations in the College of Education include both formative and summative procedures. A set of procedures for tenure eligible, non-tenure eligible, and part-time faculty are described below.

Full-Time Clinical Faculty Formative Evaluation Procedures

Reappointment (Initial Contract):

The purpose of formative evaluation is to enhance teaching performance. Several opportunities for formative evaluation are required so faculty members are continually engaging in the improvement of their teaching and in position for successful summative evaluations. In the first year, full-time clinical faculty will engage in formative observations of their mentor and other faculty, while also having their mentor observe them. These observations are informal in nature and should allow the clinical faculty member to receive feedback on their teaching in the first year and assist them in becoming accustomed to peer observations as they adjust to their new position. Any form of observation (running records, anecdotal notes, etc.) may be utilized for formative evaluation purposes. The instruments used for summative evaluation may be used but are not required for formative observations. Within the initial contract, the clinical faculty member is responsible for developing and monitoring two Teaching Enhancement Plans (TEP) for the process of formative evaluation (See Clinical Faculty Peer Observation Schedule and Documentation Form and the Teaching Enhancement Plan Form). The TEP is developed by the faculty member around a teaching goal that was detailed in the faculty member's annual report. The faculty member targets an instructional focus/topic/question to study within his or her own practice over the course of the academic year. In the TEP, a clear rationale for why this focus/topic/question was targeted must be presented. It is recommended that faculty seek feedback from Year One observations, student evaluations, and/or self-assessments to assist them in identifying their focus for the TEP. The faculty member then designs a set of steps to be taken with an academic year timeline to enhance their teaching in the focus area.

The steps to be taken must include:

- (a) At least two observations of faculty member(s) with knowledge and/or experience in the TEP focus area
- (b) At least one professional development opportunity, such as a workshop, seminar, conference session, or focus group/consultation session with a senior faculty member, that connects to the instructional focal area

The steps may also include:

- (c) identifying instructional resources/materials/scholarship to further develop deeper understanding of the instructional focal area
- (d) inviting a faculty member(s) to observe instruction and provide feedback on the instructional focal area

The TEP will be initially presented to the faculty member's mentor by September 1st for guidance and review. The TEP will be reviewed again by the mentor no later than January 15th to check implementation progress and to review any needed revisions to the plan. The mentor will sign and date the "Teaching Enhancement Plan Form" at both the initial and mid-point review.

Teaching Enhancement Plan Observations:

Formative observations are a critical aspect of the TEP. At least two formative observations of other faculty are required in each TEP. Faculty members to be observed should be selected based on their knowledge or experience in the targeted instructional focus area identified in the TEP. Focus and structure are required for meaningful formative observations. Any form of observation may be utilized for formative evaluation purposes.

For each formative observation, follow these steps:

1. Hold a pre-observation conference, classroom observation, and post observation conference.
2. Select an observation instrument or method for documentation (e.g. anecdotal records, running records, the instruments used for summative evaluation, videotaping, etc.)

Professional Development Experiences:

The annual TEP requires that faculty participate in at least one professional development opportunity that connects to the identified instructional focus, such as a workshop, seminar, conference session, focus group/consultation session with a faculty member(s), etc. The Center for Teaching and Learning is a valuable resource and provides a schedule each fall with workshops provided by the University. The faculty member may also seek professional development opportunities provided by professional organizations and conferences that align with their instructional focus. The formation of focus groups and one-on-one consultation opportunities will be facilitated by the Peer Observation Coordinator, who will communicate with TOT members and faculty seeking promotion to full professor with distinction in teaching, to facilitate the scheduling of these opportunities.

The TEP plan also allows the faculty member to develop a list of relevant resources, materials, and scholarship to deepen their understanding of the instructional focus. If this option is chosen, the reflection should show how reviewing these resources impacted their instruction. The faculty member may also wish to invite other faculty to observe their classroom instruction in order to provide specific feedback and insight related to the TEP instructional focus. Any form of observation may be utilized for formative evaluation purposes. The instruments used for summative evaluation may be used but are not

required for formative observations. The formative observation procedure presented above should be followed.

Reflection:

Each TEP requires that the faculty member reflect on the peer observations and the professional development experiences selected and implemented. The reflection should explicitly demonstrate how the plan has enhanced the clinical faculty member's teaching in the targeted instructional area.

Role of TEP in full-time clinical faculty reporting:

The TEP will be submitted in the annual report and serve as the basis for documenting how the faculty member has used feedback and data to improve instruction over the course of the academic year in the teaching narrative section of the annual report. The TEP should guide the faculty member in targeting new goals in the area of teaching that will also be included in the annual report. In addition, the TEP is designed as a potential source of evidence for clinical faculty members to use in writing the teaching narrative for promotion reviews. It may be used by the faculty member to demonstrate their engagement in the continual improvement of their teaching practices.

Full-Time Clinical Faculty Summative Evaluation Procedures

The purpose of summative peer observations is to acquire data about a faculty member's teaching that will become part of the reappointment/promotion dossier. The observation data, with other documentation required for the teaching section of the dossier (e.g. student evaluations, syllabi), is used to help make personnel decisions.

Two summative observations are required before reappointment (See Peer Observation Schedule and Documentation). Summative evaluations are conducted by the department chair and a clinical TOT member, two clinical TOT members, or a clinical TOT member plus one other appropriate faculty member identified by the TOT member (at least 1 of the summative observations must be conducted by the department chair). Each summative observation requires two peer observers attending the same class. Observers (TOTS) have been trained in the peer observation process. Mentors should not conduct summative observations of their mentees. A pre-observation conference of the lesson and a post-observation conference are required for each observation. The entire process (pre-observation conference, classroom observation, post-observation conference) should be completed within a one-week time period. A clinical faculty member's dossier for Reappointment will not be reviewed by the Department Review Committee until the Peer Observation of Teaching Documentation is complete.

Five standardized observation instruments are presented for providing feedback on the summative observations: direct instruction, indirect instruction, asynchronous on-line teaching, lecture, and discussion. The form that most closely reflects the lesson to be observed is selected by the faculty member being observed, and the appropriate form to be used will be identified in the pre-observation meeting.

All procedures for the evaluation process must be carefully followed by the participants. Any deviation from the specified procedures might jeopardize the fairness of the evaluation.

The summative peer observation process should occur as follows: arranging the observation, holding the pre-observation conference, conducting the observation, and holding the post-observation conference.

These steps should be followed:

1. The faculty member being observed requests an observation with a faculty member from the Teaching Observation Team (T.O.T.) and suggests possible dates and times for the observation and pre- and post-meetings. The T.O.T list is updated annually (See the Peer Observation web site).
2. The T.O.T. member identifies a second peer observer (or contacts the department chair, where required). At least one of the two reviewers should be an experienced clinical faculty member (at the assistant, associate, or full professor ranks.)
3. A pre-observation conference is held that includes the peer observers and the observee. The purpose of the pre-observation conference is to set the context for the lesson to be observed. The observee should bring an agenda for the class session. This agenda will become part of the final documentation for the dossier. The team will determine which observation guide will be used for the observation. The selected observation instrument will be printed from the Peer Observation link.
4. For a three-hour class, the team will determine which part of the class will be used for the observation. The classroom observation is conducted during the designated time using the selected observation instrument. The observers should be unobtrusive, engaging to a limited degree only if invited by the instructor. Otherwise, the observers should not participate in the class activities.
5. The peer observers will collaborate as soon as possible after the observation in order to provide feedback about the faculty member's teaching and complete a summary of the observed lesson using the observation instrument. Make two copies of the joint report. Attach the lesson agenda obtained at the pre-Observation conference.
6. A post observation conference is held, giving feedback to the faculty member based on the feedback of the observation instrument. Observers give one copy of the completed and signed summative observation form to the faculty member and one copy to the department chair.
7. If an observee disagrees with the evaluation or wishes to provide additional clarification, he/she may add an addendum to the form that is given to the department chair and placed in the personnel file.

These steps are also to be followed for courses that are taught online. The observer should join the class as a "guest" to follow the instructional sequence. The Asynchronous Peer Observation Guide is to be used.

****Note:** The process from classroom observation to post-observation conference should be completed within a two-week time period. If there is a delay in completing the process, contact the peer observation coordinator.

Full-Time Clinical Faculty Promotion Procedures

Within the promotion period (likely the year before review of the promotion dossier), the clinical faculty member seeking promotion will be required to participate in:

- 1 additional year of developing and implementing a TEP, and

- 2 additional summative peer observations of teaching.

The same procedures outlined above for these formative and summative evaluation activities for reappointment should be followed.