

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
Policy on Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness for Full-time Faculty

The College of Arts and Sciences is committed to the assessment of teaching as a means of determining effectiveness in promoting student learning and of identifying constructive ways of improving teaching performance for all faculty. Even highly effective instructors can benefit from regular feedback on their performance as measured by a variety of significant criteria. Such feedback can help faculty gauge their effectiveness and guide reflection on the continued improvement of their teaching.

After the completion of the annual reports (January), members of the departmental executive committee or a subcommittee approved by the Dean's Office shall provide the chair an overall teaching rating for each full-time faculty member in the department, excluding the chair. No committee member shall participate in his/her own evaluation. The ratings shall employ the following categories: outstanding (6), excellent (5), very good (4), good (3), fair (2), poor (1). Criteria for these ratings will be provided in departmental promotion and tenure manuals and may vary depending on disciplinary and departmental context. Departments may also wish to develop checklists for their committees which indicate the criteria most relevant to their discipline for receiving a particular numerical score. Committee members may also provide a brief statement explaining the most significant factors that affected the numeric ratings. It shall be open to the chair, if s\he sees fit, to discuss with committee members the grounds for their ratings and, as appropriate, to mentor faculty on this basis for the sake of improving their teaching. The chair shall take the assessments into consideration in recommending merit raises and merit equity.

It should be noted that the committee members' assessments, which evaluate faculty performance for the previous calendar year, constitute the first level of evaluation. The next level is the chair's evaluation, which reviews the faculty member's annual and cumulative multi-year performance. Following the chair's evaluation, the area chairs, together with the associate dean, make a further multi-year evaluation, which is forwarded to the Dean for a final college evaluation.

The results of the annual assessment of teaching effectiveness should inform efforts to improve instruction. As appropriate, the chair should use these results to mentor faculty for the sake of improving their teaching and to propose ways to utilize departmental, college, and university resources, including those provided by the Center for Teaching and Learning.

It is expected that the specific nature of instructional activities will vary as a function of the mission of the department and the workload assignment of the faculty member. Thus, it is expected that the distribution of effort across different instructional activities will vary and that evaluators will assess the effectiveness of teaching across the full range of instructional activities. Among the factors committee members and other evaluators should consider in their assessments are:

Quality of course content

Committee members shall assess quality of course content through review of syllabi, examinations, and other supplementary materials. Syllabi should be reviewed for conformity with university guidelines, differentiation of graduate and undergraduate expectations, reading assignments appropriate to course level and catalog description. Course materials should also be assessed for their appropriateness in relation to the current state of knowledge in the field. To assist the committee in judging these matters, faculty members may provide additional materials, such as customized texts, handouts, software, and other relevant information. In departments that give standardized and/or departmental examinations, scores on these examinations should be included for review. Credit should also be given to faculty whose courses are structured in ways that cultivate curiosity, creativity, and critical acumen in their students.

Direction of undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students

a. Committee members shall review the extent and quality of faculty efforts in the following areas: directing graduate theses and dissertations or artistic/creative activities; supervising graduate teaching or practica; mentoring postdoctoral students. The Committee shall review the effectiveness of these efforts as judged by outcomes in such things as presentations at professional meetings, publications, performances, recitals, and exhibitions.

b. Committee members shall review the extent and quality of faculty efforts in the direction of undergraduate independent studies, practica, honors theses. The Committee shall review the effectiveness of these efforts as judged by such outcomes as student success in acceptance to graduate or professional schools, scores on national examinations, and special awards or achievements.

New Courses, New Teaching Practices, and other contributions to Instructional Programs
Committee members shall consider the effective development and execution of new courses, significant involvement in the development of new instructional programs, the use of new teaching techniques and practices, teaching awards, and in general the faculty member's level of commitment and contribution to the quality of the teaching program.

Student evaluations

a. Committee members shall review the student evaluation scores in the context of the range of scores for specific courses and for similar level courses (i.e., 100, 200 etc.) both within the department and within the disciplinary area. The information, which will be provided by the chair, shall also include other important variables, such as class size, whether the course is required or an elective, the response rate on the evaluations, and number of students enrolled in the course. With concurrence of the associate dean, the department chair may also supply the committee with any other special information about teaching context that may significantly influence instructional effectiveness (e.g., availability of facilities, equipment, and materials).

b. Committee members shall also review written evaluations and factor these into the merit score. Members may, if they see fit, include for the Chair a brief account of the most salient features of the written evaluations, noting significant patterns in the comments.

In general, evaluations are indicators of student perceptions. The evaluations should be judged in the context of other information and should not be the sole basis for evaluating teaching effectiveness or for making fine-grained distinctions.

Teaching Portfolios

To facilitate the evaluation process, each faculty member shall compile a teaching portfolio that contain the materials required for the above assessments. Portfolios shall include numerical evaluations for all courses and a list of all independent studies, theses, and other such courses one has directed. In addition, faculty shall include in the portfolios more complete data (syllabi, exams, written student evaluations and other materials) from two courses per year - one a specialty course and one a more general course. In consultation with the Chair, faculty members shall vary the courses in the portfolio so that over a three-year period it will contain a broad representation of the courses they have taught. It shall be the faculty member's responsibility to have these portfolios ready for review in January at a date set by the Chair.

Additional Methods

Departments may consider developing additional assessment methods, which may vary from unit to unit as best suits particular disciplines and departments. Among the alternatives that might be explored are, for example, more extensive teaching portfolios than the type described above, peer review, mentoring of junior faculty by accomplished senior faculty, and teaching "pairs" (where each faculty member provides feedback to the other). Departments should include procedures that provide ongoing monitoring of instruction, teaching mentoring, and written documentation of teaching progress. Adoption of such additional measures and procedures shall require support by a majority of the tenured and tenure-track faculty.