## Mechanical Engineering Peer Teaching Evaluation Guidelines[[1]](#footnote-1) and Peer Observation Protocol (for RPT and Merit)

**2025.08.12**

### Observation Guidelines

The goals of the peer teaching evaluation process are to have peer observation feedback available to faculty for tenure and promotion cases, provide a formative process for continuous improvement of teaching, and create a culture of community around teaching with monetary support for observers for time and effort spent. Per expectations from the Dean’s office, departments should employ multiple measures for evaluation of teaching with scholarly tools, and this is one of the primary ones used in our department. Peer observations are thus intended to promote improvement as well as to evaluate. Please write up the peer observation protocol form responses in the spirit of being formative (i.e., provide constructive criticism, areas for improvement, areas of excellence, etc.), with the opportunity to use engagement in the observation practice for summative evaluation purposes.

**Frequency of Observation**

1. All faculty (pre-tenure, associate, full, instructors, postdocs, and lecturers) with teaching responsibilities should be observed at least once every academic year.
2. Observations are most useful when done in the first 1/2 of the semester.
3. The frequency of observation listed here should be understood as the minimum requirement. Additional observations can be requested by the faculty member or the Department Chair.
4. Completion of an observation will be given credit for annual merit purposes.

**Program Management**

Faculty who serve as observers will receive $300 for each completed observation survey. Administrative support will assist with initiation of peer observations, requesting allocation of funds to observers’ accounts, tracking who has completed observations, and submission of data to personnel files. The Personnel Committee is charged with receiving information from administrative support regarding who has participated in a peer observation and survey data in the case of RPT. The faculty member observer and observee will coordinate schedules for observation.

**Selection of Observers**

Selection of observers will be initiated by a survey going to all faculty at the beginning of semester that asks:

* Which class, which semester do you want to be observed?
* Whose teaching do you admire? Please suggest 3 possible observers.
* How many observations are you willing to do for others?

Within the first few weeks of the semester, the survey results will be analyzed by an administrator to pair observers with observation requests. Within the first month of the semester, pairings will be sent out to the observer and faculty to be observed.

**Procedure for Classroom Observations**

**Before your observation:**

1. The observer should talk to the faculty member in advance of the observation in order to understand the objectives for that class and how it fits with the overall course and to provide an overview of the observation to be conducted. Conversations to consider can include: What is the best/most important/most fun aspect of the course? What issues are you facing this semester?
2. Faculty members are required to provide their observer with the course syllabus, and may provide other materials they deem relevant, including access to the learning management system, lesson plans, assessment materials, or outlines explaining the pedagogical goals of classroom activities.

**During your observation:**

1. The observer should fill out the online the [Peer Observation Protocol Form.](https://cuboulder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ehvqbk0gD6i9ORg) A copy can be found at the end of this document. The protocol is a guide; **not every box must be checked**. After submission, the observer will receive a copy of the submission.

**After your observation:**

1. The observer should meet with the observed faculty member after the classroom observation to share the survey form and provide formative and constructive feedback to the faculty member. Ask first if suggestions are welcomed. Start with strengths and frame criticisms as questions of “why do that”. Conversations to consider can include: What might you want to do/change?
2. The survey data will automatically go to the administrator, who will initiate the observer’s payment. A copy of the completed form may be retained by both the observer and observed.

**Guidance for Evaluators of Letters**

The protocol form submitted by the observer can be used as a multiple measure of teaching evidence for several dimensions of teaching, including but not limited to: goals, content, and alignment of a course; preparation for teaching; methods and teaching practices; presentation and student interaction; student (and other) outcomes; mentorship and advising; and reflection, development, and teaching service/scholarship.

**Merit-Specific Considerations**

For merit purposes, faculty who request and have an observation completed will receive credit for having an observation done.

**RTP-Specific Considerations**

Evaluations from the past three years of observations can be used for comprehensive reappointment, promotion, and tenure uses.

**MCEN Peer Observation Report Notetaker**  
Updated 6.14.25

This document includes questions identical to the ones in the Peer Observation Report form that you will submit through Qualtrics. It is intended to make it easy for you to type up your notes during the observation, without risking losing content if your browser refreshes.

After the observation, please submit your notes at <https://cuboulder.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_ehvqbk0gD6i9ORg>.

**Part 1: Content**  
Please comment on the professor's delivery of the course content. Topics may include:

* Was the presented content accurate? If an error was identified, did the instructor respond well to the correction?
* Was the material presented at a level and depth of knowledge appropriate to the class?
* Were examples thoughtfully selected and effectively used to support learning?
* Was it made clear to the students why the material is important to learn (e.g., connections to other areas of the discipline, real-world and/or industry applications of the topic)?

[add your answer here]

**Part 2: Organization**  
Please comment on the organization, structure, and use of time in the class. Topics may include:

* Did the class period have a logical flow of topics and information?
* Was information presented clearly and in a way that helped to facilitate student learning?
* Was the presentation of course material clear and delivered using appropriate visual aids (e.g., slides, written notes, graphs, videos, images, etc.)?
* Was time used effectively throughout the class?

[add your answer here]

**Part 3: Engaged Learning**  
Please comment on the strategies that were used to encourage student engagement with the course material. Topics may include:

* What active learning strategies were employed? Were they structured effectively with a clear connection to the course material? Were they appropriate for the course size/structure?
* Did students seem engaged during the class? Did the instructor use any strategies other than active learning to encourage engagement?
* Were formative assessment methods used to gauge student understanding (i.e.: opportunities to ask questions, use of clickers, etc.)?

[add your answer here]

**Part 4: Inclusive Environment**  
Please comment on the instructor's efforts to create an inclusive environment. Topics may include:

* Did the instructor establish a classroom environment that gave all students the opportunity to participate fully (e.g., varied instructional methods, creating a positive climate, responding well to questions)?
* Has the instructor implemented any specific strategies related to inclusion? These may be evident in the course content and/or be discussed separately.

[add your answer here]

Please comment on any additional strengths and positive aspects of the course and/or the instructor's teaching that were not included in your previous responses. (optional)

[add your answer here]

Please comment on any additional suggestions for the instructor to improve their teaching that were not included in your previous responses. (optional)

[add your answer here]

1. Developed by the University of Colorado Boulder Dept. Of Mechanical Engineering Teaching Quality Framework Departmental Action Team (Jean Hertzberg, Jana Milford, Todd Murray and Daniel Knight) working in partnership with the CU Boulder 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. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)