



Summative Evaluations of Teaching Effectiveness

Custom Research Brief

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I. RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Project Challenge

Leadership at a member institution approached the Council to investigate effective practices to integrate multiple sources of evidence to evaluate teaching effectiveness among faculty members of different appointments and rank. Specific questions addressed in this report include:

Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness through Multiple Sources of Evidence:

- *How do institutions integrate multiple sources of evidence to evaluate teaching effectiveness of faculty members?*
- *What sources of evidence are purposefully included in or excluded from summative processes?*
- *How do administrators determine the best size for strategic samples of different data sources?*
- *How does the process of multiple-source evaluation account for faculty members of different appointment or rank? How does it account for different occasions for review (review and tenure, annual evaluation, reappointment)?*
- *With what frequency are faculty evaluated, and how does frequency of evaluation vary among faculty of different appointments or rank?*

Implementing Multi-Source Teaching Evaluations:

- *How have institutions implemented or changed summative processes for evaluating teaching effectiveness?*
- *What strategies are most effective in implementing and/or changing the evaluation process to include multiple sources of evidence?*
- *What training processes or other resources support faculty or administrative support of the evaluation?*
- *How do administrators promote summative evaluation processes across departments? How do departments adapt evaluation processes to their needs?*

Challenges and Lessons Learned:

- *What challenges do institutions face in using the summative evaluation process?*
- *What outcomes have resulted from adopting the multi-source evaluation process? How have faculty members responded?*
- *How do institutions promote transparency throughout the evaluation process?*

Project Sources

- Education Advisory Board's internal and online (www.educationadvisoryboard.com) research libraries
- National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] (<http://nces.ed.gov/>)
- University websites

I. RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Research Parameters

The Council targeted its outreach to administrators of faculty development at institutions similar in scope and mission to the requesting member institution, and/or institutions that demonstrate particular strength in using summative processes to evaluate teaching effectiveness. Please note that contacts from several institutions declined to share their name or contact information in the report.

A Guide to the Institutions Profiled in this Brief				
Institution	Location	Type	Approximate Total Enrollment (Undergraduate)	Classification
University A	Pacific West	Private	7,000/5,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
University B	Mid-Atlantic	Public	4,000/3,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
University C	Northeast	Public	6,000/5,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
University D	Midwest	Public	29,000/23,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University E	Northeast	Public	5,500/5,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
University F	Pacific West	Private	8,000/5,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (larger programs)
University G	South	Public	50,000/40,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University H	Mountain West	Private	12,000/5,000	Research Universities (very high research activity)
University I	South	Public	7,000/6,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)
University J	Mid-Atlantic	Public	6,000/5,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (smaller programs)
University K	South	Public	5,000/4,000	Master's Colleges and Universities (medium programs)

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

II. EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Key Observations

- ❖ **Across institutions, most evaluations of teaching effectiveness sample the following sources of evidence:**
 1. **Student evaluations**
 2. **Peer reviews**
 3. **Course materials**
 4. **Faculty portfolio/self-assessment** (consisting of several sources)
 5. **Administrator evaluations**
- ❖ **Teaching evaluation processes incorporate supplementary evidence such as student work, letters of recommendation, record of participation in professional development opportunities, grading criteria and student grade distributions, and/or video demonstrations of teaching.**
- ❖ **Procedures for evaluating faculty teaching effectiveness, and sources of information on which faculty are evaluated, are the same across all levels of faculty appointment in a department.** Evaluation procedures informing tenure decisions may involve a greater variety of samples or more comprehensive assessment of materials, since evaluation criteria is more stringent.
- ❖ **At most contact institutions, individual academic departments are responsible for defining and executing procedures to evaluate teaching effectiveness.** Institution-wide policies for teaching evaluation are uncommon, although guidelines for the process are usually provided in the faculty handbook.
- ❖ **Faculty members are more receptive to receiving evaluative feedback from their peers than from other direct-observation sources, such as student evaluations.** Administrators regard peer review as the most effective strategy for evaluating faculty teaching effectiveness.
- ❖ **Administrators emphasize the importance of peer review as a component of formative, in addition to summative, review processes.** Peer feedback is often used to support professional development beyond the evaluation process through mentoring opportunities and faculty-led teaching workshops.
- ❖ **Institutions pilot new strategies for evaluating teaching effectiveness in selected academic departments before requiring them institution-wide.** Several contact institutions are using this model to implement task force recommendations to revise policies or procedures for evaluating faculty teaching effectiveness as part of a strategic plan.

III. INSTITUTION-WIDE PROCESSES

University Policies and Recommendations for Teaching Evaluation

Recommendations on how to evaluate teaching effectiveness are usually offered through institutional handbooks or by teaching resource centers. Typically, handbooks contain broad guidelines for the evaluation process and state how often evaluation should occur. At some institutions, these guidelines are more specific; for example, faculty handbooks at **University H** and **University A** include suggestions for the evidence that should be used to evaluate teaching. Below is an example of institutional guidelines for teaching evaluation listed in University H's faculty handbook.

Faculty Handbook Guidelines for Teaching Evaluation

Teaching: The quality of teaching shall be judged by all appropriate evidence available. The evidence that should normally be used, though not to the exclusion of other evidence available, will include some or all of the following:

1. Course organization (e.g., course outlines, reading lists, statements regarding the basis on which grades will be given, and the like);
2. The degree of commitment to students (e.g., class attendance, punctuality, office hours, counseling, and the like);
3. Evaluation of teaching performance through course and teacher evaluations performed by students and/or class visits by department members;
4. Scholarly and/or creative work of his/her students (e.g., theses) and recognition of his/her students' work (e.g., prizes or awards won);
5. Students and/or alumni letters and evaluations (if available and representative);
6. Innovative teaching in method or content, extra efforts in developing new courses or laboratories;
7. Efforts to improve teaching effectiveness (e.g., self-analysis, attendance at appropriate programs, taping or filming class sessions for analysis, and the like).

University A's handbook explains that a faculty member seeking promotion or tenure should compile a "Summary of Achievements," a file and appendix of appropriate materials containing evidence of his or her achievements across all areas of performance, including teaching, research, and service. This file is submitted electronically, and can be updated across the course of the faculty member's career. Although the specific requirements for each element are determined at the department level, the file and appendix typically include the following pieces of evidence demonstrating teaching effectiveness:

Evidence of Teaching Effectiveness Included in Summary of Achievement File

- **Teaching Personal Statement** summarizing philosophy, pedagogical practices, challenges faced
- **Peer Evaluations**, following guidelines determined by the academic unit
- **Teaching Portfolio (in the Appendix), including:**
 - **Student Evaluations** from all courses taught at the University
 - **Grade Distributions**, with explanations for any unusual distributions
 - **Selected Course Materials**, such as course outlines, course handouts, electronic teaching links (e.g., Blackboard), examinations, or syllabi from new or revised courses
 - **Additional Documentation as applicable**, such as teaching awards, testimonials from students or colleagues, evidence of teacher training (e.g., certificates of attendance at teaching workshops), video demonstrations of teaching

III. INSTITUTION-WIDE PROCESSES

Recommendations from Teaching Support Centers

At several contact institutions, centers for teaching resources and support provide detailed recommendations for developing teaching evaluation procedures. For example, **University D's** Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning conducts studies on best practices in evaluating teaching effectiveness through processes of peer faculty review and student course evaluations. These documents are available on the center's website; contacts indicate that many departments use them to guide faculty evaluation processes. Both papers were produced by the Center's board of directors, which includes faculty representatives from across the institution, and each year takes on a research project investigating an area of teaching and learning. (These best practice studies will be discussed in further detail later in this section of the report, under "Integrating Multiple Sources of Evidence.")

University G's Center for Teaching Excellence is undertaking an initiative to revise and strengthen teaching evaluation practices as part of the university's 10-year strategic plan. The task force made recommendations on the best sources of data to evaluate teaching effectiveness: student evaluations; peer evaluations; faculty self-evaluations; and administrator evaluations. Although no institution-wide policies regulate teaching evaluation procedures, contacts report that most academic units use these evidence sources per the recommendations.

Departmental Procedures for Teaching Evaluation

All contact institutions carry out annual reviews of faculty, regardless of rank, which include an evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Requirements and procedures for teaching evaluation often vary across different departments; at most contact institutions, each academic unit is responsible for defining the criteria and process by which teaching effectiveness is evaluated.

Importance of the Department-Specific Approach

Across institutions, contacts stress the importance of permitting each academic department to develop its own approach to evaluating faculty teaching effectiveness and weighing evaluative sources. Administrators enable departments to craft their own evaluation procedures for two reasons:

- **Respect of distinct needs of academic disciplines.** Contacts recognize that academic disciplines have distinct needs, and that procedures for evaluating faculty of a biology department may not effectively evaluate the faculty of a law school. Therefore, institutions do not deploy university-wide policies that detail how faculty should be evaluated.
- **Involvement of faculty in procedure development.** Across contact institutions, administrators find that faculty members are more receptive to evaluation on teaching performance if they are involved in defining the terms on which they are evaluated. Crafting procedures at the department level creates a discussion among faculty members about how evaluations of teaching are used most effectively, not only to assess performance but also to advance professional development.

III. INSTITUTION-WIDE PROCESSES

Evaluating Teaching Effectiveness across Different Faculty Ranks

The criteria on which faculty members' teaching effectiveness is evaluated in the context of promotion and tenure decisions differs according to the position or status the faculty member is applying for. There are four levels of faculty rank across contact institutions: instructor, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor. Below are examples of the criteria on which faculty teaching performance is evaluated for different professorial ranks.

<i>Promotion to Assistant Professor:</i> Faculty member shows potential to improve	<i>Promotion to Associate Professor:</i> Faculty member is consistently above-average in all duties	<i>Promotion to Full Professor:</i> Faculty member demonstrates excellence and expertise
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Willing to accept and learn from evaluations and criticism from peers• Tries different teaching methods and pedagogies• Has essentially positive evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shows consistent above-average performance• Uses creative pedagogy• Confident in teaching abilities• Qualified to offer graduate instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has national reputation as an educator• Has perfect student evaluations• Considered master teacher within the department

IV. INTEGRATING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Sources of Evidence for Teaching Evaluation

Commonly Used Evidence	Supplementary Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written student evaluations• Written peer evaluations• Administrator evaluations• Peer evaluations (based on multiple sources of evidence)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Letters of recommendation from colleagues, students, or alumni• Scholarly or creative work by students• Videos of classroom teaching• Teaching statement• Formative peer evaluations of teaching• Grade distributions and/or rubrics• Examinations• Links to electronic materials• Evidence of participation in development opportunities• Self-reflection• Course materials (syllabi, course objectives, etc.)

Academic departments traditionally evaluate teaching effectiveness through student feedback, peer evaluations, administrator evaluations, and faculty-created teaching portfolios. Many of these sources draw on multiple pieces of evidence to provide a multi-dimensional portrait of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness; the extent to which these traditional sources can be modified and augmented with less common supplementary evidence allows for a summative, formative evaluation process.

Student Evaluations of Teaching

Contacts at **University I** argue that student assessments are sometimes influenced by non-academic or uncontrollable factors, such as the faculty member's personality, the course subject, or the grades that the student receives during the semester. Faculty members are sometimes resistant to being judged on student course evaluations; contacts from **University G**, **University H**, and **University A** express that other tools, like peer evaluations of teaching, are perceived as a more valid measure of faculty teaching performance.

Integrating Student Evaluations with Other Sources of Evidence

In their best practice study on using student evaluations, **University D's** teaching resource center notes that student evaluations alone do not provide sufficient information for making employment decisions. To integrate student reviews with other evidence:

- **Use student evaluations to identify trends.** At **University I**, **University B**, and **University C**, administrators use student evaluations to identify faculty members who deviate significantly from other faculty members in the department. Similarly, contacts at **University K** indicate that student evaluation scores are best used to identify trends across a department and throughout a single faculty member's career.
- **Incorporate qualitative feedback.** Student evaluations that include open-ended questions may provide more robust information than those limited to scoring rubrics. Some institutions permit faculty members to supplement course evaluation forms with letters of recommendation written by students or alumni, which provide a qualitative assessment of teaching performance.
- **Encourage faculty members to reflect on student reviews.** Several institutions require faculty to reflect on student evaluations in a self-assessment. This provides context for the evaluations and asks faculty members to identify areas of improvement.

IV. INTEGRATING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Adjusting the Weight of Student Evaluations in Light of Departmental Priorities and Faculty Rank

Student evaluations may be weighed differently across academic divisions and faculty rank.

- **Informing Tenure Decisions:** In promotion decisions, faculty are expected to have mostly positive evaluations from students to earn promotions to assistant professor, and near-perfect student evaluations in order to earn tenure.
- **Evaluating Graduate Advising:** Faculty members who advise graduate students may be evaluated by advisees in a more comprehensive format than a typical evaluation form. Advisees may be asked to participate in an interview or write a narrative about the advisor's performance.

Peer Evaluations

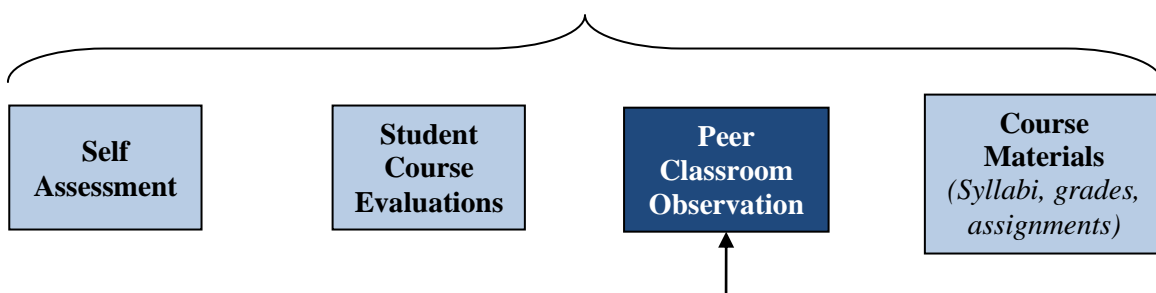
Peer evaluations of teaching are regarded by several contacts as the most important tool in the assessment process. In addition to offering a sound, informed perspective on a faculty member's teaching performance, peer evaluations can be an influential professional development tool, especially when paired with mentoring and other support services.

Integrating Peer Evaluations with Other Sources of Evidence

University D's report on best practices in summative peer evaluation of faculty teaching states that to be effective, a peer review should draw on multiple sources of evidence, including a statement of teaching philosophy, course syllabi, reports by peers who have observed the teacher in a classroom or on video, examples of course materials, samples of student work, and student evaluation forms.

Using Peer Review as a Summative Assessment

While sometimes limited to a write-up of one or two classroom observations, peer review can also serve as a synthesis of several other evidence sources commonly used in an evaluation. In this process, an individual or committee of peer faculty members examine course materials, student course evaluations, classroom observation performance, and a self-assessment narrative to produce a broad evaluation of the faculty member's teaching performance.



In a peer classroom observation, a faculty member joins one or more class sessions taught by the instructor under review. Reviewers are usually provided with a course syllabus and other relevant materials to contextualize the class. After the observation, reviewers produce an evaluation of the faculty member's teaching effectiveness based on the experience by filling out an evaluation form or rubric or writing a narrative statement.

IV. INTEGRATING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Training and Support

Institutions that use peer review to evaluate teaching often provide extensive training and support throughout the process. Through a new program at **University A**, selected faculty members lead workshops to train their peers in effective classroom observation. Currently, four faculty members are allotted release time and a stipend to lead the series.

Departments provide guidelines for peer review procedures. Contacts from **University A** and **University G** report that the establishment of peer review procedures and guidelines is one goal of institution-wide initiatives to revise teaching evaluation processes. University G's Center for Teaching Excellence is researching best practices in peer review to inform this process, aiming to develop a rubric on which teaching effectiveness can be quantitatively scored.

Formative Uses of Peer Review

Unlike student course evaluations, a faculty member's evaluation of a colleague's teaching effectiveness can lead to an ongoing dialogue between the two parties that can support the professional development of the faculty member under review. Use of peer reviews for formative purposes is one of the best practices suggested by **University D's** literature review.

"To be fully effective, summative evaluation should not occur on its own, but should instead alternate with an ongoing program of formative evaluation."

–Paper by the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, *University D*

At several contact institutions, the peer evaluation process is tied to mentoring opportunities. Mentorships are designed to help faculty members advance their teaching abilities outside of the framework of formal evaluation. Teaching resource centers at **University A**, **University F**, and **University D** offer opportunities for classroom observation and peer faculty mentoring that are separate from formal processes of teaching evaluation. In some cases, faculty can elect to include records of these professional support activities in a faculty portfolio submitted for formal review; at University D, it is common for faculty to include formative peer evaluations of teaching in their teaching portfolios.

Adjusting the Weight of Peer Evaluations in Light of Departmental Priorities and Faculty Rank

- **Weighed Heavily for Promotion and Tenure Decisions:** Since administrators regard peer review as the most effective and accurate means to assess teaching performance, this evidence source is weighed heavily in decisions about promotion and tenure. In these cases, faculty members may be reviewed by a greater number of peers and/or through more numerous classroom observations.
- **Mostly Formative for Early-Career Faculty:** In contrast, peer evaluation may serve a mostly formative purpose for less experienced faculty members. For example, assistant professors may not be evaluated by peers as part of their summative annual review, but matched with a peer mentor to provide ongoing teaching support.

Peer Review Optional or Uncommon at Some Contact Institutions

Although valued among some administrators, peer review is sometimes not included in departmental procedures, is optional, and/or is considered part of the faculty portfolio component of the evaluation. Some administrators do not perceive peer evaluation as valuable because faculty members under review know when they are observed and have time to prepare. Contacts from **University F** similarly report that peer reviews of teaching are ineffective because they are usually based on one classroom observation that is not representative of the faculty member's overall teaching performance.

IV. INTEGRATING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Administrator Review

Evaluations of faculty performance in all areas usually include some form of review from a department administrator. Administrators are often responsible for performing a synthesized assessment of all sources of evidence submitted to represent faculty teaching effectiveness. In some cases, administrators observe faculty teaching themselves: at **University B** and **University I**, department chairs conduct classroom observations to supplement those done by peer faculty.

Adjusting the Weight of Administrator Evaluations in Light of Departmental Priorities and Faculty Rank

- **Comprehensive Assessment for Tenure Decisions:** When performed to inform tenure decisions, an administrator's assessment of faculty teaching will involve a more stringent assessment of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness based on a comprehensive portfolio. At **University A**, administrators make tenure decisions based on an assessment of a faculty member's career so far as demonstrated in the comprehensive Summary of Achievement File.
- **Formative Administrator Review:** Administrator evaluations can serve as an important formative resource for faculty members as well. At **University H**, administrators help faculty in their department identify professional development goals as part of the annual review.

Faculty Portfolio: Course Materials and Self-Assessment

Most contact institutions require faculty to compile a portfolio containing evidence of effectiveness in teaching, usually represented through course materials such as syllabi, handouts, and student grades. Course materials are often supplemented by a narrative self-assessment summarizing the faculty members' statement of teaching and reflecting on the portfolio's contents. The teaching portfolio synthesizes multiple sources of evidence to provide a thorough representation of a faculty member's teaching performance. The teaching portfolio is evaluated by a faculty member's colleagues, through the peer evaluation process, and/or department administrators responsible for conducting annual or promotion-related reviews.

Usually Required

- ✓ **Course Syllabi:** Syllabi are used to evaluate the faculty member's ability to effectively time different aspects of a course across a term, his/her choice of perspectives in the discipline, and whether materials are up to date.
- ✓ **Student Grades:** Grade distributions and/or rubrics demonstrate the methodology used to grade students.
- ✓ **Self-Review:** Faculty members provide a statement of teaching and reflect on their own teaching effectiveness as conveyed through student and peer evaluations.

Optional Supplementary Material

- ✓ **Letters of Recommendation** from peers, students, or alumni
- ✓ **Scholarly or creative work by students**
- ✓ **Evidence of innovative or creative pedagogy**
- ✓ **Videos of classroom teaching**
- ✓ **Evidence of efforts to improve teaching effectiveness, e.g., peer evaluations of teaching**

IV. INTEGRATING MULTIPLE SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

Adjusting the Weight of Faculty Portfolios in Light of Departmental Priorities and Faculty Rank

Because faculty teaching portfolios contain a variety of sources of evidence, they are likely to differ across academic departments and require a greater number of sources when used to inform decisions on tenure and promotion of higher faculty.

- **Difference in Appropriate Course Materials:** Contents of the teaching portfolio are likely to differ highly among academic departments depending on what course materials and student work best represent effective teaching in that discipline. For example, a department of fine arts may require the inclusion of creative work done by students, while an English department may weigh course reading lists more heavily.
- **Weighed Heavily in Tenure Decisions:** To be awarded tenure, faculty members must demonstrate the potential for a productive career at the institution. Faculty members under consideration for tenure may be asked to reflect more broadly on their past performance as well as teaching goals across the rest of their career.

Initiatives to Revise Teaching Evaluation Procedures

At **University G**, **University A**, and **University H**, administrators recently launched initiatives to reexamine and revise procedures for teaching evaluation. Initiatives aim to strengthen and support departmental procedures for evaluating teaching effectiveness rather than to implement institution-wide guidelines for how teaching evaluation should be performed. These projects are ongoing at all contact institutions, but resulted in several initial outcomes so far.

- **Pilot initiatives in selected academic departments.** Task forces at **University G** and **University H** piloted strategies for teaching evaluation in select departments across the institution. At **University G**, the task force is piloting a framework for peer evaluation that asks evaluators to grade different aspects of teaching across a quantitative rubric. Leadership at **University H** launched the Teaching Excellence Initiative, which provides grant funding to four academic departments to investigate and implement effective strategies for evaluating faculty teaching.
- **Engagement of departmental leadership in creating evaluation procedures.** Policy revision at **University A** charges each academic unit with the development of guidelines for faculty teaching review, and requires their reevaluation by departmental faculty every three years.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES NOTE

The Advisory Board has worked to ensure the accuracy of the information it provides to its members. This project relies on data obtained from many sources, however, and The Advisory Board cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information or its analysis in all cases. Further, The Advisory Board is not engaged in rendering clinical, legal, accounting, or other professional services. Its projects should not be construed as professional advice on any particular set of facts or circumstances. Members are advised to consult with their staff and senior management, or other appropriate professionals, prior to implementing any changes based on this project. Neither The Advisory Board Company nor its programs are responsible for any claims or losses that may arise from any errors or omissions in their projects, whether caused by the Advisory Board Company or its sources.

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