

## **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.<sup>3</sup>

## **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 faculty to conduct evaluations 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 consultation with the individual faculty members involved. Faculty members to be observed have the right, within reason, to veto specific observers, and 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, the 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 please discuss scheduling the class visit(s), the goals of the course and/or the class session(s) you'll be observing, the observation criteria to focus on, and any other course materials. It is also recommended that the observer and instructor discuss the possibility of supplementing the course evaluation process with additional forms of data, such as: student interviews, [CTL services](#), and/or [ASSETT's VIP service](#).

### **Classroom Observation**

The number of classroom visits is to be determined by the instructor to be observed and by 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 visits have been completed, schedule a debriefing session with the observed instructor. You may also schedule debriefing sessions in between visits if appropriate.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Lightly edited by CTL staff 02/02/2024 to replace outdated FTEP links with CTL links

<sup>3</sup> American Association for the Advancement of Science, "Describing & Measuring Undergraduate STEM Teaching Practices," 2012, <http://ccliconference.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.istor.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, in the form of a letter addressed to the chair and CC'd to the instructor who was observed, 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 are made. This report should also be completed if an abbreviated process (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)** require three classroom observations with written reports on file prior to comprehensive review. It is important to complete observations early in the pre-comprehensive review stage where feasible, with the first observation taking place in the first year of teaching. However, this may be adjusted as necessary 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 with at least **one additional full peer course evaluation** completed before tenure review.

**Associate professors** should be observed at least once every other year until at least 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, keeping in mind that at least one observation close to the time of promotion review is desirable. It may also be useful to link one or more observation 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 process (single observation with a written report) 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.