# Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
## SET+: A Policy for Evaluating and Enhancing Faculty Teaching Effectiveness and Student Learning

**Statement of Purpose**:

The Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (EEB) encourages faculty to engage in professional development and self-assessment practices to increase teaching effectiveness and, most importantly, student learning. To that end, all faculty are urged to take advantage of the excellent resources provided by the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) (https://cetl.uconn.edu/) to enhance teaching. EEB recognizes that formal assessment of teaching effectiveness and student learning has depended almost solely on student evaluations via the SET system. This EEB SET+ policy described herein is intended to allow for and encourage submission of additional methods and materials for faculty teaching evaluation (i.e., SET+). This SET+ document is an EEB specific complement to university SET scores. This additional evaluative system is intended to further enhance the already exceptional teaching effectiveness of EEB faculty and the learning of their students. Furthermore, this SET+ system will help better support tenure, promotion, reappointment, and post-tenure review of faculty by more completely documenting teaching quality and student success.

**Background for the SET+ Requirement:**

Current University and Union contract policy that applies to the subject of teaching evaluation is as follows and informs this SET+ policy:

Article 28 of the AAUP collective bargaining agreement 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 non-reappointment with respect to full-time faculty [...]"

Promotion, Tenure, and Reappointment Form (Revised May 2018) Section 2C, Page 6, 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.

**General Requirements for the EEB SET+ Evaluation**

Areas of SET+ Evaluation: The University has given individual departments considerable latitude with respect to departmental needs and norms with respect to teaching. In EEB, we acknowledge the goal of the guidelines as stated above, i.e., the SET+ evaluation should both encourage faculty to strive for greater excellence as teachers and allow demonstration of their efforts in this regard. Evaluation of teaching effectiveness and student learning in EEB via SET+ will be focused on three overarching areas:

(1) Peer Assessment of Classroom Teaching

(2) Demonstration of Effective Instruction and the Student Experience

(3) Self-Assessment and Evaluation of Course Design and Materials.

Examples of specifics for each of these areas are provided below. The lists of specifics should be seen as providing suggestions for inclusion in the SET+ document, i.e., faculty will not be expected to provide information for all of these suggested areas, or even a majority of them, and may add additional areas as appropriate.

Timing of SET+ Evaluations:  SET+ evaluations for both untenured tenure-track faculty and non-tenure track faculty will occur in the 2nd and 5th year of employment, and then every 5 years post-tenure or post promotion (for non-tenure track faculty). Any individual faculty member desiring additional evaluations can request them from the Department Head at any time.

**Areas for SET+ Assessment**

**1. Peer Evaluation of Teaching** – Peer evaluation will follow a standardized format in the form of a checklist approved by the department faculty (see Attachment #1). For Assistant TT and NTT faculty, peer assessments will be conducted by an Associate Department Head, an outside observer to be chosen by the Department Head and a departmental representative to be selected by the Department Head, not necessarily at the same time.  For Associate and Full level TT and NTT faculty, peer assessments will be conducted an Associate Department Head and a Departmental representative selected by the Department Head.

A. Faculty should provide a syllabus to evaluators one week prior to the scheduled assessment.  The syllabus should be prepared according to University Senate recommendations.  Additional suggestions/recommendations for syllabus preparation can be found at https://provost.uconn.edu/2021/03/08/university-senate-updates-new-nrc-grade-and-syllabi-expectations/

B. Faculty may ask evaluators to assess different components of their courses, such as, but not limited to:

- Learning objectives and outcomes
- Instructional modality
- Representative course materials
- Alignment of assessments and learning outcomes
- Husky CT site
- Lecture and classroom management
- Field experiences and other out-of-classroom activities

C. The Department Associate Head will provide a brief description of how the assessed course aligns with programmatic goals of the department.

**2. Demonstration of Effective Instruction and the Student Experience** - EEB faculty may provide a range of types of evidence beyond SET scores that demonstrate their effectiveness as teachers as well as document the students' experiences.  Options include, but are not limited to:

- Mid-semester student surveys (e.g., formative assessment) and descriptions of how teaching was adjusted in response.  CETL offers robust assistance in creating mid-semester formative feedback (https://cetl.uconn.edu/mid-semester-formative-feedback/).
- Informal comments received from students, including those from the SET or Google Forms
- Requests from students for research experiences in your labs.
- Examples of situations where students sought non-classroom related advice or where students sought out additional mentoring, e.g., getting into graduate school, questions about future employment, etc.

**3. Self-Evaluation of Course Design and Materials –** Self-assessment and personal evaluation of course design, materials, and teaching is an important practice to demonstrate growth and areas for improvement.  As part of the SET+ evaluation, faculty are asked to address the following questions:

A. Briefly describe courses in terms of class size and modality and summarize your approach to effective course design and format.

B. Briefly summarize approaches to teaching materials you have developed for your courses and include representative materials as desired. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Syllabus design
- Exam format and grading structure
- Authentic assessment strategies
- Course material

C. Briefly summarize approaches to the enhancement of the student experience inside and/or outside your formal courses.  These may include, but are not limited to:

- Professional development related to teaching and learning, including CETL consultations and workshops attended.
- Creative methods used in teaching.
- Service on teaching committees
- Assistance of colleagues
- Communities of practice
- Grant support
- Invitations to speak about teaching or facilitating a workshop
- Recognition for teaching, including awards

# Peer Evaluation of Teaching

**Name of Instructor:**

**Date:**

**Course number and title:**

**Name of Evaluator:**

1. Please indicate the size and type of class:

- o   Large lecture (>80 students) in person
- o   Small lecture in person
- o   Lecture and lab
- o   Lecture and discussion
- o   On-line
- o   Field based
- o   Other (please describe):

_____

**Evaluation of period of contact with instructor**

1. What was the primary method of content delivery:

- o   Flipped classroom
- o   Lecture only
- o   Lecture and white board
- o   Lecture and slides
- o   Discussion/dialog
- o   A combination of the above (please describe):
- o   Other (please describe):

_____

2. How well was the presented material organized?

- o Poorly organized and difficult to follow
- o Adequately organized, required some effort to follow
- o Well organized with clear structure

Optional comments:

3. How clearly was the material presented?

- o Frequently difficult to follow due to lack of clarity
- o Occasionally difficult to follow due to lack of clarity
- o Easy to follow with confusing statements rare

Optional comments:

4. Was the time well utilized?

- o No
- o Mostly
- o Yes

Optional comments:

5. Did the instructor communicate enthusiasm and interest in the subject?

- o Rarely
- o Sometime
- o Almost always

Optional comments:

6. If discussion took place, how well did the instructor moderate it?

- o Instructor dominated the discussion.
- o Instructor made little effort to direct the discussion.
- o Instructor moderated the discussion well, showing skills in listening.

Optional comments:

7. How did the instructor respond to student questions and comments?

- o Instructor responses were not encouraging or respectful.
- o Instructor responses were neutral.
- o Instructor responses were encouraging and respectful.

Optional comments:

8. Were faculty-student interactions lively and interesting?

- o Rarely
- o About half the time
- o Most of the time

Optional comments:

9. Did the instructor demonstrate command of the material?

- o Not really
- o Some of the time
- o Yes

Optional comments:

**Evaluation of Syllabus and Supplemental Materials**

1. Does the syllabus set out clear learning objectives for the course?

- o No learning objectives presented
- o Yes, but objectives not clearly articulated
- o Yes, objectives clear.

Optional comments:

2. Does the syllabus provide a dated list of what topics will be covered in the course so that students can anticipate what is coming?

- o   No
- o   Yes

Optional comments:

3. Does the syllabus make clear the basis for grading?

- o   No
- o   Yes

Optional comments:

4. Is the syllabus mostly compliant with University guidelines?

- o   No
- o   Yes

Optional comments:

5. Is the instructor covering the major areas that should be covered in this course?

- o   No (please explain):
- o   Mostly (what is missing?)
- o   Yes

Optional comments:

If additional supplemental materials were included, please describe briefly:

Please provide constructive criticism the instructor can use to improve the course: