

Guidelines for Faculty Peer Observation of Teaching The University of Texas at San Antonio

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. An effective tool for faculty development in the area of teaching is provided by the process of peer observation. These guidelines provide recommendations and minimum requirements for the peer observation process to be used by departments in developing their own procedures for peer observation.

The goal of the peer observation process is to improve teaching and student learning and should serve primarily as a tool for mentoring and professional development. The peer observation process should foster a culture of teaching excellence through collegial dialogue. Thus, 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.

1. Development of Departmental Guidelines

Departments should develop guidelines outlining the peer observation process. Departmental guidelines are to be developed through consensus of the voting members of the department. The departmental guidelines should:

- focus on faculty development and the mentoring aspects of peer observation,
- protect against the possibility for harm caused by personal conflict or disagreements,
- reflect the variety of instructional delivery methods and topics within each department,
- and recognize that no single teaching method or approach is inherently superior to any other.

Department Guidelines should specify:

- whether observation will consist of a single visit or multiple visits to the faculty member's class
- expectations for any pre- or post-observation meetings,
- that class visits will only occur with prior notification and discussion with the faculty member being observed,
- areas of performance to be included in the observation process for different course formats (lecture, lab, online, hybrid),
- and 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 the observation.

Department guidelines should also make a clear distinction between what is required for the observation report that is provided by the peer observer to the faculty member and what is required for the faculty member's report. Only the latter is required to be included in the faculty member's record.

The department chair should ensure that approved Department Guidelines are posted in an online location accessible to all faculty covered by this policy.

2. Who should be observed?

Beginning in the Fall of 2014, all promotion and tenure review reports sent to the UT System must show evidence of peer observations of teaching, including individuals with administrative appointments of 50% or less. Hence, anyone going up for tenure or promotion consideration in fall 2014 MUST have peer observations of their teaching done beforehand (i.e., fall 2013, spring or summer 2014). The decision on whether to include peer observation for Comprehensive Periodic Evaluation or for promotion of non-tenure track faculty should be made within the Departments and Colleges.

3. How often should peer observation be conducted?

The following recommendations for the frequency of observation may be modified by departments so long as the requirement of peer observation for promotion and tenure cases is met. Individuals may also request more frequent observation to the extent that this can be accommodated by the department. It is recommended that Assistant Professors be reviewed once per year and Associate Professors be reviewed once prior to seeking promotion to Full Professor. If department guidelines specify that peer observation be included in the CPE review process, Associate and Full Professors should be reviewed once during each CPE review cycle as defined in HOP 2.22, *Comprehensive Periodic Evaluation of Tenured Faculty*.

If department guidelines specify that peer observation includes non-tenure track faculty, it is recommended that faculty members with the rank of Lecturer I, Lecturer II, or Assistant Professor in Practice shall be reviewed once per year and 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.

4. Who can serve as a peer observer?

Department guidelines should specify who can serve as peer observers. The faculty member being observed should have considerable input into who will serve as the peer observer. Observations by non-faculty experts cannot substitute for peer observation.

5. What training requirements and options are available to the peer observer?

Department guidelines should specify whether there are requirements for training for peer observation. Guidelines should also direct peer observers to any available options for training, even if not required. Training can occur within the department or through the Teaching and Learning Center (<http://www.utsa.edu/tlc/>)

6. What is to be included in the faculty member's report for inclusion in the faculty member's record?

- A. Name and signature of Faculty Member
- B. Name and signature of Peer Observer
- C. Name and course number of observed class
- D. Date of pre-observation meeting
- E. Date of observation(s)
- F. Date of post-observation meeting
- G. A narrative written by the faculty member describing what the faculty member has learned from the peer observation process and any plans for improvement or development.

Note: Department guidelines may specify additional information that is to be provided to the faculty member by the observer but any such information should not be included in the final report. Only the faculty member's narrative is included in the final report.

The report should be provided to the department chair (or to the dean in the event the faculty member being observed is the department chair) no later than the last day of classes for the semester in which the observation takes place. The department chair or dean will file the report with the faculty member's record.

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.	Department chair
No later than the third week of the semester.	Identify peer observer and provide name of observer to chair.	Faculty member
No later than fifth week of semester.	Meet to discuss teaching materials and set date(s) for observation.	Faculty member and peer observer.
No later than 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