

**COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES
NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY**

GUIDELINES FOR CONDUCTING PEER REVIEWS OF TEACHING

The following is in compliance with REG 05.20.10, Evaluation of Teaching, <https://policies.ncsu.edu/regulation/reg-05-20-10/>, and the Guide for Peer Review of Teaching, <https://ofd.ncsu.edu/teaching-learning/peer-review-of-teaching/>. Further details and explanation may be found on these websites.

Overview

The peer review process is designed to provide instructors with helpful feedback and the College of Natural Resources with information concerning teaching effectiveness. Peer Review Committees are appointed in the fall and are charged with evaluating the teaching activities of a colleague. Peer review comprises evaluation of course material (curriculum, syllabus, website, etc.) and observation of classroom performance or online sessions or modules. The steps involved in the process, additional details, and the forms used to record peer reviews are included in this document.

Outline of Steps in the Process

- Peer Review Committee members are appointed by Department Head.
- Committee chair assigns two evaluators to each instructor to be evaluated, with mutual consent.
- Evaluators contact faculty member being reviewed to schedule a pre-observation conference and request course documents for review (curriculum, syllabus, website, etc.).
- Evaluators review the course using Course Evaluation Form and information obtained during the pre-observation conference.
- The evaluation includes at least one classroom (or online) observation.
- Evaluators and faculty member being reviewed hold a post-observation conference.
- Evaluators complete assessment forms, discuss with instructor, sign, and submit copies, along with a summary letter of evaluation, to the Department Head; a copy is sent to the faculty member being reviewed.

Further Details

- Peer review assignments and timing are based on teaching schedules for the current academic year as well as consideration of Reappointment, Promotion, Tenure schedules. All reviews must be completed and submitted to the Department Head by end of the current academic year (i.e., mid-May) unless otherwise agreed upon (e.g., earlier requirement for instructors undergoing PRT).
- Evaluators will base their final assessment on in-class observation(s), an overall evaluation of the course based on available course documents (e.g., website, syllabus, assignment descriptions, handouts, graded assignments, tests, quizzes), and discussion with the instructor.
- Online courses must also be evaluated. Classroom observation, in this case, comprises review of a course module, participation in a synchronous online class session, or similar.

Pre-Observation Conference

Prior to conducting the in-class observation, the evaluators should meet with instructor. The pre-observation conference is designed to provide the evaluators with some background information on the course and some context for understanding and interpreting their observations. At this conference, the instructor should describe the course, general course objectives, and specific objectives for any sessions to be observed. The instructor also should describe the various course materials or documents that s/he employs. The evaluators and instructor will agree upon at least one date for in-class review (exact number at the discretion of evaluators and instructor) and review the evaluation instrument to be used (see Classroom Observation below). The date should not occur earlier than two weeks into the semester nor later than two weeks prior to the last day of classes, unless mutually agreed upon.

Course Evaluation

The evaluators should review learning materials which may include the website, syllabus, examinations, handouts, electronic materials, and examples of students work. There is a Course Evaluation Form to be completed for this part of the process; it is applicable to traditional (face-to-face) and distance courses.

Classroom Observation

The evaluators observe class (or online session or module) at a time mutually agreeable to the instructor and evaluators. If the class has a lecture + lab format, observing one of each type of session is desirable. Each evaluator must observe at least one class, preferably the same one, although exactly how this is done is at the discretion of the evaluators and the instructor. During the in-class observation, or visit to a course module or session for online courses, the evaluators record relevant comments and ratings using the Classroom Observation Form. At their discretion, evaluators may submit individual or combined forms for sessions they visit together.

Post-Observation Conference

In a timely fashion, the evaluators meet with the instructor to discuss the data collected. Course Evaluation Form(s), Classroom Evaluation Form(s), and a draft of the evaluation letter should be provided to the instructor in advance of this conference. These conferences should be used to gather additional information needed to complete the review and to provide the instructor with feedback. Instructors are encouraged to provide the evaluators with any information needed to understand the course documents, course structure, textbook selection, class dynamics, and choice of assignments and activities. Evaluators are encouraged to share their observations and offer advice or solutions for dealing with identified challenges. Information gleaned from post-observation conferences should be considered when making final assessments.

Written Assessment

- The evaluators must complete a written assessment of the course and classroom visits (using Course Evaluation and Classroom Observation Forms) by the end of the semester or at the discretion of the Department Head.
- The written assessment must include a memo addressed to the Department Head that summarizes the key points of the evaluation.
- The written assessment is signed by the evaluators and instructor and submitted to the department head with a copy to the instructor.
- Evaluation is confidential and becomes part of the faculty member's personnel file.
- The instructor may write a response to the report if s/he wishes, but doing so is optional.

Specifics

1. Selection of review committee and review teams.
 - a. A three-year schedule for review of all instructors will be drafted by the Department Head and approved by the faculty. This schedule should take into account new faculty members, who need good feedback about teaching and need formal reviews for their promotion and tenure package. Similar considerations should be made for faculty members seeking promotion.
 - b. The department head will appoint a Teaching Review Committee of a sufficient size to handle the workload and designate one of them as chair. The Committee will ensure that required reviews are completed each year and will, as needed, evaluate and revise the review process in consultation with the department head and faculty. Appointments to the Committee will begin in August and be for three years; one-third of the members will rotate off the Committee each year. When reasonably possible, avoid appointing to the Committee faculty members who would be reviewed during their tenure on the Committee.
 - c. Upon appointing the Committee in August, the Department Head will release to the faculty a list of faculty members to be reviewed during that academic year.
 - d. An *evaluation team* of two faculty members will be assigned to each faculty member being reviewed, taking care to avoid any conflicts of interest (e.g., Committee members reviewing one another). Initial selection of evaluation teams will be by the review committee chair, but must be agreed upon by the team, Department Head, and the faculty member to be reviewed.
 - e. Faculty serving on evaluation teams should have teaching experience. Efforts should be made to ensure that at least one member of the review team is competent in the discipline of the faculty member being reviewed. To meet this criterion, the Committee chair may ask faculty from outside the Committee, including outside the Department and College, to participate; generally, no faculty member from outside the Committee should be asked to perform this duty more than once per academic year.
 - f. The Committee chair may recruit faculty from outside the Committee as reviewers during semesters of unusually high workload; generally, no faculty member from outside the Committee should be asked to perform this duty more than once per academic year.
2. Practices to follow in conducting reviews.
 - a. An instructor must have taught a course at least once before being reviewed for that course, unless mutually agreed upon by the instructor and Department Head.
 - b. Assistant Professors should be reviewed every year, after meeting condition 2a.
 - c. Associate Professors should be reviewed at least once every three years, with approximately one-third of the Associate Professors reviewed each year.
 - d. Professors should be reviewed at least once every five years, with approximately one-fifth of the Professors reviewed each year.

- e. An instructor may be reviewed for no more than one course per academic year, unless mutually agreed upon by the instructor and Department Head.
 - f. At least one classroom visitation must be conducted during the review; preference is for both evaluation team members to attend, but each evaluator must attend at least one session. At the discretion of the instructor or the evaluation team, additional classroom visitations may be scheduled. If the class being reviewed has a lab + lecture format, visiting at least one lecture and one lab session is desirable.
 - g. The evaluation team should gather data from a variety of sources, including but not limited to the course syllabus, reading lists, handouts distributed to students, quizzes and examinations, and web sites.
 - h. Students enrolled in the class under review should be informed that a review is under way and that it is part of a constructive and positive process to improve teaching in the department.
3. Evaluation Instruments – The evaluation instruments must contain the following:
- a. Categories that are required to be included on the peer review are:
 - i. Class description – describe the class observed including title, academic level, number of students, whether it is required or not, GEP, in person/DE, type of course, time period and date of observation.
 - ii. Teaching methods – describe the teaching methods (e.g., lectures, case studies, interactive small group activities, class discussion) and comment on their appropriateness to achieve the class learning outcomes/goals. Note any discipline-specific or general types of teaching methods.
 - iii. Teaching effectiveness – comment on the instructor’s knowledge of the subject matter (e.g., currency and depth of knowledge) as well as his or her ability to explain things well and respond to questions at an appropriate level.
 - iv. Student-teacher interaction – describe the instructor’s interaction with the class, including rapport with all students, instructor’s ability to promote creative and critical thinking, opportunities for student engagement, and opportunities for students to demonstrate achievement of the lesson objectives.
 - v. Teaching materials – comment on overall course design (e.g., syllabus, handouts, class notes, course-packs, and other teaching materials). Describe the types of assessments (e.g., class activities, homework, exams, papers, videos, presentations, projects, portfolios), addressing their rigor and appropriateness, is material being taught up to date?
 - vi. Areas of strength – describe areas of strength the instructor has demonstrated.
 - vii. Opportunities for improvements – describe at least one area for improving student learning or the instructor’s teaching effectiveness; if applicable, comment on instructor’s actions in response to previous peer reviews.
 - b. Categories that are optional that can be included on the peer review might be:
 - i. Innovative/interesting Teaching Ideas – describe any innovative techniques, materials or assignments that could benefit other faculty.
 - ii. Technology Utilized – describe technologies used by the professor and students as well as comment on the appropriateness and effectiveness of the technology.
 - c. Overall Evaluation – comment on any other information that will be helpful.
 - d. Signature of instructor and evaluators.