

UTSA Senate Ad Hoc Committee on Peer Observation of Teaching Report to the UTSA Faculty Senate, April 11, 2013

BACKGROUND

In 2012 The UT System appointed The Task Force on Faculty Peer Observations of Teaching. The attached report was drafted by this task force and shared with members of the Academic Affairs and Faculty Quality committee of the System Faculty Advisory Council (SYSFAC). The report has not been considered by SYSFAC as a general body, nor has SYSFAC made any recommendations regarding peer observation of teaching.

A working group, formed by the UT System in early 2013, is considering this report in service of developing guidelines on peer observation. At this time, it is not clear whether the UT System intends for the recommendations to serve as general guidelines or a formal policy requirement.

SENATE AD HOC COMMITTEE

Based upon indications that the UT System is moving towards guidelines and/or policies on peer observation of teaching, the Executive Committee of the UTSA Faculty Senate formed, in February 2013, an ad hoc committee to develop recommendations on this issue. *The Senate Executive Committee is not advocating that a peer observation policy should be implemented. Instead, the intention in forming the ad hoc committee is to proactively draft a set of guidelines/policy with substantial Faculty Senate input so that a faculty voice is included in possible policy development.*

COMMITTEE GOALS

The goal here is not to lay out exactly how (or even if) the peer review process will occur. If peer observation is to be implemented the details should be developed at the department level given the wide variety of subjects and teaching methods across disciplines. The goal here was instead to establish the baseline expectations for the process should peer observation be required, while also including protections for academic freedom in the process.

DRAFT POLICY/GUIDELINES

The University of Texas at San Antonio
Handbook of Operating Procedures
Chapter 2 – Faculty and Academics

2.XX Faculty Development: Peer Observation

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The University of Texas at San Antonio recognizes the essential contribution of its faculty members to the quality of students' education and learning experiences and supports faculty development in all aspects of instruction.

II. RATIONALE

This policy sets forth the processes for peer observation for the purpose of faculty development in classroom instruction. The goal of the peer observation process is to improve teaching and student learning and should serve as a mentoring, as opposed to an evaluative, facility. In such, the outcome of the faculty peer observation process should be a reflective summary describing any steps taken or changes made towards the enhancement of teaching and improvement of student learning.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to all full-time faculty at The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) holding any of the following faculty appointments: Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor, Professor in Practice, Associate Professor in Practice, Assistant Professor in Practice, Distinguished Senior Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer III, Lecturer II, or Lecturer I. The policy also applies to individuals holding the above titles who hold administrative appointments of 50% or less.

IV. WEBSITE ADDRESS FOR THIS POLICY

TO BE ADDED.

V. RELATED STATUTES, POLICIES, REQUIREMENTS OR STANDARDS

UTSA or UT System Policies or the Board of Regents' Rules & Regulations

A. TO BE ADDED

VI. CONTACTS

If you have any questions about HOP policy XX, *ADD FINAL TITLE*, please contact the following office:

The Office of the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs (Provost)
210-458-4110

VII. DEFINITIONS

Peer Observer – Individual who observes and provides feedback to faculty member.

Faculty Member – a faculty member is any individual to whom this policy applies as defined above in Section III. Scope.

Department Faculty – For purposes of this policy, department faculty includes full-time voting members of the department.

Department Guidelines—Guidelines for the peer observation process developed by department faculty and approved by a majority of the voting members of the department faculty. Departmental policies regarding peer-observation should be posted in an online location accessible to all faculty (e.g., in the department common folder).

VIII. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Department Faculty

1. Responsible for developing and approving Departmental Guidelines for the peer observation process.

B. Faculty Member

1. If observation is to take place during a summer term, Faculty Member works with chair in advance of the start of the term to establish deadlines for the peer observation process. The deadlines table below provides a suggested timeline for the observation process during a long semester.
2. Follows Departmental Guidelines for peer observation based on academic title and teaching responsibilities.
3. Provides department chair with a written reflection summary describing any steps taken or changes made towards the enhancement of teaching and improvement of student learning as described in Department Guidelines.

C. Peer Observer

1. Following the Departmental Guidelines, Peer Observer will meet with Faculty Member prior to classroom observation to discuss syllabi and other teaching materials.
2. Provides reasonable flexibility in determining a mutually agreed upon date for observation and follow-up meeting.
3. Observes Faculty Member in the classroom.
4. Following classroom observation, meets with Faculty Member to orally convey observations and any resulting suggestions.

D. Department Chair

1. Ensures that approved Department Guidelines are posted in an online location accessible to all faculty covered by this policy.
2. Chair notifies to-be-observed Faculty Member of upcoming observation and directs Faculty Member to the Department Guidelines. Provides name of qualified and available Peer Observers to Faculty Member.
3. Meets with Faculty Member to discuss observation process and, if warranted, to come to an agreement on any additional mentoring or support.

4. Files faculty statement within department.
5. Provides Dean with summary memo of observation process.

E. Dean

1. Reviews the chair's summary memo for each Faculty Member observed.
2. Reviews any recommendations for additional mentoring or support, when such recommendations are made, and either approves or modifies these recommendations.
3. In rare cases in which an unusual level of support is needed, the Dean may forward the case to the Provost for additional review. In all other cases the Dean will provide a memo to the department chair and the Faculty Member stating that the peer observation process has concluded successfully and indicating when the Faculty Member will next be observed.

F. Provost

1. Reviews any cases forwarded by Deans.

G. Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee of the UTSA faculty Senate

1. Monitors the peer observation process and reports results annually to Faculty Senate
2. Recommends revisions to process, if warranted

IX. PROCEDURES

A. General Provisions

1. Purpose of Peer Observation
 - a. Ensure that courses cover material at an appropriate level;
 - b. Foster a culture of teaching excellence through collegial dialogue;
 - c. Foster professionalism in teaching;
2. Process of Peer Observation
 - a. The process of peer observation should follow the timeline outlined in this policy.
 - b. Within the general guidelines provided in this policy, specific Departmental Guidelines should be established.

B. Peer Observation Frequency and Exclusions

1. Frequency of Peer Observation
 - a. Assistant Professors should be reviewed once per year, unless faculty member requests additional observation.
 - b. Associate Professors and Full Professors should be reviewed once during each CPE review cycle as defined in HOP 2.22, *Comprehensive Periodic*

Evaluation of Tenured Faculty unless faculty member requests additional observation.

- c. Faculty members with the rank of Lecturer I, Lecturer II, or Assistant Professor in Practice shall be reviewed once per year, unless faculty member requests additional observation.
 - d. Faculty members with the rank of Lecturer III, Senior Lecturer, Distinguished Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor in Practice, or Professor in Practice shall be reviewed once during each period of appointment.
2. Exceptions
 - a. Any variation from the frequency of observation must be approved by the Provost or another individual designated by the Provost to make such approvals.
 3. Exclusions
 - a. Individuals with appointments at the rank of Assistant Instructor, Teaching Assistant I, and Teaching Assistant II should receive appropriate mentoring and training, but are not included in this policy.
 - b. This policy does not apply to individuals with faculty titles not specified above.

C. Development of Peer Observation Guidelines

1. Guidelines should be developed through consensus of the voting members of the department and are to be approved by the dean.
2. Guidelines should not specify what or how faculty will teach, as this would infringe upon academic freedom. Instead, guidelines should specify how the peer observation process is to be conducted.
3. Guidelines should focus on faculty development, keeping in mind that the peer observation process can supplement but is not intended to serve as a mechanism for evaluation.
4. Guidelines should protect against the possibility for harm caused by personal conflict or disagreements.
5. Guidelines should reflect the variety of instructional delivery methods and range of topics within each department
6. Guidelines should recognize that no single teaching method or approach is inherently superior to any other.

D. Peer Observation Process

1. The peer observation process should take place during a long semester, unless otherwise approved by the department chair and dean.
2. The following timeline is recommended, but Departmental Guidelines can specify alternative timelines:
 - a. At least two weeks prior to the first day of classes, the department chair
 - i. notifies faculty member of upcoming peer observation process;
 - ii. directs faculty member to online location of Department Guidelines; and

- iii. requests that the faculty member provide the names of at least three possible observers.
- b. Selection of Peer Observer
 - i. Department Guidelines should specify the minimum qualifications for an individual to serve as a peer observer;
 - ii. By the end of the first week of classes, the faculty member provides the department chair with a list of at least three qualified peer observers.
 - iii. Department chair
 - I. Contacts an individual from list provided by faculty member and requests that they serve as an observer.
 - II. If an individual contacted cannot or does not wish to serve as a peer observer, the chair contacts additional individuals from the list provided by the faculty member until a peer observer is identified, or until the list is exhausted.
 - III. Only in the event that none of the individuals on the list provided by the faculty member is available to serve as a peer observer may the chair request that someone not on the list serve as peer observer.
 - iv. In the event that the department chair is to be observed, the dean shall select a peer observer from a list provided by the chair.
 - v. Individuals holding administrative appointments of 50% or less shall go through the same peer observer selection process.
 - vi. The chair (or dean in cases in which the chair is to be observed) shall provide the faculty member of the name of the peer observer no later than the end of the third week of classes.
- c. Preliminary Meeting
 - i. The faculty member and peer observer shall meet prior to the end of the fifth week of classes to review course syllabi and other materials as specified in department guidelines.
 - ii. The faculty member and peer observer shall establish a date for the peer observation and a date for their post-observation meeting.
- d. Peer Observation
 - i. Department Guidelines shall specify whether observation will consist of a single visit or multiple visits to the faculty member's class
 - ii. In no cases should these visits occur without prior notification and discussion with the faculty member.
 - iii. Department Guidelines shall specify areas of performance to be included in the observation process for different course formats (lecture, lab, online, hybrid).

- iv. For courses in which the Faculty Member conducts both the lecture and lab sections of the course, department guidelines shall specify whether both lecture and lab are to be included in observation.
 - v. Peer observations should be concluded no later than the twelfth week of classes, unless approved by the department chair.
 - e. Post-observation meeting
 - i. Unless otherwise agreed to in advance, Peer Observer will meet with the Faculty Member within one week of the classroom observation or within one week of the final observation if department guidelines specify that multiple observations should take place.
 - ii. Peer Observer should reinforce strengths in the faculty member's performance and should provide any recommendations for improvement.
 - f. Faculty Report
 - i. No later than the last day of classes, the Faculty Member shall provide a report, to include information as specified below, to the department chair
- 3. Faculty Report shall include the following:
 - a. Name of Faculty Member
 - b. Name and course number of observed class
 - c. Name of Peer Observer
 - d. Date of observation(s)
 - e. Date of post-observation meeting
 - f. A narrative of what the faculty member has learned from the peer observation process and any plans for improvement or development.
 - g. Because evaluation tends to strain collegial and coaching relationships, the peer observation process should be focused on development not evaluation. Therefore, the peer observer will not provide a written report or evaluation.
 - h. Department Guidelines should provide uniformity in what is reported and included in the faculty member's file. Inclusion of any additional reports should be required in all cases or allowed in none to avoid any unwarranted assumptions of a negative outcome when no report is provided or is not included.
- 2. Outcome of the Peer Observation Process
 - a. Within 10 working days of receipt of the Faculty Member's report, the chair shall meet with the Faculty Member to discuss the report and any plans for development.
 - i. If the chair feels that additional support is needed, any plans for such support and follow-up shall be determined in agreement with the Faculty Member.

- ii. Any disagreement between the chair and the Faculty Member concerning possible follow-ups to the peer observation.
- b. Within 5 business days of meeting with the Faculty Member, the chair shall provide a memo to the dean, with copy provided to the Faculty Member, briefly summarizing the final outcome of the Peer Observation process and any plans for the provision of additional support.
- c. The Dean
 - i. reviews the chair's summary memo for each Faculty Member observed.
 - ii. reviews any recommendations for additional mentoring or support, when such recommendations are made, and either approves or modifies these recommendations.
 - iii. within 10 business days of receipt of memo from chair,
 - I. the Dean will provide a memo to the department chair and the Faculty Member stating that the peer observation process has concluded successful and indicating when the Faculty Member will next be observed or
 - II. in rare cases in which an unusual level of support is needed or additional review or action may be warranted, the Dean may forward the case to the Provost for review
- d. If a case is forwarded to Provost for additional review, the provost will make recommendations regarding any additional support, additional review or observation, or other action within 20 business days of receipt of dean's request for review.
- e. The University's grievance policy, outlined in HOP policy 2.34, *Faculty Grievance Procedure* is applicable to the peer observation process.

E. Protection of Individual Rights

Nothing in this institutional evaluation policy, or its interpretation, will be interpreted or applied to infringe on the tenure system, academic freedom, due process or other protected rights, nor to establish new term-tenure systems or to require faculty to re-establish their credentials for tenure.

F. Recommended Timeline

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>
At least two weeks prior to first day of class.	Provide faculty member with department guidelines and request name of at least three individuals qualified to serve as peer observer.	Department chair
First week of semester.	Provide names of recommended peer observers.	Faculty member

Second and third week of semester.	Select peer observer and notify faculty member of selection.	Department chair (or dean when chair is to be observed)
Four and fifth week of semester.	Meet to discuss teaching materials and set dates for observation and post-observation meeting.	Faculty member and peer observer.
Sixth through twelfth week of semester.	Peer observation(s)	Peer observer
Within one week of observation	Post-observation meeting	Faculty member and peer observer.
No later than last day of class.	Faculty report provided to chair.	Faculty member
Within 10 business days of receipt of faculty report.	Chair meets with faculty member.	Department chair.
Within 5 business days of meeting with faculty member	Chair provides summary memo to dean and faculty	Department chair.
Within 10 business days of receipt of chairs memo.	Dean reviews chair's memo and approves or amends recommendations.	Dean
Within 20 business days.	If a case is forwarded to the Provost for further review, any recommendations or decisions conveyed to dean, chair, and faculty member.	Provost

X. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

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XI. FORMS AND TOOLS/ONLINE PROCESSES

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XII. APPENDIX

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