Procedure for responding to low course evaluations

Background

Course evaluations open approximately three weeks prior to the end of term, and close one or two days before the day course grades are due.

The program evaluation director generates evaluation reports for all courses and scans all evaluations to look for concerning or urgent results or comments that might warrant an alert to the associate dean for academic affairs before course evaluations are released to faculty and department chairs.[1]

Faculty receive notice within 2 weeks that course evaluations are available for them to view via the online portal.

The program evaluation coordinator is also available to provide PDF reports to individual faculty. Faculty whose evaluations received three or fewer responses, or whose courses had three or fewer students enrolled, are not permitted to see their course evaluations. Those evaluations are shared only with the department chair and associate dean for academic affairs.

Within three days after faculty receive notice that course evaluations are available, department chairs receive a full evaluation report, including all student comments, for every course taught in their department. In fall and spring semesters, department chairs also receive a summary report of their department's overall course quality and overall teaching scores for each course, and longitudinal data for their public health core course(s).

Chairs review evaluations with individual faculty at each annual review meeting.

Triggers for mandatory peer review

The two items on which we rely most heavily to evaluate course quality are the items in which students rate "overall course quality" and "overall teaching quality." Both items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale with anchor points of (1) poor and (5) excellent.

Any course for which at least four students have completed the course evaluation will be assessed for meeting school standards of quality. Courses with an average score below 3.0 on either of these two items (overall course quality and overall teaching quality) will be required to undergo mandatory peer review.

The department chair for the department in which the course resides (as well as the department chair for the department in which the instructor resides if it is different than the department for the course) will receive an email notice of any course for whom peer review of teaching has been mandated. The department chair[2] must meet with the responsible faculty[3] within one working month of this notice to initiate the peer review process and to determine a plan to address relevant concerns.

Full guidelines for peer review of teaching begin on the following page. The peer review process concludes with a written report (see section II.G.).

The department chair and the associate dean for academic affairs will both receive a copy of the written report produced at the conclusion of the peer review process.

Other opportunities for peer review

The program evaluation coordinator will review all evaluations. Courses which do not meet the standards for mandatory peer review, but which may warrant further inquiry by the department chair, will be brought to the attention of the department chair.

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[1] Campus directors serve as department chairs for UNC and CSU courses. The procedure outlined in this document applies specifically to the Anschutz campus.

[2] In the event that more than one department chair is involved, they should meet before approaching the faculty member to determine a plan and departmental responsibilities.

[3] For courses with low overall course scores and more than one instructor, all instructors will be considered "responsible faculty." For courses in which one of multiple instructors receives low overall teaching scores, only the instructor who received the low scores will be considered "responsible faculty." Occasionally, individuals are listed as instructors who do not regularly interact with the course. Department chairs and the program evaluation director will assure that these procedures are used to address instructors who are actually involved in the delivery of the course.

Some reasons a course might be referred for closer review by a department chair include low scores on other evaluation items and/or a significant concentration of negative comments on a certain theme.

Resources

Resources for faculty development can be found on the Office of Faculty Affairs page on the ColoradoSPH website: http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/resourcesfor/Faculty/facultyaffairs/Pages/default.aspx

Specifically, see the Peer Review of Teaching Tool Box: http://www.ucdenver.edu/academics/colleges/PublicHealth/resourcesfor/Faculty/facultyaffairs/Pages/ToolBoxforPeerReview.aspx

Course evaluations can be accessed here: https://p12.courseval.net/etw/ets/et.asp?nxappid=M12&nxmid=start

Colorado School of Public Health
Office of Faculty Affairs

Guidelines for Peer Review of Teaching

The Colorado School of Public Health strongly endorses the use of peer review as one of the multiple components used to evaluate faculty teaching.[1]

Peer review of teaching provides information to help improve teaching and to inform promotion and tenure decisions based on merit in teaching.

I.   Guiding Principles

A.   Peer review of teaching, including classroom observation, should be an integral part of faculty development efforts and teaching evaluation.

B.   Peer review is only one of multiple means of a comprehensive teaching evaluation.

C.   The purposes of peer review include optimizing the teaching effectiveness of all faculty members and providing a fair, effective, and uniform set of criteria for incorporation in promotion and tenure decisions.

D.   Review criteria should be grounded in the instructional goals of the course. Peer reviewers should be tolerant of different styles of teaching and should not impose standards predicated on a single acceptable technique.

E.   To the extent consistent with a fair and objective review, the process should be collaborative and participatory.

F.   Reviews should be in writing and instructors should be allowed to respond in writing to the reviews.

G.   Emphasis should be placed on specific, achievable recommendations for improvements in teaching in addition to evaluation.

H.   A plan for accomplishing recommended changes should be an integral component of the review process. The instructor who has been reviewed should be made aware of available resources that might facilitate recommended changes.

I.   Information about the procedures each department uses to conduct peer review of teaching, and the criteria by which instructional competence is assessed, should be openly available to the department's faculty.

J.   Faculty may contribute to peer reviews in multiple different ways, e.g., reviewing a single course annually, reviewing multiple faculty in a given year, trading peer reviews between faculty, or jointly reviewing multiple courses or faculty.

II.   Recommended Procedures for Peer review of Teaching

A.   <u>Timing</u>: Peer review, including classroom and/or on-line observation, is of potential value to instructors at all levels of experience and rank. Formal peer review of teaching is recommended at any time upon request by a faculty member who wishes to improve his or her teaching. In addition, reviews are recommended:

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[1] Administrative Policy Statement (APS 1009): Multiple Means of Teaching Evaluation

1. At the start of the academic career, to provide guidance and recommendations for new faculty members to develop and improve their teaching skills;
2. During the year prior to the mid-course evaluation (which usually occurs 3-4 years from initial appointment), so that the results can be considered as part of this evaluation;
3. During the year prior to the promotion and/or tenure evaluation, so that the evaluation results can be included in the promotion dossier;
4. When indicated by poor student evaluations or by teaching-related concerns raised by students, faculty or chair; and
5. For other faculty as faculty time and resources allow (e.g., during the year prior to post-tenure review).

B. Planning: The peer reviewer(s) should meet with the faculty member to plan the review, in order to understand the type and level of students enrolled in the course, to review the syllabus, to choose the dimensions of teaching (see below) to be reviewed, and to schedule observations. Not all dimensions of teaching need be evaluated during a given review.

C. Dimensions of Teaching: The instructional goals of the course being reviewed and the reasons for conducting the peer review will influence the choice of which dimensions of teaching will be reviewed. These should be discussed during the planning meeting. Major dimensions of classroom teaching include the following:

1. *Content* - e.g., currency, accuracy, level of appropriateness, scope of material covered in class and in assigned readings; the instructor's mastery of the material covered; the appropriateness of syllabi and other materials.
2. *Style* - e.g., the teaching methods, communication skills, innovativeness, organization, preparation, enthusiasm, respect for diversity and pacing exhibited by the instructor in the classroom.
3. *Access* - e.g., the instructor's availability before or after class or at office hours, responsiveness to calls or e-mail from students, approachability, and attentiveness to student concerns.
4. *Fairness* - e.g., the amount of work assigned in the course, appropriateness of tests and the criteria used for scoring them, clarity of expectations, differentiation of opinions from facts, receptivity to alternative views, respect for students, and equal treatment of students.
5. *Mentoring* - e.g., exposure of students to relevant opportunities for learning or career development, encouragement of further pursuit of ideas, and conduct as a role model.
6. *Outcome* - e.g., course test performance, student performance on course-related portions of exams, student performance in more advanced courses of the same type, and student self-reported knowledge gains.

D. Classroom Teaching: Classroom observation is an integral component of peer review of classroom teaching. Each review should include classroom observation. Observation of two entire class periods is considered optimal. In general, observations should be scheduled in advance with the instructor. The objectives of the session(s) to be observed should also be reviewed in advance. Following the classroom observation(s), the peer reviewer(s) may meet with the instructor under review to clarify and discuss issues arising related to the observations.

E. On-line Teaching: The same general principles and procedures noted above should be followed when evaluating on-line courses, including observation/review of multiple class sessions or modules. Consideration should be given to aspects specific to the on-line teaching environment, such as flow between screens and opportunities to check self-knowledge.

F. Data Collection Forms: Standard forms for collecting and reporting classroom observation and other relevant data should be specified and used. Examples of forms are included in the **Tool Box for Peer Review of Teaching**.

G. Written **Summary**: Peer **reviewer**s should prepare a written summary that addresses the faculty member's strengths and areas that need development, citing specific examples from the observations/ course reviews. Emphasis should be placed on specific, achievable recommendations for improvements in teaching. The summary should include a plan for accomplishing recommended changes, including information on available resources that might facilitate recommended changes. The instructor being reviewed should also receive a copy of the summary.

H. Disposition of the Written Summary: The disposition of the written summary will depend on departmental policy as well as other factors such as the purpose of the review and whether it was required of or requested by the faculty member. In addition to the faculty member, copies may, for example, be provided to the department chair and/or kept in the faculty member's permanent confidential file.