Department of Geosciences

Policy for Assessing Teaching Effectiveness

Approved by faculty consensus on November 13, 2020

Introduction

The Department encourages faculty to engage in professional development related to teaching and learning. This policy outlines examples and resources for faculty to use in the development and implementation of a holistic teaching assessment portfolio. Multiple methods of teaching evaluation serve a developmental purpose by providing instructors with information that (1) can be used reflectively to adjust teaching and assessment practices, (2) provide an opportunity to align programmatic goals and learning outcomes within and across units, and (3) can be used for administrative purposes towards promotion, tenure, and reappointment (PTR) evaluation. The goal of the teaching portfolio is to balance quantitative and qualitative assessment of teaching based on three components – (1) student experience, (2) peer-review, and (3) development, self-evaluation, and reflection.

Article 28 of the **AAUP collective bargaining agreement**[1] notes that: "*Student Evaluations of Teaching (SET) can productively inform regarding teaching effectiveness in particular areas. In gauging teaching effectiveness, however, SETs are not to be used as the sole criterion of teaching for disciplinary measures, promotion, tenure or reappointment, or for nonreappointment with respect to full-time faculty […]*"

The **Promotion, Tenure, and Reappointment Form** (Revised May 2018) Section 2C Evaluation of Teaching states: "*Evidence of assessment of teaching beyond the SET, such as classroom observations by peers or colleagues, mid-semester surveys, or other evidence of good teaching must also be included in Section 8-C.*"[2]

Policy

Geosciences faculty will have considerable flexibility in customizing how they approach and format their individualized teaching assessment portfolios. Noteworthy teaching will be based, in large part, on the faculty member's evolving and individualized portfolios.

Implementing the new teaching assessment policy is expected to evolve over time. There is much to be learned, both for the Department (e.g., recommending peer-review best practices) and for individual faculty (e.g., fully developing a teaching portfolio).

Faculty feedback about this teaching assessment policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis, preferably early in the fall semester, and incorporated appropriately into policy modifications.

Methods of Evaluation

Examples and guidelines of evaluation techniques are listed below for each pillar. Additional evaluation techniques can be found at https://cetl.uconn.edu/set-plus/. Faculty members may use additional evaluation techniques.

(1) Student experience

Faculty should include multiple forms of student feedback in their teaching assessment portfolio that demonstrate effective teaching and learning from the student perspective.

Some options faculty may consider are:

- Student evaluations of teaching (SET). Note that the quantitative summary statistics are required by the university.
- Geosciences End-semester Student Questionnaire for all courses.
- Mid-semester student surveys
    - Formative assessments collected during the semester provide ongoing feedback that may be used to improve teaching. Example mid-semester surveys are available from CETL https://cetl.uconn.edu/mid-semester-formative-feedback/. These questionnaires can be completed in class, through HuskyCT or online via anonymous survey tools such as Qualtrics.
    - Evidence of student learning such as before-and-after learning assessments for a given learning goal or topic.

Additional options faculty may consider to include for gauging student experience are:

- Student testimonials, such as copies of direct emails to the faculty member.
- Examples of student work (including original assignment details). Names and other student identifying information should be removed.
- Student final reflection or personal growth essays or surveys.

(2) Peer-review

Peer-review includes observation of the faculty member during classroom, field, or laboratory instruction. Peer-review may also include review of assignments, graded student work, or lecture material. Faculty may choose which peer to incorporate into this process and which class(es) to review. Faculty's reflection from the feedback received by the observation may be included in the PTR files (i.e. the faculty member decides on including peer evaluation).

Below are recommendations for peer-review evaluation by another faculty member (peer-reviewer):

- Faculty may request a peer-reviewer in consultation with the Department Head. The selected peer-reviewer should follow AAUP policies regarding conflict of interest, and, preferably, be someone of equal or higher faculty rank. Peer-reviewers may include Geosciences faculty and faculty with primary appointments in other units as well.
- Faculty will identify a selected lecture, discussion, field and/or laboratory session to be evaluated. Observation of entire classroom or learning period is optimal.
- Faculty will provide background material (syllabus, reading assignment) to peer-reviewer at least one week prior to the scheduled evaluation.
- Faculty is generally not evaluated by the peer-reviewer on course content unless the reviewer finds glaring issues related to content omissions or errors.

- If the faculty determines that the presence of a peer-reviewer may negatively impact the teaching and learning experience, faculty may arrange for the classroom to be video recorded and reviewed subsequently by the peer-reviewer.
- For distance learning and online modalities, faculty may arrange for teaching sessions to be recorded and reviewed subsequently by the peer-reviewer. For asynchronous courses or fully online courses, peer-review may focus on the delivery of course content and student engagement through online response.
- Peer-reviewer will provide written feedback within two weeks of the teaching observation using the standardized Geosciences Peer-Review Questionnaire.
- Post assessment meeting between the faculty and the peer-reviewer should ideally occur within two weeks of classroom observation.
- It is expected that faculty members contribute positively to the peer-review process. Peer-reviewers may earn credit appropriately for their department service.
- Faculty are encouraged to meet with the Department Head to discuss peer-review feedback within 4 weeks of classroom observation. If the faculty member is not in agreement with the findings after reviewing the supporting documents from the peer-reviewer, the faculty member may choose to request a subsequent evaluation, in consultation with the Department Head.

Additional options faculty may consider to include for peer-review are:

- Review of course materials and student learning assessments – particularly for new course content and substantially revised course content.
- Peer-review of student survey data and/or comments.
- CETL observation and assessment, possibly in tandem with a Geosciences peer-reviewer.

(3) Development, self-evaluation and reflection

Faculty should include some form of self-evaluation and written reflection of proactive steps to promote effective teaching and learning.

Some options faculty may consider are:

- Self-reflection on individual teaching modules or the course as a whole (what went well, what needs adjustments, etc.). Self-reflection may be accomplished in a variety of written ways suitable to the assessment, and may also use the Geosciences Self-Evaluation Questionnaire.
- CETL workshops or reviews
- Description of new pedagogical teaching methods, course content, and other substantial improvements made to courses, and, if appropriate, along with reflection on the effectiveness of new content.
- Teaching enhancement plan in consultation with CETL https://cetl.uconn.edu/teaching-enhancementplans/
- Teaching conferences attended/professional development CETL consultation https://cetl.uconn.edu/consultations/

- Completion of a "teaching practices inventory" http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/TeachingPracticesInventory.htm
- Publications and presentations pertaining to teaching innovations

Finally, additional evidence of effective teaching may include teaching awards, recognition, and nominations from the department, university, or other organizations

Department SET+ Recommendation

The department recommends an active and up-to-date teaching assessment portfolio. In each year of faculty review, faculty are encouraged to develop a portfolio that includes components from all three categories (peer-review, self-reflection & evaluation, and student evaluation), with a minimum of one (1) evaluation from each category – in addition to SETs. For milestone promotions or reappointment reviews (e.g., 5-year reappointment, promotion to associate of full professor), faculty should complete a minimum of two (2) evaluations from each category (student experience, peer-review, and self-reflection and evaluation) – in addition to SETs.

Citations

1. AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement
https://lr.uconn.edu/wpcontent/uploads/sites/988/2017/08/AAUP.CBA_.07.01.17.pdf

2. Office of the Provost: Promotion, Tenure, and Reappointment
https://provost.uconn.edu/faculty-andstaff-resources/promotion-tenure-and-reappointment-2/#ptr-18

Resources

CETL, UConn SET+ https://cetl.uconn.edu/set-plus/

• Aligning Practice to Policy: Changing the Culture to Recognize and Reward Teaching at Research Universities. https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/STEM-Education-Initiative/Aligning-Practice-To-Policies-Digital.pdf

• Undergraduate STEM Education Initiative https://www.aau.edu/education-service/undergraduateeducation/undergraduate-stem-education-initiative

• Gender Bias in Student Evaluations https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/ps-political-science-andpolitics/article/gender-bias-in-student-evaluations/1224BE475C0AE75A2C2D8553210C4E27