Peer and Self Evaluation of Teaching

For more resources on Peer Review, see the LTO page of resources on the topic. All of the following information was taken from links found on the LTO website.
http://www.ryerson.ca/lt/resources/teachingstrategies/peerevaluation/

What is peer review?

“Peer review is evaluation, by colleagues or peers, of all teaching related activities for either formative (for development) or summative (for personnel decision) purposes. Components of either type of review may include course materials, student evaluations, course portfolios, teaching portfolios, documentation of teaching philosophy, teacher self-assessments, classroom observations, and other activities which may be appropriate to a discipline.

Peer review of teaching may be completed as part of a formative review of teaching process and must be completed as part of the summative review of teaching. Both processes are important to faculty development and the improvement of teaching effectiveness. Since there are different purposes for each type of evaluation, the processes should be conducted independent of each other.

Formative evaluation describes activities that are to provide teachers with information that they can use to improve their teaching. The information is intended for their personal use, rather than public inspection. As a result, formative evaluation frequently is less formal, focuses on specific aspects of teaching, is ongoing, and includes a wide range of activities. It is a basis for the development of effective teaching throughout a career.

Summative evaluation describes activities that are conducted to gain information needed to make personnel decisions such as promotion, reappointment, tenure, or comprehensive review of tenured faculty relative to teaching performance. Consequently, the information collected becomes part of the faculty personnel file. It is often more general and comparative in nature. It may provide results of ratings or rankings, or summary information. The information should provide comparative information which enables the evaluator to determine the quality of teaching performance with respect to the performance of other peers.

Summary of Best Practices

1. Faculty involvement in developing the process is essential. Since each department has unique characteristics, faculty should be involved in tailoring general recommendations on peer review into specific guidelines at the departmental level.
2. Good peer review processes include several critical characteristics. These critical characteristics include: openness, mutually agreed-upon criteria, adherence to developed procedures, written feedback at all stages, discussion of the results, and methods for monitoring and revising the process.
3. **An effective peer review system must be supported by institutional leadership.** For peer review to be effective, the institution must value the importance of teaching and articulate this value in all documents related to the faculty review and reward system.

4. **Multiple sources, methods, and points in time must be included.** The most common sources of information on teaching effectiveness include: student evaluation, instructor self-assessment, peer review of course material, academic administrator evaluation, and **peer classroom observation.** Reliance on any one source of information to assess teaching effectiveness is to be avoided.

5. **Peers are the best source of judgment in several areas of teaching performance.** Peers serve as the best judge of subject matter expertise, course goals, instructional materials and methods, assessment and grading practices, student achievement, and professional and ethical behavior.

6. **Both Formative and Summative Review must be accomplished.** Formative Review that provides information used by the individual for improvement and professional development of teaching begins the first year of employment. Summative Review focuses on information needed for personnel decisions and accountability begins when a personnel decision is pending.

7. **Formative and Summative Reviews must only be used for the purpose stated.** Reviews for faculty development and reviews for personnel decisions must be kept separate.

8. **Teaching mentors should be assigned to new faculty during the first year of their contract.** New faculty should be given support for developing their teaching skills during their first year from experienced, successful teachers in the department or possibly from another discipline.

9. **Preparation for being a Peer Reviewer is essential.** Peer reviewers can be mentors, developers, and judge depending on the type of review. Peer reviewers need to study the literature related to in their roles as formative or summative reviewers. Reviewers especially need advance preparation for effective classroom observations.”

(excerpted from “Peer Review of Teaching,” North Carolina State University, [http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/peer_review/](http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/peer_review/))

**A Framework for Peer Review**

“Peer review of teaching is important for maintaining the quality of teaching and learning in a department. It provides faculty members with an opportunity to discuss and receive feedback on their teaching. It has the following potential benefits:

- Draws upon the disciplinary expertise of colleagues
- Contributes to a collegial academic culture

Considering that academic fields may have unique teaching styles and/or requirements, departments can use these guidelines to develop a peer review process that best fits their specific needs.
In general, effective peer review of classroom teaching includes the following steps:

- a pre-observation meeting
- a classroom observation
- a post-observation debriefing
- a written summary documenting the process

This process can typically be carried out in two to three hours.

**Pre-Observation Meeting**
Best practices suggest that the observer meet with the instructor before the class observation to discuss the instructor’s plan for the class. It may also be helpful to review teaching materials that were developed for the class. Materials may include:

- The course syllabus
- Any teaching materials the colleague has prepared for that class that might be relevant such as handouts, pre-class quizzes, homework assignments due that day, teaching notes, PowerPoint slides, or an overall teaching plan

During the pre-observation meeting the observer can benefit from discussing the following with the instructor:

- What do you want the students to have learned by the end of this class?
- What will happen in the class? What can I, as the observer, expect to see?
- How does this class fit in with the overall course?
- What pre-class work will the students have done for this class?
- Are there specific aspects of the class on which the instructor would like to receive feedback?

**Class Observation**
Best practices in peer review propose that a core set of criteria be used in the observation process, and that departments discuss and establish criteria appropriate for their field. These criteria may vary among fields. In the pre-observation meeting the instructor and observer identify two to three criteria on which the observer will focus during the class. The following criteria have been cited as factors that contribute to better student learning.

**Sample Criteria:**

- **Clarification of class purpose:** How well does the instructor convey the focus for the class?
- **Organization of class structure:** Are the class materials and activities well organized?
- **Reinforcement of major concepts:** Does the instructor emphasize the major concepts being covered? Do the activities and materials utilized in class reinforce the major concepts?
- **Pacing and scope:** Is the material presented at a suitable rate? Is the amount of material covered reasonable?
• **Classroom atmosphere:** Has the instructor established a safe and respectful classroom atmosphere conducive to student learning? Has the instructor created an inclusive class environment?
• **Consideration of diversity:** Does the instructor acknowledge or interact with a broad range of students? Is the instructor respectful of diverse opinions and perspectives? Does the instructor employ a diverse set of activities or methods to accommodate a range of student learning styles?
• **Class management:** Does the instructor effectively manage the class?
• **Balance between abstract and concrete:** If applicable, is there an appropriate balance between abstract and concrete concepts?
• **Classroom assessment:** If applicable, in what ways does the instructor check for comprehension and solicit feedback?

**Post Observation Meeting and Reporting**

It is recommended that departments discuss and develop a post-observation process that reflects departmental teaching expectations and priorities for peer review.

Following the class observation, the observer and instructor meet to review their assessment of the class. A written summary to document the observation process is recommended and generally includes the following:

- pre-observation meeting notes
- class observation notes (with emphasis on the 2-3 aspects of the class on which the observer was asked to focus)
- post-observation meeting notes

(excerpted from “Peer Review of Teaching,” Cornell University, http://www.cte.cornell.edu/faculty/peerreview.html)

**Sample Observation Forms and Guidelines**

**Guidelines for Peer Review**
(http://www.cte.cornell.edu/faculty/forms/peerreview_guidlines.pdf)

**Peer Review of Teaching Observation Forms**
(http://www.cte.cornell.edu/faculty/forms/peerreview_observer.pdf)
(http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/services/ldc/resource/evaluation/tools/peer/links/proforma.pdf)

**Peer Review of Teaching Instructor Form**
(http://www.cte.cornell.edu/faculty/forms/peerreview_instructor.pdf)