

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.

Peer Observations in the College of Education include both formative and summative procedures. Each set of procedures is described below.

Formative Evaluation Procedures

The purpose of formative evaluation is to enhance teaching performance. Several opportunities for formative evaluation are required so that faculty members are in position for successful summative evaluations. Mentors or other faculty members conduct observations to provide informative feedback. Also, untenured faculty members observe mentors or other faculty members as a way to enhance teaching effectiveness.

Focus and structure are required for meaningful formative observations. Any form of observation may be utilized for formative evaluation purposes. The observation instruments required for summative evaluations may be used, but are not required for a formative observation. Documentation from formative observations do not become part of the dossier, but may be referred to in the teaching section of the dossier in terms of how feedback was used to make teaching modifications.

Follow the recommended schedule for each semester on the Peer Observation Schedule and Documentation Form.

For each formative evaluation procedure:

1. hold a pre-conference, classroom observation, and post observation conference.
2. use any observation instrument or method for documentation (e.g. anecdotal records, running records, the instruments used for summative evaluation, videotaping, etc.)
3. obtain the signature of the faculty member observed or the observer on the Peer Observation Schedule and Documentation form during the post-observation conference.

Summative Peer Observation Procedures

The purpose of summative peer observations is to acquire data about a faculty member's teaching that will become part of the reappointment and tenure/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.

A total of five summative peer observations are required before tenure as prescribed in the process. Two summative observations are required before reappointment and three more observations are required before the tenure review. (See Peer Observation Schedule and Documentation). 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 (preobservation conference, classroom observation, post-observation conference) should be completed in a one-week time period.**

Five standardized observation instruments are provided for summative observation purposes: direct instruction, indirect instruction approaches, asynchronous on-line teaching, lecture, and discussion. The form that most closely reflects the lesson to be observed is selected by the faculty member.

All procedures for the evaluation process must be carefully followed by the participants. Any deviation from the specified procedures will 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, holding the post-observation conference. Follow these steps:

1. The faculty member (observee) requests an observation with a faculty member from the Teaching Observation Team (T.O.T.) and suggests possible dates and times for the observations. The T.O.T list is updated annually. (See the Peer Observation web site)
2. T.O.T. member identifies a second peer observer for the observation (or contacts the department chair, where required). The second peer observer should be a tenured faculty member or experienced clinical assistant professor.
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 document for the dossier. Determine which observation guide will be used for the observation. Copy the selected observation instrument form the Peer Observation link. For a three-hour class, determine which part of the session will be observed if it is deemed that a portion of the class will provide a complete observational record.
4. The classroom observation is conducted during the designated time using the selected peer observation instrument. The observer should be unobtrusive, engaging to a limited degree only if invited by the instructor.

5. The peer observers collaborate as soon as possible after the observation to evaluate the faculty member's teaching and complete a joint report 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 results of the observation instrument. Observers give one copy of the completed 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 placed in the personnel file.

These steps are also to be followed for courses that are taught online. The observer can 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 in a one-week time period. If there is a delay in completing the process, contact the peer observation coordinator.

Teaching Workshops

Teaching workshops are provided to enhance teaching in other ways than direct observation of classroom instruction. They offer the opportunity to discuss aspects of teaching that are of interest to faculty members. Attendance is required for untenured faculty members. Other than the orientation to the peer observation process, opportunities for teaching enhancement are provided by the Center for Teaching and e-Learning, by the University, and by the College of Education. You are free to select from various activities that fit your interests and needs. Make sure you get a signature from the workshop presenter.

End of Year Documentation

Attach a copy of the Peer Observation Documentation to the Department Annual Report due April 15.

Helpful hint: In the annual report, where appropriate refer to peer observation results as a source for setting teaching goals.

Peer Observation Web site link

All current information and documents for peer observation can be found in the College of Education web site under Faculty Governance and Resources in the Faculty Handbook on the College of Education web page.