

# Faculty Peer Teaching Assessment for Summative Purposes

*Academic Policy Committee memo continued: revised March 7 2014*

## **Guidelines for classroom observation and Common Curriculum peer evaluation**

**Rationale:** Faculty observation and feedback provides valuable assessment from a community of expertise. Our committee aims to document peer assessment for inclusion in annual review and tenure and promotion without overburdening faculty with excessive observation responsibilities. We have articulated consistent guidelines and principles across all classroom observation and provided sample instruments to promote consistency. Common curriculum courses have a proposed additional group peer assessment survey to document and credit the teaching team's contributions (e.g. lectures and curriculum development, including from faculty who are not leading their own sections).

While this procedure documents teaching activities for **summative assessment**, we hope this process will contribute to a college teaching ethos and promote more self-awareness about teaching excellence at all ranks.

*Academic Policy Committee and the Dean of Faculty would like to implement some version of this process this semester; these recommendations are proposals synthesized from research and discussion within the Academic Policy committee for review by the full faculty on February 20th. Furthermore, any policies adopted from this memo should be considered provisional for year one, and subject to further review by a body constituted by the faculty at regular intervals. This semester's data should be considered as "prototype" or "beta" for the purposes of annual and tenure review.*

*With thanks to the Academic Policy Committee members, past and present, Common Curriculum facilitators, Dean of Faculty, and collegial volunteers.*

Respectfully submitted,

Mira Seo, Chair Academic Policy Committee

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# Part 1: Classroom observation mechanism

## Timing: annual for all

- **Untenured faculty**<sup>1</sup>: once per year. Strong recommendation for an supplementary formative visit by a senior divisional colleague to provide a balance of observed CC and non-CC courses. All observations should adhere to the same principles (under [Guidelines\\_part 2](#) below).
- **Tenured faculty**: once per year (slight preference for CC courses).

## Mechanism:

### Instructor:

- Requests a date for observation based on syllabus content.
- Provides any materials s/he considers necessary to orient the observer for the visit, e.g. syllabus, website, class blog, in the pre-observation meeting/communication (see below).

### Dean of Faculty (college-level organization):

- Selects an appropriate observer on the following criteria:  
**Untenured faculty**: observed by a tenured colleague from within the division, or any colleague from outside the division.  
**Tenured faculty**: observed by a tenured colleague from any division or an untenured colleague from outside of the division.<sup>2</sup>

*No reciprocal visitation is permitted. Each faculty member can pre-register a confidential list of excluded observers with the Dean of Faculty<sup>3</sup>; any spouses or partners and others with conflicts of interest should be excluded automatically (i.e. do not count toward the list).*

### Divisional Director of observed faculty member + faculty support office (implementation and follow up):

- Confirm date with instructor and observer, confirm visit occurred.
- Record and retain all documentation to be included in faculty file (FSO).  
*Forms should be made available online to all faculty.*

### Instructor and observer:

- Pre-observation meeting or email confirmation of process.
- Post-observation meeting within one week (before submitting report).

### Observer:

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<sup>1</sup> How are non tenure-track faculty being assessed for annual review?

<sup>2</sup> It was junior colleagues on the committee who most strongly supported the general "best practices" consensus that there's too much baggage to have untenured evaluating tenured colleagues and peers within one's division for summative reporting. It creates unwelcome risk for an untenured faculty member to evaluate a senior colleague who will be voting on one's tenure eventually. In peer observation, there could be a sense of invidious comparison within a shared discipline. Peer to peer feedback is valuable for unrecorded formative conversations, but the committee members felt it was safer to remove invidious scenarios from summative data.

<sup>3</sup> No more than two faculty members and a brief rationale must be provided for each name.

- Submit report to Divisional Director and FSO for inclusion in faculty file within one week of the visit.

**Report:** Report will be made available to the faculty member, the Divisional Director, the Dean of Faculty, and all other future assessors of the faculty file as part of the teaching portfolio. Only reports from the past five years will be considered in any review process. Annual review only includes the previous year's report.

**Common Curriculum** courses follow the same format for classroom observation with one additional element, the **Peer Assessment Survey** (see **Part 3.3**). **Year 1 data will be for formative use only.** All teaching team members should be provided with the form at the beginning of the semester to notify everyone of the format and content of peer assessment, and its inclusion in the annual review and teaching portfolio for tenure and promotion. All data will be anonymized by the FSO before distribution.

Each Common Curriculum course facilitator will submit a cover letter describing the course and any distinctive challenges or characteristics of that semester's collaboration.

## Part 2: Guidelines

**These principles apply to all classroom observations (including CC seminars and any supplementary formative assessment).<sup>4</sup>**

1. The course should be selected by faculty member being observed with attention to compiling observations on a range of courses and formats.
2. Visits are to be scheduled in advance (no drop ins for evaluative observation).
3. Instructor will inform students beforehand of the visit and its routine nature.
4. Observers are expected to be punctual and accommodated before class commences.
5. Upper division courses counted toward the major should be observed by a faculty member from within the division.

**Pre-observation meeting/ communication between faculty member and observer ensures all parties are familiar with the forms used and the process; can be conducted over email.**

Instructor:

Provides any materials s/he considers necessary to orient the observer for the visit, e.g. syllabus, website, class blog, etc.<sup>5</sup>

Highlight any ongoing issues or special situations (e.g. specific student learning difficulties, structural idiosyncrasies, e.g. QR or Integrated Science teaching expectations).

Observers:

Explain the guidelines, the process and the **forms (see Part 3)**

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<sup>4</sup> These practices largely follow the practices of [Allegheny College](#).

<sup>5</sup> The observer is expected to be prepared for the observation, namely, s/he should understand the course objectives and the place of the observed class within the semester's trajectory.

**Post-observation meeting:**

*Within one week before submitting the report.*

Instructor begins with a self-assessment/ debrief.

Observer shares notes and preliminary report for discussion before a final report is submitted to Divisional Director (cc'd to FSO) of observed faculty member.

**Report:** Report will be made available to the faculty member, the Divisional Director, the Dean of Faculty, and all other future assessors of the faculty file as part of the teaching portfolio. Only teaching material from the past five years will be considered in any review process. Annual review only includes the previous year's reports.

## Part 3: Proposed Instruments<sup>6</sup>

These forms are intended to standardize the format of faculty response and to ensure some measure of consistency in observations, particularly in cross divisional observation. Standardized formats will also assist in longitudinal study. All forms will be available to faculty online.

### 1. Classroom observation format [Recommended]

TIME	CLASS CONTENT/ INSTRUCTOR ACTIONS	OBSERVER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, RESPONSES
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<sup>6</sup> For further information on how these kinds of observations capture data, see the very helpful [article](#) from the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, with thanks to Marty Weissman for bringing this to the committee's attention.

## 2. Observation REPORT form [SAMPLE]

A preliminary report is to be discussed with the observed faculty member before a final report is submitted to the Divisional Director. Please submit within ONE WEEK of the observation.

General questions:

- Describe the classroom activities [e.g. lecture, discussion, group work, workshop, student presentations].
- Summarize the instructor's self-assessment of the class (e.g. Was it a typical class? What worked? What didn't work?)
- In your own observation, what was effective? What was less effective? Please describe with specific examples.

For lecture courses add:

- Describe the depth and breadth of material covered in lecture; does it seem calibrated to the learning objectives of the course at its level?
- Describe student participation in the lecture. How did it contribute to the lecture?

For seminar or hybrid class with discussion add:

- Describe the level of student participation, with attention to atmosphere, gender balance, nationality.
- Quality of discussion: degree of listening and productive responses from instructor and students.

### 3. Common Curriculum Peer-Assessment [Survey](#)<sup>7</sup> [FOR FORMATIVE USE ONLY IN YEAR 1]

*Please provide an assessment of your teaching team colleagues this semester. Responses will be anonymized and made available to the relevant faculty member, and included in the annual review and in a teaching portfolio for tenure and promotion with a cover letter from the course facilitator.*

*Anonymized data for the team will also be provided to the course facilitator for curriculum development.*

You may wish to comment on the topics below, or any other aspect of team teaching; specific examples are the most helpful. Non-response is considered neutral.

#### **Course materials and content**

*Describe contributions to curricular preparation or areas for improvement.*

#### **Lectures**

*Which lectures were effective in their presentation of depth and breadth of material; which lectures were well calibrated to the learning objectives of the course? What specific areas need more work?*

#### **Team teaching contribution and support**

*How did individual colleagues (including those who did not lead their own seminars) support the teaching team's productivity and effectiveness as a group? Which colleagues were models for teaching? Who provided important mentoring for you as a teacher?<sup>8</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> Click the link to access an app we might be able to use to collect this anonymized survey data.

<sup>8</sup> An example of additional information that could be documented here: Derek Heng guided students from his and Mira's LH2 sections through the NUS museum ceramics collection to illuminate *Eredia's Description of Malaca*. This was a supplementary classroom activity that he generously shared with another section at his colleague's request, in addition to meeting the other section's student "curator" in his office hours.

## Part 4: Questions for future discussion on revising peer observation

*To be discussed after a first iteration; to be resolved no later than early AY 2014/15 if possible.*

1. Should the prototype observation data be recorded for annual and tenure and promotion review?
2. Should untenured faculty be able to request additional summative observations for inclusion in the file? Only in the years immediately before a contract renewal and/or tenure review?
3. Should the Common Curriculum peer assessment survey be recorded for SUMMATIVE assessment in annual review, tenure and promotion reviews? If not, what other mechanism might best capture non-teaching contributions to the CC teaching teams?