

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.

Tenure-Eligible 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 continually engaging in the improvement of their teaching and in position for successful summative evaluations. In the first year, tenure-eligible 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 tenure-eligible 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. In years two, three and four, the tenure-eligible faculty member is responsible for designing and implementing a Teaching Enhancement Plan (TEP) in order to focus the process of formative observations (See Peer Observation Schedule and Documentation Form and the Teaching Enhancement Plan Form). The TEP is developed by the faculty member around a teaching goal detailed in their annual report. The faculty member must target an instructional focus/topic/question to study within his or her own practice over the course of the next academic year. The TEP must outline a clear rationale for why this focus/topic/question was targeted. 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 focal 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 focal 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 develop deeper understandings 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 cycle. Faculty members to be observed should be selected based on their experience or expertise 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 , etc.).

Professional Development Experiences:

The annual TEP requires that faculty participate in at least one professional development opportunity that links to the instructional focal area, 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 relevant resources, materials, and scholarship to deepen their understanding of the instructional focal area. If this option is chosen, a reflection (see below) should document how reviewing these resources impacted their teaching. 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 tenure eligible faculty member's teaching in the targeted instructional area.

Role of TEP in tenure eligible faculty annual reporting:

The TEP will be submitted in the annual report and will 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 may also help guide the faculty member in targeting new goals in the area of teaching for the next academic year that are included in the annual report. In addition, the TEP is designed as a potential source of evidence for tenure eligible faculty members to use in writing the teaching narrative for the reappointment and tenure/promotion reviews. It may be used by the faculty member to demonstrate their engagement in the continual improvement of their teaching practices.

Tenure-Eligible 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 and tenure/promotion dossier. This observation data, along with other documentation required for the teaching section of the dossier (e.g. student evaluations, syllabi), is used in the personnel review process.

A minimum of three summative peer observations are required before tenure, as prescribed in the approved RPT process. Two summative observations are required before reappointment and one or two more observations will be required before the tenure review (see Peer Observation Schedule and Documentation). At reappointment, based on a review of teaching, the department chair will determine if the tenure-eligible faculty member will need to complete one or two additional summative evaluations in Year 4/Year 5 prior to the promotion and tenure review. This determination must be clearly articulated in the Reappointment Review Letter submitted by the department chair. The faculty member may also elect to complete one additional summative evaluation in Year 4/Year 5, if they so desire. Each summative observation requires two peer observers attending the same class. Teaching Observation Team members (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 two-week time period. A faculty member's dossier for Reappointment, Tenure, and Promotion 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 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). TOT members are not expected to conduct more than two or three peer observations each academic year. Therefore, the faculty member needs to contact TOT members as early as possible to confirm their participation. Faculty members are encouraged to seek a variety of observers within and outside their departments across the required summative observations. They are also encouraged to have different lessons observed, rather than have the same lesson observed in different semesters by different TOT members.
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 a tenured faculty member.
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 observed faculty member disagrees with the evaluation or wishes to provide additional clarification, he/she may include an addendum to the form that is given to the department chair and placed in the personnel file. This addendum will become part of the formal record for the observation throughout the RTP process.

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.

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 TEP results as a source for setting teaching goals for the following year.

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.