

Protocol for Peer Evaluation of a Research Group*

[NOTE: Highlighted text is intended to be modified or deleted. All other text may be left as is or modified to fit departmental needs].

The evidence-gathering process for peer evaluation of a research group includes three phases: observing a lab/research group meeting; conducting a lab-member focus group; sending a follow up questionnaire. Then the peer evaluator will draft a follow up discussion of the findings.

I. Observing a lab/research group meeting

In collaboration with the PI, attend and observe a lab meeting. Plan to

- record the purpose of the meeting
- identify the role(s) of the attendees (e.g., undergrad, grad student, postdoc, research scientist, lab manager, etc.)
- observe/take note of
 1. Level, range, tone of discourse
 - a. Who contributed and participated: All, most, or only a few? Were there differences based on age, sex, race/ethnicity, role of the attendee?
 - b. What was the quality of contributions? Were they targeted and on task or unfocused and distracting? What feedback did the PI or others offer?
 - c. Group dynamics/Climate
 - i. What was the level of ease/comfort of lab members?
 - ii. How did the PI function as a facilitator?
 - iii. What was the tone/feel of the meeting?

II. Conducting a lab-member focus group

NOTE: The PI should NOT attend. Plan for 30 minutes. Explain the purpose of the focus group is to collect evidence about the quality of teaching and mentoring in the group. Announce

“The information you share with me will be used for evaluation of teaching. *Concerns* about professional conduct such as regarding discrimination are very important but should not be addressed in this manner. Instead, please contact Llen Pomeroy, Acting Associate Vice Chancellor for the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance and Title IX Coordinator, cureport@colorado.edu.

If you are hesitant to share thoughts with the group, I will also send an email so students can respond to me privately. I have a couple of very broad questions. I’d like you to collectively brainstorm answers, and then I will ask you each to indicate whether you agree or disagree with each response.”

Sample focus group questions:

1. What are some of the best things about working in Dr. XXX’s lab?
2. What could improve the experience of working in Dr. XXX’s lab?
3. Is there anything else we did not cover that you would like to mention?

III. Follow-up email/questionnaire

NOTE: Do NOT include the PI in this distribution list. The first goal is to invite members of the lab who were not able to participate in the focus group to share feedback on their experiences in the lab. The second goal is to allow members of the lab who prefer a private channel for their feedback to offer their observations directly with the evaluator.

Sample Text for Email

Dear XXX Lab Students, Researchers, and Collaborators,

Thanks to those of you who attended my visit to the lab yesterday (date). This email invites non-attendees to share their experiences in the lab and also offers attendees of the meeting a chance to share their experiences privately. All contributions will be kept private. In your reply to this email, **please do not change the subject line**; that helps me stay organized!

For anyone who was not able to attend, here is your chance to share your perspective. Yesterday, we broadly discussed these questions:

1. What are some of the best things about working in Dr. XXX's lab?
2. What could improve the experience of working in Dr. XXX's lab?
3. Is there anything else we did not cover that you would like to mention?

Lab meeting attendees, please feel free to reply to this email with any information you wish to share privately. Thanks again for meeting with me yesterday!

I welcome meeting with any of you personally if you like. Just email me to make an appointment.

Thanks much for your help!

Best,

[your name]

IV. Writing up your report (3-5 pages)

NOTE: Name ONLY the PI. All student/mentee responses should be unidentified. Briefly describe the overall observation/interview process, including

- Briefly summarize the lab/research meeting
 - date & purpose of the meeting
 - roles of those in attendance
 - meeting dynamics (e.g., level of discourse; group interactions/engagement)
- Briefly describe the process for the lab-member focus group, including
 - date & duration
 - roles of those who participated
 - copy the questions asked
 - for each question, highlight responses that participants unanimously agreed on
 - character of overall tone of comments—positive/negative
- Briefly describe the process for the follow-up email questionnaire, including
 - the text of the email
 - verbatim responses to the email—**after having first**
 - removed names
 - redacted any identifying information
 - a summary statement on overall tone of comments—positive/negative
 - a brief summary statement of main takeaways, strengths/weaknesses

*Based on a letter by Tim Curran (Dept of Psychology and Neuroscience), reviewing June Gruber's group in spring 2019