Peer Evaluation of Teaching Guide
Working Draft last updated July 25, 2010

1. Introduction

1.1 Benefits: Peer evaluation of teaching is a critical component of a quality program of education. Faculty members benefit from the feedback and recognition. Students benefit from the ongoing improvement in faculty instruction. Department heads benefit from the information about their faculty members and gain material from which to write annual evaluations and teaching award nominations.

1.2 This guide provides the information necessary for department heads, the review committee, and the faculty to schedule and implement the faculty peer review process.   Numerous factors were considered in developing this guide to include appropriate timing by faculty rank, content and process of the evaluation, and faculty evaluators' time commitment so as to not make this an overly arduous process, yet adhere to the spirit and letter of the *Manual for Faculty Evaluation.*

1.3 Purpose: Peer evaluation of teaching is discussed formally in the *Manual for Faculty Evaluation (http://provost.utk.edu/docs/evaluation/faculty-evaluation-manual-2009.pdf)*. As stated in this *Manual*, the underlying reason for conducting peer teaching reviews is:
> "Peer assessment provides faculty members with feedback from their peers that will assist them in identifying strengths and areas for improvement in their teaching. Peer assessment of teaching can foster constructive dialogue about teaching that can benefit not only the faculty member under review, but the members of the peer assessment team."

2. Peer Review Team Composition

2.1. Composition: As stated in the *Manual*, the peer evaluation team should consist of three tenured faculty members. One is to be selected by the faculty member under review, one by the department head, and the third is selected jointly by the faculty member and department head (I remain confused about which "two"?). The *Manual* encourages

departments to have at least one faculty member from outside the department on the peer assessment team.

2.2 Other considerations: In addition to what is stated in the *Manual*, it is suggested that a novice evaluator be paired with a seasoned department evaluator, when possible. It is also helpful to have someone on the team who is versed in learning theory and teaching pedagogy. To facilitate the peer evaluation process, each department or college may consider naming a Coordinator of Peer Reviews of Teaching.

3. **Timing of Review**

3.1 The *Manual* states when the peer evaluation should occur:

"A peer teaching review should be conducted for a tenure-track faculty member typically twice during their probationary period, and for a tenured faculty member at least once prior to consideration for promotion. Department bylaws may specify more specific intervals for peer assessment, as well as whether or if full professors are reviewed. Where special circumstances arise, a faculty member has the right to request reconvening of a peer assessment team or formation of a new peer assessment team in the interval between scheduled peer reviews. Peer assessment of teaching should also be conducted as part of a 'triggered' cumulative review of tenured faculty as described in the Faculty Handbook (3.8)."

3.2 Recommendation for new faculty: It is recommended that the first formal peer evaluation occur during the second semester of the second year or the first semester of the third year of a new faculty member's probationary period. This gives the new person an opportunity to acclimate and to reflect upon and improve his or her teaching before a formal peer review takes place. Informal feedback from an observer or mentor may be valuable to new faculty even during the first year of teaching. New faculty members are also encouraged to get (informal ideas) by scheduling visits to other instructors' classes.

3.3 Recommendation for tenured faculty: It is recommended that a tenured professor be evaluated three years into their associate professor status, and thereafter on a five-year schedule.

3.4 Recommendation for non-tenure-track full-time faculty: It is recommended that non-tenure-track full-time faculty be evaluated the second year of employment and thereafter on a five-year schedule.

3.5 Other considerations: A faculty member may request an informal review at any time. Likewise, a department head may request a review for a faculty member one semester in advance should the circumstances recommend it.

4. **Process**

4.1 Department bylaws: The *Manual* states that the process for peer evaluation of teaching should be addressed in the department bylaws (see Section 6 for an example).

4.2 Nature of feedback: The *Manual* recommends that the peer evaluation team offer the following points of feedback:

- Consider whether the courses of the faculty member have appropriate content and offer students sufficient opportunity to acquire appropriate skills;
- Consider whether the grading system and review/assessment tools are consistent with course content and student skill development;
- Examine the teaching methods of the faculty member for effectiveness; and

- Recognize the potential risks and benefits inherent in innovative teaching methods.

4.3 Teaching Methods: While pedagogy may be discipline specific, the review should assess the degree to which faculty actively engage students in their learning process. Active engagement is reflected in learning activities that create meaningful learning moments through application, analysis, evaluation, discovery, and critical thinking. These active learning moments may take place through engaged interaction in-class or through out-of-class activities and assignments.

4.4 Timing of feedback: As noted in the *Manual*, "feedback is facilitated by meetings with the faculty member to discuss teaching before, after, and otherwise as needed or requested during the assessment process."

4.5 Sequencing for a review: Evaluation team activities take place within a semester or a year depending on whether the courses taught are substantially different each semester (most reviews are anticipated to require 15-20 hours of faculty time.

Beginning of the semester or preceding semester	1. Take the TENN TLC training session, if needed 2. Meet with the department head or college/departmental Coordinator of Peer Reviews 3. Gather background information such as course syllabi, online site (e.g., Blackboard) information, teaching materials, assessment examples, formative feedback if collected, etc.
Peer review	4. Meet with the faculty member to discuss the review process 5. Understand the learning objectives for the course and for the classes to be observed, the pedagogy used, and the assessment of learning methods. Ascertain the faculty member's needs regarding the peer evaluation 6. Observe 3-4 class settings or combinations of other outreach/teaching situations (e.g., Clinical Teaching, Service Learning), conduct in-class student evaluation, and meet with faculty member afterward, as appropriate 7. Use the provided checklist and worksheets, as appropriate
Write and submit the review	8. Meet with the faculty member to provide verbal and/or written feedback 9. Prepare final report (may include review of Student Instruction of Assessment (SAIS) forms or other student feedback at this time; may mention use of innovative teaching methods) 10. Submit review to department head 11. Faculty member under review has the right to respond and be given the opportunity to do so

5. **Guide for Department Heads**

   5.1 It is important to not overuse reviewers. This responsibility should be distributed equally among a unit's qualified tenured faculty. It is important to bring more recently tenured faculty into the review process by pairing them with seasoned reviewers.

   5.2 Faculty reviewers may take advantage of the annual 90-minute TENN TLC Workshop entitled Training Peer Teaching Evaluation Reviewers.

   5.3 It is important that the evaluation informs the department head's annual evaluation, as well as the department's tenure and promotion process. In addition, the evaluation should count for the reviewers as a valued service contribution.

   5.4 Each peer review requires 15-20 hours of service from the members of the review team and could be viewed as the equivalent of a committee assignment.

   5.5 It is appropriate to use materials from the peer review to write annual evaluations, promotion and tenure documentation, and teaching award nominations.

6. **Sample of Department Bylaw**

   "Evaluation of faculty for promotion, tenure, retention, and merit will be based on teaching, service, scholarship/creative activity, research accomplishments and outreach, weighted according to effort allocation. Faculty should consult the Faculty Handbook (Chapter 3, Items 3.8- 3.11), the Manual on Faculty Evaluation, the UTCVM Guidelines for Tenure and Promotion , UTCVM Guidelines on Effective Peer Review of Teaching (Appendix 10.3) and departmental bylaws for specific information on evaluation of teaching, scholarship/creative activities, research, service, and outreach."

7. Checklist for Review Process

CHECKLIST FOR PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING
University of Tennessee

Prepare at the beginning of the evaluation period (or the preceding semester):
- ❐ Take the TENN TLC training session, if needed
- ❐ Meet with the department head or college/departmental Coordinator of Peer Teaching Reviews
- ❐ Gather and review:
    - o Teaching philosophy
    - o Course descriptions
    - o Syllabi
    - o Online sites (e.g., Blackboard)
    - o Teaching materials
    - o Assessment examples
    - o Formative feedback, if collected
- ❐ Meet with the faculty member, especially to understand his or her perspectives on teaching
- ❐ Understand the learning objectives for the course and for the classes to be observed, the pedagogy used, and the assessment of learning methods

Review during the semester or year:
- ❐ Observe 3-4 class settings or combinations of other outreach/teaching situations (e.g., Clinical Teaching, Service Learning)
    - o Completed Observation #1: Date_____
    - o Completed Observation #2: Date_____
    - o Completed Observation #3: Date_____
    - o Completed Observation #4: Date_____
- ❐ Conduct in-class student evaluation (without faculty member present), and meet with faculty member afterward.
    - o One method of getting formative feedback from students in these sessions is to ask students to get in groups and develop answers for the following questions, recording the agreed upon responses (to be turned in anonymously).
        - ▪ What do you like about the class regarding its different structural components (e.g., organization, presentation of content, methods of learning, assignments, evaluation process)
        - ▪ What structural components of the class would you like to see improved?
        - ▪ What do you like about the way the instructor teaches the class?
        - ▪ What would you like to see the instructor improve upon?
        - ▪ If you had to describe this instructor to a friend, what words would you use?
- ❐ Conduct interviews with Ph.D. student mentees
- ❐ Complete the provided worksheets, as appropriate

Write the review:
- ❐ Meet with the faculty member to provide verbal and/or written feedback (if the evaluation is done promptly and coincides with the observation, then two meetings may not be necessary).
- ❐ Prepare final report (may include review of Student Instruction of Assessment (SAIS) forms or other student feedback at this time; may mention use of innovative teaching methods)
- ❐ Submit review to department head
- ❐ Faculty member under review is notified of her or his right to respond to the department head.

8. **Worksheets [classroom observation]. For an evaluation of an online course, please refer to the Online Course Checklist on the OIT website (http://itc.utk.edu/teaching/online/).**

WORKSHEET FOR PEER REVIEW OF A TEACHING SESSION
University of Tennessee

Name of Reviewee _____   Rank _____   Years in Rank _____

Instructions: Prearrange observations of a variety of teaching settings, as applicable. Provide specific feedback on strengths and areas for improvement in the following areas. Include examples from your observation as much as possible. Prompts are given to aid your review; all questions may not be applicable in a given review.

Pre-Observation Notes (context of class session or lab, goals for the session):

Classroom Observation:

Session
1. Does the session reflect some aspect of the course objectives?
2. Was the material clearly organized for the students?
3. Does the instructor clarify relation of course to previous and future courses? Provide class goals or purpose? Outline?
4. Does the instructor have well-organized learning activities that reinforce active engaged learning?
5. Does the instructor explain transitions between class or lecture segments?
6. What instructional activities are employed to engage students in their learning process?

Instructor
1. Is the instructor well-prepared for this session?
2. Does the instructor vary the pace of activities?
3. Does the instructor encourage and respond to questions from students?
4. Does the instructor appropriately facilitate class discussion?
5. Does the instructor provide directions for the instructional strategies and/or assignments (if applicable)?
6. Does the instructor reinforce the use of active engaged learning techniques in class?
7. How effective is the instructor's voice clarity, pace, volume,

	tone and pitch?
	8. Does the instructor employ good eye contact with all students?
	9. Does the instructor have any distracting mannerisms?
	10. Does the instructor show respect for students?
	11. Does the instructor address students directly and in a constructive manner?
	12. Does the instructor recognize student confusion?
	13. Does the instructor provide appropriate guidance, feedback and positive reinforcement (including student assignments or presentations)?
	14. Does the instructor encourage creative thought for active learning?
Students	1. To what degree do the students appear to be actively engaged in class?
	2. Do students frequently ask questions in class to clarify learning?
	3. To what degree do students stay on task?
Integration of session, instructor, and students	1. Is the content appropriate, accurate and current?
	2. Does the instructor define new terms or concepts?
	3. Does the instructor effectively communicate reasoning processes for difficult concepts? Does the instructor elaborate or repeat complex concepts?
	4. Does the instructor use examples effectively?
	5. Does the instructor employ active engagement learning activities that directly reflect the course content?

_____   _____

Signature and Identification of Reviewer   Date

Forward completed reviews to the Coordinator of Peer Reviews and/or Department Head.

WORKSHEET FOR PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING MATERIALS
University of Tennessee

Name of Reviewee _____   Rank _____   Years in Rank _____

Instructions: In reviewing the instructor's teaching material or portfolio, provide specific feedback on strengths and areas for improvement in the following areas. Include examples from your observation as much as possible. Prompts are given to aid your review; all questions may not be applicable in a given review.

Notes from Meeting with Reviewee: (teaching philosophy, teaching goals, goals for review):

Course Syllabus (if applicable):
- Does the syllabus include goals and objectives of the course? Does it include course policies, descriptions of assignments and exams?
- Does the syllabus further support rapport with students and reflect a positive, motivating approach?
- Does the syllabus communicate high expectations for the students?
- Does the syllabus reinforce the importance of student responsibility for learning?
- Does the syllabus include a statement regarding the importance of active, engaged learning in class?

Course Materials: (objectives, recommended text(s) or readings, notes or handouts, presentations, videos or other teaching aids)
- Are the materials organized clearly? Is the format appropriate (acceptable, readable, attractive)?
- Does the material match the goals of the instructor, course, and program?
- Are the learning objectives clear, specific and measurable?
- Is the content accurate, current? At an appropriate level for students?
- Does the content attempt to engage student interest?
- Do the active learning exercises attempt to engage student interest?

- Does the material reflect creativity in teaching?

Assignments and Examinations:
- Are the directions in exams clear? Is the exam format and length appropriate for time available?
- Does the exam material match the course goals and content? Are the grading methods appropriate?
- Does the examination include assessment of higher order thinking skills (application, assessment, analysis, synthesis)? Reflect an appropriate level of challenge?
- Are homework/class assignments clear, challenging, and reflective of the course content?
- Does the instructor employ grading rubrics to aid the students in understanding expectations for performance?

Other: (Published articles, grants, proposals, documentation of other innovative strategies)

_____   _____

Signature and Identification of Reviewer   **Date**

Forward completed reviews to the Coordinator of Peer Reviews and/or Department Head.

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9. **Sample Evaluation**

EVALUATION OF TEACHING AND CLASSROOM PERFORMANCE
PROFESSOR JANE DOE
2005-2006

Evaluation Team: Professors John Smith and Carol Jones

This evaluation took place in the Fall Semester of 2010. During this semester, Prof. Doe taught Rocketry 101, with an enrollment of 65 students, and Orbital Dynamics 565, with an enrollment of 12 students. The following activities were conducted in the course of this evaluation:

- Discussion of Professor Doe's perspectives on teaching with her
- Review of Professor Doe's course syllabi
- Review of Professor Doe's philosophy of teaching document
- Review of the description of the project assigned in Rocketry 102 in Spring 2010.
- Review of Professor Doe's teaching evaluations over the past two years
- Interviews with eight former and current students (five undergraduate, three graduate) of Prof. Doe.
- Interviews with three peer instructors within Prof. Doe's unit
- Interview with a Ph.D. student whom Prof. Doe mentored
- Four classroom visits to observe Prof. Doe's teaching

Evaluation of Prof. Doe's Teaching Quality: Exceeds expectations.

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Improvement:

Strengths:
Throughout the evaluation process, it was evident that Prof. Doe's course planning and design, course content, delivery methods, and demeanor toward her students were excellent. Consistently high student evaluations and interviews with students indicate that Prof. Doe connects well with students and is considered tough but fair in her grading policies. Her material and delivery are very applications oriented. This is a hallmark of her work, particularly in the program's Orbital Dynamics course. She uses many examples from her own experiences, an approach which is much appreciated by her students both for their applications orientation as well as their ability to hold student interest and to be considered relevant to their future careers. She insists on professionalism in class, penalizing lack of attendance, insisting on class participation as a key element in grading, and being very firm about considering her class as a professional "work" environment, which requires being in class every day, arriving on time and not exhibiting unprofessional behavior (e.g., cell phone on, instant messaging, napping in class, etc.).

Simultaneously, Prof. Doe's delivery in the classroom is highly energetic, stimulating, and enthusiastic. She also creates a dynamic class atmosphere, in that she continuously walks around

the classroom instilling attention and participation by all students. This leads to a significant amount of student interaction within all of her classes. She seems to be in constant benevolent control of her classes.

The content of Prof. Doe's courses is very comprehensive, an important aspect of these types of offerings. There appears to be no omission of important or difficult issues (as is sometimes seen in other courses and colleges) due to a faculty preference or bias. Given the coverage demanded by the courses in Prof. Doe's teaching assignments, this is a significant accomplishment.

Outside of class, Prof. Doe is considered to be friendly and accessible. No student to whom we talked indicated that they had any problem in having discussions with her after class or in her office. They said that she was very responsive to e-mail and, overall, was highly accessible and helpful to them, both as a teacher and as a mentor.

Illustrative positive comments about the quality of Prof. Doe's teaching from her former and current students and her peers include the following:

"This class was probably one of the most beneficial classes I have taken while at school…" (student)

"Dr. Doe gave it to us straight and with honesty about the real world and how we needed to be prepared…Her class discussion was very interactive and effective – she wanted students to speak up – she wanted to hear what our thoughts, opinions and worries were about…Your grade was based on what you earned – your participation in class, attendance, along with how you expressed your reasoning on written exams." (student)

"I thought that Dr. Doe was a wonderful teacher in Rocketry 102. I really felt like I learned a lot about Rocketry and I think that her examples were even more helpful." (student)

"I had Dr. Doe in Rocketry 102 and another class also, I think it was Missile Engineering 111. In both, she was very clear on what she was teaching and was always good at getting the class involved and relating the subject matter to real life situations. Her tests were fair and discussions were never boring." (student)

"Dr. Doe follows a very creative way to teach her class. She brings out examples of her personal life as a rocket specialist and tailors it so as to address similar issues that students will face in their future jobs…She asks students to express their thoughts and encourages discussion that stimulates students' attention in class. This way, the class becomes a friendly environment where students are encouraged and feel free to ask questions and share ideas with both classmates and the teacher." (peer)

Suggested Areas for Improvement:
Our observations of the Rocketry 101 class, which meets for two 2-hour sessions each week, revealed that student attention was difficult to maintain for the allotted time. This is a general

problem that has been discussed by the college and one that generally demands either (1) a significant amount of that course being dedicated to group work or simulations, or (2) more frequent but shorter breaks.

It may be advisable to modify the course to include more interactive assignments or exercises for significant portions of each meeting time, or to at least include a five minute "stretch" break about halfway through each portion of each day.

The only complaint students had about Prof. Doe was that she did not return course projects on time, or not at all. (This was from students who had Prof. Doe in her Rocketry 102 class last spring.) Students found the project to be very relevant to the content, but would have liked to have had feedback on it. A significant proportion of the students interviewed from Rocketry 102 made comments like, "I never saw feedback on my final project" and, "I never got to see my final exam feedback or my individual feedback. I wasn't too concerned regarding my grade; however, I do like to have feedback in a timely fashion." Those who did receive exam feedback indicated that it was highly relevant; however, every effort should be made to get feedback to students on their course projects prior to the end of the course.

In the interviews, students were significantly more enthusiastic about Prof. Doe's teaching than were Prof. Doe's peers, though it should be emphasized that her peers definitely considered Prof. Doe to be a very competent mentor and teacher. However, Prof. Doe's peers felt that her teachings, while stimulating and involving, were not of significantly higher caliber than many other faculty, in contrast to the uniformly high praise of the students that Prof. Doe was one of the very best they had experienced. Prof. Doe's peers also commented that her examples, though relevant, were too oriented toward her personal career and did not include a sufficient breadth of situations for those interested in other facets of the field.

Finally, some students who were evaluated by her on their final oral presentations found her comments excessively pointed, particularly as the comments were delivered in front of the class. (Perhaps the same feedback content could have been provided in a less negative manner, thus providing the critique needed without the students feeling that they had been embarrassed in a peer setting.)

Even given these few needs for improvement, however, the evaluation team strongly feels that Prof. Doe is an exceptional teacher and deserves an, "Exceeds Expectations" evaluation due to her conscientiousness, professionalism, involvement of students in the classroom, stimulation of students' interest in her material, providing material to students that they can apply to important areas in their professional lives, and bringing applications oriented material to them in her subject matter in a way that makes them highly receptive to learning.

10. Resources

- TENN TLC – Guidelines for Peer Evaluation
- TENN TLC – Individual Faculty Consultation
- TENN TLC Annual Workshop – Training Peer Evaluation Reviewers: reviews process, what to look for regarding sound teaching and learning, how to provide the faculty member good feedback (90 minutes)
- *UT Faculty Teaching Guide* (Provost's Site http://provost.utk.edu/teaching/; TENN TLC Site http://tenntlc.utk.edu/publications.html)