

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
University Policies and Procedures

5800 - UNIVERSITY POLICY ON THE EVALUATION OF TEACHING

The university is committed to the goal of excellence in teaching. It therefore provides encouragement and means for faculty development and establishes ways to recognize and reward effective teaching. Evaluation of teaching serves to provide information to the faculty member for self-improvement. In addition, suitably devised evaluations of teaching provide a means that is as fair, reliable, and valid as possible for the administrative evaluation of teaching performance for merit rewards.

Evaluation should be an ongoing aspect of all teaching/learning situations and should involve dialogue between teachers and students. Evaluation for merit awards must follow certain guidelines to insure maximum fairness, reliability, and validity.

The quality of teaching eludes precise definition. Nevertheless, any evaluation of teaching depends on conceptions of desirable attributes, whether precisely formulated or not. Teachers, students, and evaluators all need to think clearly about what good teaching means to them, to share their ideas openly, and to identify various components of good teaching and suitable combinations of methods for measuring these components.

In the evaluation of the various aspects of teaching performance, an emphasis should be placed on skills and knowledge (including aesthetics and clarification of values where appropriate) acquired by students in each course. Such emphasis is necessary for the encouragement of academic quality.

Attention should also be paid to the relationship of the skills and knowledge acquired to the overall objectives and the specific requirements of a given departmental program.

Various methods are available to obtain data for use in the evaluation of teaching and are described below. Since any method is deficient if used alone, a combination must be used, so that each source of data will act as a check on the others and thereby contribute to a fairer evaluation. Careful consideration must be given to the question of which combination of methods will provide the best data base for the evaluation of each of the identified components of good teaching. Different components may well require different combinations of, or different emphases among, the various data sources.

Obtaining a suitable data base for the evaluation of certain components of good teaching, such as the skills and knowledge acquired by students, may well be time-consuming. In addition, the interpretation of the data must be supplemented by cautious consideration of other factors germane to instruction, such as student ability, student needs, and possibly the drop rate. Student learning is the result of the student's skills and efforts as well as those of the instructor; at the same time the instructor should be rewarded for good student learning regardless of whether it has resulted from

outstanding lectures, inspiration and encouragement of the students to perform outside reading, effective drill, innovative teaching aids, or other methods.

Great caution must be exercised to insure that evaluations are not used as a means to make fine distinctions among faculty members. Even in combination, the available means of evaluation are able to distinguish only the clearly superior and deficient instructors from among the majority of competent teachers. The rating of an instructor in the majority category should be considered as evidence of teaching competence. Rank ordering of teachers is not valid and must be avoided in the evaluation process.

The total evaluation of teaching must include evaluation by student questionnaires and at least one other method.

I. Student Opinion Questionnaires

- A. The several colleges are responsible for obtaining data for the evaluation of teaching within the college by means of student opinion questionnaires. A committee of faculty in each college (plus students, if the college wishes) shall be responsible for the development and implementation of the specific questionnaire(s) employed in that college. Supplemental departmental and individual questions (or separate questionnaires) are desirable. In the case of courses taught by telecommunications, questions specific to teaching in that environment should also be included. When courses are team-taught by more than one faculty member, students should be asked to complete separate questionnaires for each faculty member. Questions specific to team teaching should also be included. Responses in the student's own words are to be solicited on questionnaires.
- B. Students are to be made aware of the purposes and value of the questionnaire.
- C. The faculty of the several colleges are responsible for developing a standardized procedure for the administration of questionnaires within the colleges. Instructors will neither collect nor see the completed questionnaires, and every effort should be made to have the questionnaires disseminated by persons other than the instructors. The statistical results, produced so as to insure student anonymity, should be simultaneously distributed to the faculty, to the chair of the department, and to the dean as soon as the results are produced or at the end of the normal grading period for the course, whichever comes later. As soon as it is possible for the students' comments to be transcribed in a manner that will protect individual student anonymity, these comments will similarly be disseminated to the faculty member and the chair and will be available to the dean if the dean wishes to see them. Comments and other questionnaire results obtained by means other than these standardized procedures shall not be accepted as primary evidence of teaching ability. Individuals in the evaluation process will have access to the statistical results as contained in the individual faculty member's file. College questionnaires will be administered within the last four weeks of classes of the semester.

Administration of course evaluation forms should be according to the following schedule:

1. All faculty members, including tenured, nontenured, adjunct and graduate teaching assistants--each semester, every course.
 2. Instructors may elect a more frequent evaluation than that required by the college or university.
- D. The provost and vice president for academic affairs, on the advice of the Faculty Senate, will be responsible for conducting a review of the student evaluation process at least once every three years, with outside consultants being involved in the review, if desired.

II. Peer Review of Portfolio

Peer evaluation of faculty course portfolios should be used as the second method of evaluation of teaching. Colleges and/or departments desiring an alternate second method of evaluation should submit a proposal through the dean to the provost and vice president for academic affairs for review and possible approval.

The function of the portfolio is to permit the evaluation of teaching effectiveness by an examination of the documents used in instruction. These documents are to be assembled by each faculty member and presented to the department chair in accordance with the established university evaluation schedule. The chair will collect all portfolios and make them available to the designated evaluation committee.

Annual reviews of portfolios should be conducted for nontenured faculty. Courses taught during the previous two regular semesters should be part of the review. For tenured faculty, peer review of portfolio should be conducted at least once every five years. The review should be conducted for all courses taught during the previous two years. More frequent review may be requested by the faculty member, the chair or the dean.

The full-time faculty of each department, through an election, are responsible for establishing the procedure for the selection of evaluation committees. Each portfolio must be evaluated by at least three individuals. Under this policy it is possible that a department might elect to have a separate committee for each faculty member, to assign the evaluation of all faculty to a standing committee, or to designate a specifically elected committee for the purpose of portfolio evaluation.

The portfolio will consist of all instructor provided materials used in each course (not section) during the period covered by the evaluation. Materials from only the most recently taught section of each course and only from courses taught during the period covered by the evaluation should be included. If the faculty member chooses, summer session courses may

be included. Where it is impractical to include items, such as films, a description of those materials should be included.

Examples of materials to be submitted are the course syllabus, assignment lists, research paper assignments, reading lists, study guides, handouts, problem sets, laboratory exercises, performance assignments, simulations, all testing materials including the final examination, and any other material or information which would assist the committee in evaluating the effectiveness of teaching.

In addition to the course materials, the faculty member will provide a brief summary of sections taught, final enrollments, the grade distribution in each section covered by the evaluation, and a few brief comments regarding course objectives and the evaluation of student performance.

In preparing the portfolio, the faculty member should keep in mind the issues which the evaluation committee will address in its review. These issues are as follows:

1. The overall reasonableness of the faculty member's teaching load.
2. The overall quality of the materials selected for use by the faculty member in each course covered by the evaluation. Issues include whether the materials are current and represent the best work in the field, whether the materials represent a superficial or a thorough coverage, how well the course has been developed, and whether the intellectual tasks set by the instructor are appropriate.
3. The overall quality of feedback, evaluation and testing in each course covered by the evaluation. Issues include whether the testing and evaluation procedures are consistent with the intellectual tasks set by the instructor and whether adequate feedback is provided to students in order to develop the desired levels of intellectual performance. If appropriate, the reasonableness of grade distributions will be addressed
4. If appropriate, the faculty member's efforts to improve teaching effectiveness.
5. Specific suggestions for improvement in any of the above areas.

In colleges or departments where faculty portfolios are developed and evaluated as part of the accreditation process, this effort can substitute for peer review of portfolio for the year of the accreditation review. The college or department should follow the process outlined above in other years.

The peer review of portfolio process could result in faculty development proposals for those faculty whose instruction, course materials, or evaluation methods need improvement.

Proposals for faculty development funds should be submitted by the faculty member, the chair or the dean and should include cost-sharing figures.

It is the responsibility of the provost and vice president for academic affairs to review the peer review of portfolio process after three years to determine if the data gathered and communicated to faculty are useful and constructive.

III. Other Methods of Evaluation

As noted in section II, colleges and/or departments desiring an alternate second method of evaluation should submit a proposal through the dean to the provost and vice president for academic affairs for review and possible approval. Methods of evaluation that might substitute for peer review of portfolio are as follows:

- A. Student achievement tests - Student achievement tests should be used for evaluation of teaching if standardized and uniform questions and scoring are feasible, and if there exists a wide testing sample of students with different instructors in different semesters or in different sections of the course. Testing shall be performed both early and late in the course to insure a valid measure of learning actually achieved during the course. This procedure will not be appropriate in many teaching/learning situations. However, where it can be used, it may well provide a good measure of the skills and knowledge actually achieved in the course considered. It should be developed and utilized, where possible, on a regular basis by the faculty on the departmental or college level.
- B. Student interviews - Systematic exit interviews or surveys, or interviews at predetermined stages of a student's major program, should be conducted within each college or department. A standard format should be used. A means should be devised to insure accurate recording of the interview, through the presence of a disinterested observer, through maintenance of a written account, tape, or transcription of the interview, or through other appropriate means. Comments about individual faculty members should be transcribed and made available to them, although the identity of the students will remain confidential.
- C. Classroom visitation - A carefully designed and consistent program of peer observation of teaching may be established within a college or department. The design of the program of observation must provide for a consistent program, with sufficient controls to avoid prejudice or caprice, and must be approved by the dean and the provost and vice president for academic affairs.
- D. Evaluation of distance education - When teaching is done in a distance-education mode such as instructional television, the second evaluation may be based on: class visitation at a distant site (as defined above), personal interviews of distant students (as defined above), or a review of evaluations prepared by regional or national consortia such as

National Technological University. If a course is part of a larger program for distance learners, the evaluation should also assess faculty contribution to the success of the overall program.

Certain other procedures are generally considered to provide a less reliable contribution to a fair and systematic evaluation of teaching performance and therefore should be employed only with due caution. They include (1) evaluation by organized student groups; (2) alumni surveys; and (3) self-evaluations. Normally, use of data based on these procedures should be limited to a supplemental role and not constitute a primary means of evaluating teaching performance. Colleges or departments that wish to use these or other techniques not noted above as a primary data source for the evaluation of teaching must develop clear standards of application for their use. These procedures and standards of application must be approved by the dean and the provost and vice president for academic affairs.

It is the responsibility of colleges or departments to establish formal procedures for the evaluation of faculty, supervision of student research projects, internships, tutorials, honors programs, and the like. The results of such evaluations may be included in the evaluation process but must be used with extreme caution, particularly when such activities constitute a major portion of an instructor's teaching load.

Variables such as course level, course difficulty, class size, required vs. elective courses, teaching load, etc., must be constantly investigated and taken into consideration by those involved in the evaluation process. Class attrition is a questionable measure of teaching effectiveness, but if it is to be used, its relationship to the various variables must be examined.

Evaluators in all levels of the evaluation process must be attentive to allegations of bias, and be particularly alert to patterns of possible discrimination.

Department chairs, deans, and appropriate faculty committees should be knowledgeable concerning the evaluation, interpretation, and use of the data gathered from the various evaluation sources. The university, through the Office of Academic Affairs and other means, should make available opportunities for faculty members and responsible administrators to obtain appropriate knowledge.

The data gathered in the evaluation process will not be made available to anyone beyond those officially part of the evaluation process without the written authorization of the faculty member. This restriction is not intended to apply to collegewide statistical studies that do not reveal the identity of individual faculty members.

The several colleges are responsible for implementing the provisions of this policy. The colleges may delegate this responsibility to departments as appropriate. The development of college or departmental policy within the context of this policy is primarily a function of the faculty.

Appropriate departmental, college, and university individuals and committees should regularly review these policies on the evaluation of teaching and how they are being implemented, both to

insure that they are not being violated to the possible detriment of the individuals being evaluated, and to initiate needed improvements.

It is the ultimate responsibility of the provost and vice president for academic affairs to enforce the provisions of this policy.

Responsibility: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Authorization: Roseann Runte, President

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