

Peer Review Procedure Sample *

University of Colorado History Department Peer Course Evaluation Plan¹ (APPROVED 12/4/2020)

Overview/Purpose

The History Department has committed to developing best practices in teaching. The process outlined below is designed with several goals in mind:

- a) to provide consistency in the scheduling of observations and in evaluating components of teaching that the department values as effective practices;
- b) to be formative and developmental for faculty at all ranks in improving teaching over time; and
- c) to foster a departmental culture of scholarly teaching.

The process implements strategies that are backed by research, including employing a standard protocol for classroom observations and incorporating those observations within a broader process of consultation and conversation.²

Evaluation Types

There are two types of evaluation:

- 1) A Full Peer Course Evaluation consisting of a pre-observation meeting, classroom observation(s), at least one post-observation discussion, and a formal report
- 2) An Abbreviated Observation consisting of a single classroom observation and formal report.

Selection of Observers

The Department Chair, Director of Undergraduate Studies, and Chair of the Mentoring Committee will meet at the beginning of each semester to determine who will be observed in the upcoming semester, based upon the frequency plan detailed below and prioritizing those due for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Review.

They will also tentatively identify peer evaluators and select the appropriate evaluation type. Faculty members to be observed will be consulted as part of this process, and peer evaluators will be assigned only after verifying with the individual faculty members involved.

Faculty members to be observed have the right, within reason, to veto specific observers; any such vetoes will be kept confidential. The Department Chair will make the final selection of observers and may delegate specific areas of responsibility to the Undergraduate Studies Committee (such as responsibility for observing Lecturers and Postdocs).

Full Peer Course Evaluation Process

Pre-observation

Prior to the in-person consultation, the observer should request and review a copy of the syllabus, including course learning goals (e.g., departmental Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)). The observer can also review optional materials, including class handouts/exams, access to the course management system, prior FCQs, etc.

In-Person Consultation

The observer should set up an in-person meeting with the instructor being observed **before** any classroom observation, ideally early in the semester. At this meeting, the observer and instructor should discuss

1. scheduling the class visit(s),
2. the goals of the course and/or the class session(s) to be observed,
3. the observation criteria to focus on, and
4. any other course materials.

The observer and instructor may also discuss supplementing the course evaluation process with additional forms of data, such as student interviews (CTL CLIP service or a modified version), other CTL services, and/or ASSETT's VIP service.

Classroom Observation

The number of classroom visits is to be determined by the instructor and the observer. As a guideline, 2-3 classroom visits over the course of the semester are recommended for pre-tenure faculty and 1-2 are recommended for post-tenure faculty.

Post-Observation Discussion

After all classroom observations have been completed, the observer should schedule a debriefing session with the observed instructor. Debriefing sessions in between visits may also be scheduled if appropriate.

*Adapted from the University of Colorado History Department, retrieved July 27, 2021:

https://www.colorado.edu/teaching-quality-framework/sites/default/files/attached-files/peer_course_evaluation_plan_hist-revised.pdf

1 Developed in partnership with the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative (<https://www.colorado.edu/teaching-quality-framework/>) with sponsorship by the National Science Foundation (DUE-1725959) - any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF.

2 American Association for the Advancement of Science, "Describing & Measuring Undergraduate STEM Teaching Practices," 2012, <http://cliconference.org/files/2013/11/Measuring-STEM-Teaching-Practices.pdf>; K.T. Brinko, The practice of giving feedback to improve teaching: What is effective? The Journal of Higher Education 64, no. 5 (1993): 574-593, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2959994>.

Abbreviated Observation Process

The observer should consult (by email or in person) with the instructor to be observed to

- schedule a single classroom observation;
- select criteria to focus on during the observation; and
- request the syllabus, which should be reviewed before the classroom observation.

Any other aspects of the Full Peer Course Evaluation process may be completed as time allows, but they are not required.

Filing of the Report

The report, a letter addressed to the chair and CC'd to the observed instructor, should address the observation criteria selected from the Peer Observation Protocol and, where applicable, other elements of the course evaluation (e.g., evaluation of course materials, pre-and post-consultations with the instructor, interactions with students, etc.). A single comprehensive report is required for each Full Peer Course Evaluation process, *even if* multiple observations of the classroom occur. This report should also be completed if an Abbreviated Observation (a single observation) is conducted. This report should be submitted to the department chair and the program assistant *within one month* following the close of the semester observed. The report will be added to the observed faculty member's personnel file for comprehensive review, reappointment, promotion, tenure, post-tenure review, and other purposes such as nominations for prizes and awards.

Frequency of Evaluation

Pre-tenure faculty (assistant professors) must receive three classroom observations including written reports on file *prior to* comprehensive review. It is important to complete observations *early* in the pre-comprehensive review stage with the first observation taking place in the first year of teaching, where feasible. This may be adjusted to accommodate those with reduced teaching loads. *At least two* of the required observations should be Full Peer Course Evaluations. After comprehensive review, pre-tenure faculty should be observed *at least* once per year and receive *at least* one additional Full Peer Course Evaluation completed *before* tenure review.

Associate professors should be observed *at least* once every other year until a minimum of three reports are on file. At least one of the observations should be the Full Peer Course Evaluation. Thereafter the schedule can be more flexible and responsive to the needs of the faculty and department as a whole. *At least* one observation close to the time of promotion review is desirable. It may also be useful to link one or more observations with the post-tenure-review cycle.

Full professors should undergo the Full Peer Course Evaluation process *at least* once every 5 years as part of the post-tenure review process.

Instructors and senior instructors should be observed once per year. One full evaluation process should be completed at least once every contract period (every three years).

Lecturers, postdocs, and other ranks not included here should be observed *at least once in their first semester of teaching* and then at the discretion of the chair. An Abbreviated Observation may be used if there are not enough resources to conduct the Full Peer Course Evaluation process.

A faculty member may request to be observed at any time; additional observations may also be requested by the Department Chair. The chair is responsible for accommodating reasonable requests for observation, as personnel and schedules allow.

OPTIONAL NOTE-TAKING FORM¹

Pre-Observation

1. Review of Syllabus and Other Material(s)

a) If you were to assume the role of a student in this course, what would you identify as the strengths of the syllabus? Are there details about the course that you would like to see covered more in the syllabus? What other comments and/or questions do you have for the instructor?

b) If you requested other materials to review (e.g., class handouts/exams, access to the course management system, prior FCQs, etc.), what comments and/or questions do you have for the instructor?

2. In-person Consultation

a) Learning goals. Discuss learning goals for the course and/or the class meeting you will be observing. (Goal Oriented)

b) Syllabus (and other materials, if applicable). Discuss course materials relevant to classroom observation.

c) Selection of observation criteria and label in the note-taking form below.

d) Number and timing of classroom observations.

1. Developed in partnership with the [Teaching Quality Framework Initiative](#) and adapted from [Optional Note Taking Form](#) (retrieved July 27, 2021) with sponsorship by the National Science Foundation (DUE-1725959). Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NSF.

Observation

Instructor:

Course Name:

Course Number/Section:

Date/Time/Room/Bldg:

of students enrolled/#students who attended:

Criterion 1–

Notes:

Summary/Key Takeaways:

Criterion 2–

Notes:

Summary/Key Takeaways:

Criterion 3–

Notes:

Summary/Key Takeaways:

Additional note-taking space

Overall impressions: (Continuous Improvement; Coaching)

- a) Strengths and positive aspects of this class and/or the instructor's teaching of this class
- b) Suggestions for the instructor to improve their teaching:

Classroom Interview Questions

- 1) What aspects of [insert faculty member's name] teaching were most effective in helping you learn?
- 2) What aspects of [insert faculty member's name] teaching were least effective in helping you learn?
- 3) How would you describe [insert faculty member's name] level of interest in helping students learn? Explain and provide example(s).
- 4) What could students do to help improve this class?
- 5) How has [insert faculty member's name] worked to ensure members of the class were engaged during the semester?
- 6) The instructor has identified a key learning goal for this course as [insert goal that the instructor would like assessed]. How much progress do you feel you are making towards this goal?
- 7) Has [insert faculty member's name] clearly outlined the requirements for assessments and given you sufficient/clear information to achieve success? Describe an example, explaining how this helped you achieve success or, if not, what was missing or unclear.
- 8) Has [insert faculty member's name] regularly provided activities and assignments that helped you improve your performance on the final project, paper, or exam? Describe an example, explaining how an activity/assignment helped you (or did not help you) improve your performance.

Optional: Summary from Classroom Interviews

If classroom interviews were conducted, please describe common themes and takeaways here (see separate "History Classroom Interview Guide" for details):

Post-Observation Discussion (Use if conducting full peer course evaluation)

Use this space to prepare for and conduct your debriefing session(s).

- a) What highlights from your observation would you like to share?
- b) What questions do you have for the instructor?