What is the Quality Teaching Initiative?

The Quality Teaching Initiative, or QTI, promotes the use of scholarly approaches to teaching evaluation. The QTI framework provides resources that can:

- Make elements of effective teaching more visible in the evaluation process.
- Bring more structure and consistency to the evaluation process.
- Help faculty use the evaluation process to foster improvement

The College of Arts and Sciences at CU Boulder is committed to **inclusive, goal-oriented,** and **scholarly teaching**. These three dimensions of quality teaching must be considered when a unit evaluates the teaching performance of our educators.

Inclusive teaching

Inclusive teaching at CU Boulder is designed with an eye toward the wide range of ways in which our students and educators teach and learn. In part, inclusivity means supporting diverse approaches to learning using a variety of teaching practices. Inclusivity also involves sensitivity to and support of diversity of students and faculty from across the range of social, economic, and demographic factors. Frequently, this sensitivity is geared toward initiatives in the classroom but also involves mentorship of students and support of their efforts to achieve their professional and personal goals. *For examples of inclusive teaching practices, see this resources page. See also this guide to elements that pertain explicitly to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion for students.*

Goal-oriented teaching

Hallmarks of quality teaching at CU Boulder include teaching that is: (1) guided by clearly articulated learning goals; (2) based on a curriculum designed to prepare, enact, and achieve those goals; and (3) evaluated and responsive to various forms of feedback, including evidence of impacts on learning. Additional elements of goal-oriented teaching may include engaging in efforts to make visible the achievement of specific learning outcomes, as well as to improve and adapt to the needs of diverse learners.

Scholarly teaching

Scholarship on teaching and learning and domain-specific studies of education provide clear pictures of effective, evidence-based, and often innovative approaches for CU Boulder educators to draw from and contribute to. These high impact practices may include (and are not limited to): engaging students in classroom settings; challenging them appropriately; providing structured research experiences; experiential learning opportunities; bringing appropriate faculty research or creative work into our classrooms; developing technology-based and innovative teaching methods; individualized mentoring; and nurturing a sense of identity, belonging, and reflection among our students. Scholarly approaches to teaching at CU-B encourage our own continued development as educators and may seek to make our practices and their impact visible through dissemination and peer review.

Department of Sociology Peer Teaching Evaluation Plan[1]

Overview/Purpose

The Department of Sociology has collectively committed to developing scholarly, inclusive, and goal-oriented practices in teaching. The process outlined here will use the voices of faculty peers toward a) improving individual teaching development, and b) providing evaluative reports, such as those required for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Review. This plan is designed with several goals: a) to provide greater consistency in the scheduling of observations and evaluating the 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 and shared visions. To achieve these goals, 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.

Selection of Observers

Twice annually (August and December), the department chair will determine which faculty members will be observed in the upcoming semester based on the frequency detailed below (p. 3) and prioritizing those due for Reappointment, Promotion, and Tenure Review. The chair will also recommend faculty to conduct observations. In most cases, the observer will be familiar with the course and/or course content and be senior in rank to the observed faculty member. Faculty members may notify the chair if they prefer not to be observed by a specific colleague.

Evaluation Types

There are two types of evaluation:

- A **full peer course evaluation** consisting of a pre-observation meeting, classroom observation(s), at least one post-observation discussion, and a formal report.
- An **abbreviated observation** consisting of a single classroom observation and formal report.

Course Evaluation Process

All first-time observers, or observers who are new to the evaluation process, shall become familiar with this process through training offered through the department by representatives from the Center for Teaching and Learning.

Step 1: Pre-observation
Prior to the in-person consultation, the observer should request (by email or in person) and review a copy of the syllabus, including course learning goals. The observer can also review optional materials, including class handouts/exams, access to the course management system, prior FCQs, etc.

Step 2: 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, discuss scheduling the class visit (or visits, for Full Peer Course Evaluation), the goals of the course and/or the class session(s) you will be observing, the observation criteria to focus on, and any other course materials.

[1] Developed in partnership with the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative with sponsorship by the National Science Foundation Award numbers: DRL 1725946, 1726087, 1725959, and 1725956. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

- For an **Abbreviated Observation Process,** any other aspects of the full peer course evaluation process may be completed as time allows, but they are not required.
- For a **Full Peer Course Evaluation**, the observer and instructor should also discuss the possibility of supplementing the course evaluation process withadditional forms of data, such as student interviews (FTEP CLIP service or a modified version - see [insert link to departmental classroom interview guideline, e.g., this template, if relevant]), other FTEP services, and/or ASSETT's VIP service.

Step 3: Classroom Observation
The number of classroom visits is to be determined by the instructor to be observed and by the observer. As a guideline, for Full Peer Course Evaluation, 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. Note that this does not mean filing multiple reports as the final report will summarize and evaluate all classroom visitations.

All observers should use the provided form on pp. 4-5 as a guide during the classroom observations. Observers may also wish to use the optional notetaking form. These forms will not be collected; however, they may be shared with the observed instructor during post-observation discussions and should be used as evidence when completing your final report.

Step 4: Post-Observation Discussion
The observer should meet with the observed faculty member after the classroom observation(s) but prior to submitting their report to resolve any questions of factual data, discuss concerns or questions the faculty member or observer may have, and to provide formative and constructive feedback to the faculty member. If the evaluation includes multiple classroom visits, you may also schedule meetings in between classroom visits if appropriate.

Step 5: Submission of Report
The observer should review their notes/evidence from the peer observation protocol, syllabus and other materials shared with them, their meetings with the faculty member, and any other applicable evidence (e.g., interactions with students) and prepare a report in the form of a letter summarizing the observations and assessments. This report must address the most relevant items from the standardized protocol. Note that most reports include some suggestions for improvement; it is not expected that any class would ever be perfect.

The peer observation protocol should be retained by the observer for their records. Within one month following the close of the semester observed, the report should be submitted to the department chair, who will file it in the faculty member's personnel file.

An observed faculty member has the opportunity to provide a written response to the observation report, including additional evidence on their teaching practices if relevant. This response may be submitted to the chair, who will file the report in the faculty member's personnel file.

The peer observations should be done in a way that promotes improvement. If the observed class doesn't meet an acceptable standard, the report should be written in the spirit of being formative. The department chair may schedule a follow-up classroom observation and consultation. The second observation can be conducted by the same or different faculty member; this will be decided by the chair in consultation with the observed faculty member and the observer.

Frequency of Observation

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 oneof 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 full peer observation at least once every 5 years as part of the post-tenure review process.

Instructors should be observed at least once per year and **senior instructors** should be observed at least once every other year.

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.

The frequency of observation listed here should be understood as the minimum requirement. Additional observations can be requested by the Department Chair. A faculty member may also request to be observed at any time, and the Department Chair is responsible for accommodating reasonable requests for observation, as personnel and schedules allow.

Department of Sociology Peer Observation Protocol[2]

Thank you for completing a peer observation for a Sociology colleague for inclusion in their reappointment, comprehensive review, promotion, tenure, or post tenure review case. The guidelines below are intended as a way to help you and the instructor being observed to establish the criteria for evaluating the course. Used across the Department, they will also enable more consistent and transparent evaluations over time. Please see the department's Peer Course Evaluation Plan (on the Department website) for full instructions on the process.

Observers can use the optional "Sociology Peer Observation Form" (p. 6) to take notes, or they can take notes as they see fit.

Guidelines for 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?

Guidelines for In-person Consultation

a. Discuss **learning goals** for the course and/or the class meeting you will be observing.

b. Discuss **syllabus and other course materials** relevant to classroom observation.

c. Determine the **number and timing** of classroom observations.

d. Determine whether you will conduct a Classroom Interview, and if so, whether you will use Option A or Option B.

e. Select three (or more) **observation criteria** from those suggested below. These criteria are not intended to prescribe any particular teaching method or style; a wide variety of classroom approaches tailored to different course types can address any of the selected criteria. Together, the instructor and observer should choose three (or more) of the criteria that best reflect the instructor's needs/concerns and/or the class meeting structure. If the instructor/observer would like the observation to focus on an area not reflected in the following criteria, you may create and add an additional criterion. The set of agreed upon criteria will serve as the primary focus of the classroom observation.

- **Learning goals.** How did the instructor convey the purpose of lecture topics, class activities, and/or assignments to students? How did the instructor work to achieve the goals?

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- **Organization and clarity.** How did the instructor structure the lecture/class session? How did the instructor communicate relevant instructions about materials, tasks, discussion, etc. to students?

- **Sociological subject matter.** How did the content and examples support the themes and concepts of the class meeting?

- **Classroom environment.** How did the instructor establish a classroom environment that was respectful, cooperative, and conducive to learning? How did the instructor support diverse approaches to learning using a variety of teaching practices? How did the instructor demonstrate sensitivity to and support of students from across the range of social, economic, and demographic factors?

- **Students' intellectual engagement.** How did the instructor make efforts to engage students and/or foster interest in the course material during the lecture/class session?

- **Connections to prior learning.** How did the instructor encourage students to draw on materials from previous class sessions to help them understand new materials in this lecture/class session?

- **Formative assessment.** How did the instructor check in on/gauge student learning during the lecture/class session? How did the instructor adjust their teaching to address student comprehension, learning needs, and academic progress during the lecture/class session? How did the instructor provide opportunities for students to build comprehension and skills in preparation for future assessments?

- ***Interactive pedagogies.** How did the instructor engage students in doing, sharing, thinking, writing, or other forms of interactive involvement in their learning during the lecture/class session? In what ways did the instructor provide students with the opportunity to engage with the course material, on their own or in small groups, during the lecture/class session? (*See examples below)*

- **Optional additional criteria of individual design**

***Examples of interactive pedagogies include, but are not limited to:** think-pair-share; making time for students to discuss with peers; active writing (e.g., minute papers) or speaking (e.g., in -class presentations); working through problems, scenarios, and/or arguments with students; group work; routinely asking for and welcoming student input and questions; fielding questions in a way that encourages further discussion and debates; clicker concept questions. Awareness of the wide range of ways our students learn should always guide the design and implementation of interactive pedagogies.

Department of Sociology Peer Observation Notetaking Guide[3]

(Optional resource)

Pre-Observation

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 strengthsof 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., exams, access to the course management system, prior FCQs, etc.), what comments and/or questions do you have for the instructor?

In-person Consultation

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

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

c. Selection of three (or more) observation criteria (see list on the Peer Observation Protocol document).

d. Number and timing of classroom observations.

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Observation

Instructor:

Course Name:

Course Number/Section:

Date/Time/Room/Bdg:

# 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:

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:

Optional: Summary from Classroom Interviews

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

<u>Post-Observation Discussion</u> *(applicable only if conducting **full peer course evaluation**)*

This is a place to write notes from your debriefing session(s). What highlights from your observationwould you like to share with the instructor? What questions do you have for the instructor?

Department of Sociology
Guide for Writing Peer Teaching Observation Letters[4]

When writing your peer observation letter, please address the following items (as relevant).

Review of syllabus and other course materials

- Did the syllabus and learning management system clearly describe expectations, requirements, and assessments for the course?

Technical aspects/classroom mechanics

- **Resources.** Were the resources selected for the class (e.g., board work, slides, handouts, etc.) educationally valuable, well executed, and beneficial for the students?
- **Organization.** Were the instructor's activities well organized and structured to make good use of time?
- **Accuracy.** Was the instructor's written and spoken content information accurate and appropriately thorough (e.g., information on slides, written on board, in hand-outs)?
- **Active Learning (if applicable).** Did the instructor employ active learning strategies appropriatefor the size and structure of the class, and in line with departmental expectations for scholarly, inclusive, and goal-oriented learning?

Student engagement efforts

- **Content.** Did the instructor choose examples that were appropriate forhelping students learn the content in this course?
- **Motivation.** Did the instructor provide context and make clear attempts to point out the relevance of the material (e.g., by connecting it to other subjects, giving examples and applications, etc.)?
- **Depth.** Did the instructor deliver content and answer questions in a way that was consistent with deep knowledge of the subject?
- **Reasoning.** Did the instructor highlight the ideas behind the content and encourage students toincrease their reasoning ability?

Evidence of student engagement

- **Engagement.** Did students appear to be on task and engaged in learning throughout the class?
- **Participation.** Did students in the class contribute to discussion? Did they appear comfortable speaking up in class, both to each other and to the instructor?
- **Informal Assessment.** Did students engage with attempts by the instructor to gauge student understanding (e.g., by answering questions)?

Additional considerations

Discuss any of the following:

- Observations of what the instructor did well.
- Suggestions for the instructor to improve their teaching.
- Comments on your interactions with the instructor.

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Department of Sociology
Use of Faculty Course Questionnaires (FCQs)

Every term, students on the Boulder campus evaluate each of their courses and instructors using a questionnaire called the Faculty Course Questionnaire (FCQ). The FCQ program is managed within the Office of Data Analytics at CU Boulder.

Although students are one of the three key voices in evaluation of teaching, over-reliance on FCQs as the primary/sole measure of student voice can be problematic (see "Role of Students in Evaluation: Student Voice"). **In keeping with the recommendations of the Quality Teaching Initiative of the College of Arts & Sciences, CU Boulder's Center for Teaching & Learning, and the campus Office of Data Analytics, the Department of Sociology uses FCQs primarily as formative feedback rather than summative assessment.**[1]

Questions used on the Boulder campus as of fall 2020

Scale: 1-Hardly Ever, 2-Occasionally, 3-Sometimes, 4-Frequently, 5-Almost Always, N/A

Course Questions: In this course, I was encouraged to:

- Q1 Interact with other students in a respectful way.
- Q2 Reflect on what I was learning.
- Q3 Connect my learning to "real world" issues or life experiences.
- Q4 Work and learn collaboratively with my classmates.
- Q5 Contribute my ideas and thoughts.
- Q6 Evaluate arguments, evidence, assumptions, and conclusions about key issues (be acritical thinker).
- Q7 Connect, synthesize, and/or transform ideas into a new form (be a creative thinker).
- Q8 Consider diverse perspectives (gender, political, ethnic, racial, etc.) during class or in assignments.

Instructor Questions: In this course, the instructor:

- Q9 Demonstrated respect for diverse students and diverse points of view.
- Q10 Challenged me to develop my own knowledge, comprehension, and conceptual understanding.
- Q11 Gave projects, tests, or assignments that required original or creative thinking.
- Q12 Provided opportunities for students to ask questions and initiate discussion.
- Q13 Provided feedback on my work that helped me improve my performance.
- Q14 Explained the grading criteria for assignments.
- Q15 Was available to answer questions or provide assistance when needed.
- Q16 Effectively used available technology to enhance learning.

Comments:

- Q17 Please offer constructive comments to your professor/instructor on the most effective and/or least effective aspects of this course.

[1] See "Using FCQs and Multiple Measures of Teaching for Annual Reviews," Center for Teaching & Learning and Office of Data Analytics, February 2021.

Center for Teaching & Learning

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

Using FCQs and Multiple Measures of Teaching for Annual Reviews

Center for Teaching & Learning and Office of Data Analytics
February 2021
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The Faculty Course Questionnaire (FCQ) is an important tool for students to provide feedback about course instruction. The inclusion of FCQs in annual faculty evaluation is also outlined in the University of Colorado Regent policies. In recent years, there has been considerable effort by CU Boulder faculty and administrators to create a more valid and reliable FCQ, and to advocate for more robust models for evaluating teaching effectiveness. The accurate interpretation and use of FCQ data is essential to effective and equitable faculty evaluation. Personnel decisions about faculty using FCQ data can be life-altering and should be made with the utmost care and intentionality.

This document offers recommendations from the scholarship on teaching and learning and educational evaluation. Where available, official university guidance is provided and cited as such. Links to CU Boulder institutional and college bylaws and policies about the use of FCQs and multiple measures of teaching are listed at the end of the document. This list is not exhaustive, and the authors recognize that there may be ongoing efforts that were not known to us at the time of this publication. Suggestions for revision are welcome and should be directed to CTL@colorado.edu.

Understanding the Data

What do FCQ data represent?

FCQs—and student ratings of instruction, generally—represent students' perceptions of their experience in a single course. The FCQ is not a substantive evaluation of the instructor, nor is it a comprehensive measure of course effectiveness. The FCQ is not designed to collect comparative information about other instructors, nor does it ask students to compare their experience with other courses in the major or in the department. It is intended as a formative assessment tool to provide actionable feedback to instructors with the goal of improving the learning environment.

It is important to note that the FCQ does not measure student learning or achievement. However, the new FCQ asks about specific instructor actions that have been demonstrated to create a supportive learning environment, such as the extent to which the instructor explained grading criteria, provided helpful feedback, and demonstrated respect for students.

How should FCQ data be interpreted?

The FCQ uses the following scale for all of the 16 items: 1-Hardly Ever, 2-Occasionally, 3-Sometimes, 4-Frequently, 5-Almost Always. Not Applicable (N/A) does not receive a numerical score and is excluded from the mean (average) calculation.

For each item, the FCQ Reporting Tool provides the distribution of responses across the scale (i.e., how often each rating in the 5-point scale was received) and the average rating of those responses. To get an accurate picture of the results, one must not only consider the average ratings, but also the distribution of scores across the scale.

It is also important to understand how many students completed an FCQ (number of responses) as well as the percentage of students in the class who responded (the response rate). Keep in mind that there is random variability in the ratings; that is, interpreting class results based on fewer students or a smaller percentage of the class creates more uncertainty about the "true" distribution and average ratings. FCQ results based on a small set of responses should be interpreted with caution.

What counts as a meaningful difference in FCQ scores?

When reviewing student ratings data, it is important to be aware that the university uses teaching excellence as a standard for hiring faculty. Ratings are often high, and it is also normal to see a wide range of variability across courses and individuals. Because student ratings yield numerical averages, there is a temptation to overestimate the precision of the averages that are presented. Small differences in individual ratings are typically not meaningful and should not be used as a basis for personnel decisions.

When reviewing FCQ ratings data, do not focus on the average; rather, look at the distribution of the ratings across the scale. There may be outliers—one or a few ratings that pull the average down. These outliers should be considered in context and should not be allowed to represent the collective views of students in the course. Look for “red flags” such as average ratings that are one point or more below the comparative average, and consistently low scores across courses and semesters. When reviewing comment data, note that contradictory comments are not unusual and should be given proportionate weight. It is important to look for patterns in ratings rather than focusing on individual courses, semesters, or outliers.

Ratings from courses should only be compared on an apples-to-apples basis. Ratings from a large lower-level undergraduate course may look different from a small graduate level course. Ratings from a large introductory course may look different from a small upper-division elective course. Use care when evaluating FCQ data across these variables.

It is not advised to compare academic units to each other without statistical adjustments to account for differences in disciplinary teaching styles and norms, subject material, grading standards, or factors such as the ratio of majors vs non-majors enrolled in courses. If comparative data must be used, it should be used with caution. For comparisons to be useful, comparative groups should be selected based on similar departments or divisions. It may be better to compare ratings of similar courses (such as large introductory lectures) across departments rather than ratings of dissimilar courses within departments.

Can items be aggregated or combined somehow?

Aggregating data across items on the FCQ to create a composite score or set of scores is not advised. The FCQ was not designed as a scale instrument; while responses may correlate across

items, the items are meant to be considered independently. Simply averaging across scores essentially weights items equally in importance, which may not be appropriate generally or across contexts. Doing so can conceal particularly concerning or commendable scores on items that should be interpreted with different thresholds for acceptable performance.

The omnibus questions ("Rate the course overall," and "Rate the instructor overall") were omitted from the current FCQ in May 2018 after the CU Boulder Faculty Assembly passed Resolution BFA-M-1-040518. By combining items to create a composite score, the result is an attempt to create an omnibus score. Not only is the strategy methodologically untenable, the attempt to do so would run counter to the BFA resolution.

It is important to note that the use of statistics provides a way of thinking about the data, and is not a substitute for thinking about what the results mean or what they are showing us about instructors or students in their classes. Over-reliance on numerical scores can obscure the full picture of the impact that faculty are having on student learning.

How valid is the FCQ? How do we know how students are reading the questions?

Faculty and students at CU Boulder and other CU campuses helped the redesign team pilot test the new instrument during fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters. The results from each pilot administration were used to revise and modify the questions. More than 4,000 students received the new FCQ and were asked targeted questions about their experience with the instrument. Pilot test faculty provided feedback through surveys and interviews. The instrument was revised and re-tested multiple times during Academic Year 2016-17. The Boulder campus decided in fall 2017 not to move forward with the new FCQ questions while the downtown Denver and Colorado Springs campuses adopted the new questions in fall 2017. CU Boulder implemented the new FCQ questions in fall 2020.

How do we compare FCQ ratings for individual instructors over time?

An individual's history should be considered in a review of student ratings, and not just a single academic year or composite score. Look for patterns over time and across different course types. Anomalous ratings are not representative of performance, and should be kept in perspective. Look at trends over time and how instructors respond to their data: How has the instructor used their data to make improvements? Have they tried new strategies, pursued professional development opportunities, or sought feedback from peers? How does the instructor view students and respect their contributions? FCQ data are significant only within the context of the many factors shaping the instructional environment, and should only be used as a formative assessment strategy to help faculty improve their practice.

Because of the change in FCQ instrument, data from past semesters cannot be compared with the fall 2020 semester. When using data from past semesters, the omnibus questions ("Rate the course overall," and "Rate the instructor overall") should be ignored.

Multiple Measures

Since student ratings provide only one source of feedback on teaching effectiveness, it can be problematic to use them for decisions about promotion, tenure, merit, and contract renewal. The student voice is an essential element of evaluating teaching effectiveness, but it should not be the only measure. Effective strategies should include information from students, peers, and the instructor themselves. When student ratings are used in combination with evidence such as peer observations, reflective statements, and teaching portfolios, a clearer view of the instructor's overall teaching effectiveness emerges.

How can we collect evidence from the student voice beyond FCQs?

Students can give meaningful feedback about their instructors and courses, especially when they understand that their contribution will be used to help improve the course. Information can be obtained through mid-semester evaluations, letters, interviews, and online surveys. Getting regular feedback throughout the semester is a good practice to support continuous improvement.

What other evidence is reasonable to include?

Colleagues—from both inside and outside of the department—can provide valuable information about teaching effectiveness. Common strategies include peer observation and consultation, review of syllabi and course materials, review of student work or research produced through mentoring, and interviews designed to encourage reflection about teaching practice.

How can FCQs and evaluations of teaching be used to help faculty improve?

The primary and most appropriate use for the FCQ is to improve an instructor's teaching. Faculty should be encouraged to examine feedback from the students in their courses and identify areas of strength and areas in which they can improve their practice. Treated as a formative assessment, the FCQ should provide a starting point for development. Faculty mentors can use FCQ results as part of a package of materials and observations to help instructors identify areas for growth and strategies for addressing concerns. Effective teaching behaviors are learned, and faculty can improve, especially when provided adequate support from colleagues and the institution. Faculty should be encouraged to engage with campus resources like the Center for Teaching & Learning, and services available from external sources such as professional organizations. It is also essential to acknowledge and celebrate areas in which instructors excel.

Using FCQs for Merit Review

How should (and shouldn't) FCQs be used to allocate merit?

Faculty performance should not be compared to another based on student perception data only. There are many elements of effective teaching practice, and student ratings can be affected by factors such as how many students are in the class and the perceived difficulty of the material and assignments. Small differences in average ratings across individual faculty are common and are not

necessarily meaningful. Faculty who are new to teaching should not be compared to more experienced faculty, and those who regularly teach large introductory courses should not be compared to those who teach small graduate seminars. Each faculty member should be evaluated individually without reference to other faculty members. FCQ data represent but a single element among many elements that inform instructor performance. Rankings using only FCQ data are ill-advised; avoid comparing faculty to each other in personnel decisions.

When FCQs are used as part of the evaluation of teaching for personnel decisions, they must be accompanied by other means of evaluation. Major personnel decisions should not be made based on FCQ data alone. A comprehensive assessment of teaching should include elements such as observations by peers and/or supervisors, evidence of work in improving one's teaching such as teaching portfolios, self-assessments on annual reports, and other evidence prepared by the faculty member.

How should we think about issues related to equity and bias?

Studies of student evaluations of teaching have found that student ratings of instruction can be correlated with individual faculty characteristics such as gender and race, though these findings are not uniform across all disciplines nor circumstances. Given that ratings of instruction have been found NOT to correlate with student learning or performance, many scholars have justified concerns about the ways in which student ratings are used in personnel decisions. Units are trying to address these concerns through adoption of robust models using multiple measures of evaluation, including peer review, reflective teaching statements, and professional development for all teaching faculty regardless of student ratings data. Some universities have decided to use student ratings of instruction in dossiers for promotion decisions, but have eliminated the inclusion of numerical scores for this purpose.

Responding to concerns about bias in many existing processes, a 2019 statement from the American Sociological Association asserted, "A scholarly consensus has emerged that using [student evaluations of teaching] as the primary measure of teaching effectiveness in faculty review processes can systematically disadvantage faculty from marginalized groups. This can be especially consequential for contingent faculty for whom a small difference in average scores can mean the difference between contract renewal and dismissal." The Statement on Student Evaluations of Teaching called for evidence-based, holistic practices for evaluating teaching quality, including multiple measures, and was endorsed by 23 additional professional societies.

What if we only have FCQ data and no other measures of teaching effectiveness?

It is not advised to use FCQ data as the primary or only source of information about an instructor's teaching. If more information is not available, departments might request that instructors submit a reflective teaching statement that asks them to discuss how their course design aligns with their teaching goals; changes they have made and how they assessed the effectiveness of those changes; teaching challenges and how they responded; or the ways in which their teaching experiences at CU Boulder have helped them approach inclusive teaching.

COVID-19 Pandemic Semesters

When CU Boulder responded to the COVID-19 outbreak by moving to remote teaching in March 2020, the Provost and senior leadership recognized that the resulting disruption would impact teaching and learning in unknown ways. To relieve faculty anxiety about evaluation while maintaining a space for student feedback, the Provost announced that FCQ data from spring and summer 2020 would not be made available for evaluative purposes. Students were still given an opportunity to provide formative feedback to their instructors using the FCQ, but the data were only made available to instructors for their own use.

How should we think about teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Surveys have found that faculty and students are experiencing significant stress, anxiety, and depression with the prolonged effects of the pandemic. Many people are struggling with trying to maintain their workload alongside caring for family members or homeschooling children, and have faced loss of partner's income, housing instability, and illness of their own. It is important that there not be a greater burden of proof or performance placed on faculty during this time. Consider asking faculty to submit a COVID impact statement to discuss the ways in which their work has been impacted—in both negative and positive ways, as applicable—by the pandemic. Committees should consider the individual impacts on productivity during this extraordinary time.

How do we consider only one semester of FCQ data (fall 2020 only)?

For the calendar year 2020, FCQ data are available for the fall semester only. FCQ data for courses taught in fall 2019 and earlier are available for department use. It is important to note that results using the new FCQ instrument in fall 2020 cannot be compared to results from previous FCQ instruments because the items have changed substantially. As CU expects departments to use multiple sources of information to evaluate teaching, other evidence can still be used.

How can we acknowledge the additional challenges faculty and students are currently facing this year? Are there ways to recognize faculty for their extra work?

While the budget is tight this year and there may not be funds for salary increases, there are ways to acknowledge exceptional faculty for their efforts. Letters of commendation can be included in a dossier for future use. Chairs might submit recommendations for campus or disciplinary teaching awards; work with the Center for Teaching & Learning, your college dean's office, or Strategic Relations and Communications to write an article highlighting their contributions; or provide them with professional development funds, as available. Or how about allowing them first choice for course scheduling next semester or that prime conference room spot? Be creative!

Resources

CU Boulder FCQ Information

- University of Colorado Faculty Course Questionnaire (FCQ) — fall 2020
- University of Colorado Faculty Course Questionnaire (FCQ) — version used through fall 2017
- CU Boulder FCQ Results
- Faculty Course Questionnaire Information Pages
- University of Colorado Boulder FCQ Redesign Project
- Summer 2020 FCQ updates

University and College Statements that Mention FCQs and/or the Evaluation of Teaching

- CU Boulder Faculty Assembly (BFA) Resolution BFA-M-1-040518
- University of Colorado Multiple Measures of Teaching Policy
- College of Arts & Sciences Policy on Teaching Quality and Associated Evaluation
- College of Media, Communication and Information Bylaws
- College of Music Faculty Bylaws

Information and Examples of Multiple Measures

- Teaching Quality Framework Initiative at CU Boulder
- Multiple Means of Teaching Evaluation from the CU Faculty Council Education, Policy and University Standards Committee (scroll to Appendix A)
- Multiple Measures of Teaching—10 Ideas from CU Boulder College of Arts and Sciences
- University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching--Evaluation of Teaching Resources

Additional Information about Evaluating and Improving Teaching Practice

- Office of Faculty Affairs Mentoring Resources
- Teaching Quality Framework Initiative Resources
- Condon, C., Iverson, E. R., Manduca, C. A., Rutz, C., Willett, G. (2016). *Faculty development and student learning: Assessing the connections*. Indiana University Press.
- Kember, D., & Ginns, P. (2012). *Evaluating teaching and learning: A practical handbook for colleges, universities and the scholarship of teaching and learning*. New York and Canada: Routledge.
- Linse, A. R. (2017). *Interpreting and using student ratings data: Guidance for faculty serving as administrators and on evaluation committees*. Studies in Educational Evaluation, 54, 94-106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2016.12.004
- On the care and handling of student ratings

Dimensions for defining teaching quality

The College of Arts and Sciences at CU Boulder is committed to inclusive, goal-oriented, and scholarly teaching. These three dimensions of quality teaching must be considered when a unit evaluates the teaching performance of our educators.

Inclusive teaching
Inclusive teaching at CU Boulder is designed with an eye toward the wide range of ways in which our students and educators teach and learn. In part, inclusivity means supporting diverse approaches to learning using a variety of teaching practices. Inclusivity also involves sensitivity to and support of diversity of students and faculty from across the range of social, economic, and demographic factors. Frequently, this sensitivity is geared toward initiatives in the classroom but also involves mentorship of students and support of their efforts to achieve their professional and personal goals. *For examples of inclusive teaching practices, see this resources page. See also this guide to elements that pertain explicitly to improving diversity, equity, and inclusion for students*.(*Links were accurate as of 3/21/22. They may have expired or changed since the creation of this document.)

Goal-oriented teaching
Hallmarks of quality teaching at CU Boulder include teaching that is: (1) guided by clearly articulated learning goals; (2) based on a curriculum designed to prepare, enact, and achieve those goals; and (3) evaluated and responsive to various forms of feedback, including evidence of impacts on learning. Additional elements of goal-oriented teaching may include engaging in efforts to make visible the achievement of specific learning outcomes, as well as to improve and adapt to the needs of diverse learners.

Scholarly teaching
Scholarship on teaching and learning and domain-specific studies of education provide clear pictures of effective, evidence-based, and often innovative approaches for CU Boulder educators to draw from and contribute to. These high impact practices may include (and are not limited to): engaging students in classroom settings; challenging them appropriately; providing structured research experiences; experiential learning opportunities; bringing appropriate faculty research or creative work into our classrooms; developing technology-based and innovative teaching methods; individualized mentoring; and nurturing a sense of identity, belonging, and reflection among our students. Scholarly approaches to teaching at CU-B encourage our own continued development as educators and may seek to make our practices and their impact visible through dissemination and peer review.

Department of Sociology
Guide for Reflecting on Teaching in Preparation for Writing the Faculty Statement on Teaching[1]

When preparing to write your Faculty Statement on Teaching for reappointment, promotion, and tenure, we recommend reflecting on the components of effective teaching below and incorporating them into your statement. When writing your statement, think about the most relevant/important/interesting components and tailor your statement to those items. A strong teaching statement should highlight successes in your teaching to date, and also identify areas and strategies for growth in the future. For reappointment, promotion and tenure review, a typical statement is two to four pages. Not every statement needs to address every component. These components are based on foundational scholarship and not meant to be exhaustive or limiting.

The "Five Minute Reflection" exercise (p. 5) is intended to help you quickly reflect on you teaching in real time. When used consistently, the collected notes provide evidence for drafting a longer teaching statement and support both formative assessment of instruction and summative assessment of course goals. In other words, these notes might jog your memory when you are required to write a teaching statement and wish to recall efforts undertaken to improve teaching over time.

As you think about turning your reflections into your written statement, use structure and language that engages the reader. Remember that some reviewers will not be sociologists. In particular, ensure that:

- You give the statement a guiding structure and/or theme.
- You avoid disciplinary jargon and explain teaching terms and approaches (e.g., critical thinking, active learning) in the context of the instructor's course(s).
- You use specific examples from multiple courses are used to bolster statements. *It may be helpful to synthesize across courses rather than describe each course separately.*
- Your statement does not need to be structured around the headings below; consider synthesizing across headings, if applicable.
- If you would like to share more detailed information such as a complete list of teaching responsibilities, data showing teaching effectiveness, etc., you may wish to submit these in a teaching portfolio (documented evidence of teaching activities with context), rather than incorporating them into your teaching statement.
- Consider sharing your statement with your mentor and/or a colleague for friendly review before submission.
- Consider this as a framework for more frequent reflections.

Considerations for teaching statements during remote/online/hybrid teaching
As you prepare your teaching statement, consider the additional work, time, and adjustments that the new teaching formats required of you. You may wish to highlight things that went well, changes that took a great deal of effort, and/or lessons you have learned.

[1] Adapted from the Teaching Quality Framework Assessment Rubric and developed in partnership with the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative 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.

COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHING

Goals for student learning

- What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are important for student success in your course?
- How do you articulate and share course goals with the students?
- How do you identify goals that are appropriately challenging for the course level?
- What are you preparing students for?
- What are key challenges in the teaching-learning process?

Preparation for teaching

- What have you done to learn about best pedagogical practices in your discipline?
- How has student and peer feedback informed your teaching? Consider both in-the-moment modifications, and longer-term adjustments.
- What efforts have you made to design your courses, syllabi, learning management system, and/or materials to show a commitment to meaningful assignments (e.g., that connect to real world applications, prior knowledge, and/or future course applications)?
- How do you prepare for all aspects of classroom mechanics (e.g., grading, use of technology, prepping activities, lectures, demonstrations, etc.)?
- What special preparation have you done to learn about and/or integrate new topics into your courses?

Methods and teaching practices

- What assignments, assessments, and activities do you implement in/out of the classroom?
- How do these methods contribute to your goals for students?
- Why are these methods appropriate for use in your discipline? For the classroom environment (e.g., lecture, lab)? For the course level?
- How do you incorporate evidence-based teaching practices into your courses?
- How do you work to overcome student challenges or address them when they arise?

Creating an inclusive learning environment

- How do you create a positive and inclusive learning environment that is respectful, cooperative, and encourages motivation and engagement?
- How do you make your teaching supportive of different student approaches to learning (e.g., considering accessibility, designing a variety of assessment and activity formats, etc.)?
- What steps have you taken to become aware of your implicit biases?
- How do you integrate diverse perspectives (within the discipline, politically/socially, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.) into your teaching?
- How do you attend to issues of equity through your teaching and/or mentoring?
- How do you make yourself accessible to students?

Assessment of goals (measuring student learning)

- What sorts of assessment tools do you use (e.g., exams, pre/post-tests, papers, surveys, portfolios, journals), and why? How did you develop or find these tools?
- Are your assessments aligned with your course goals? In what ways?
- Beyond grades, how do you know your goals for students are being met?
- How do you use assessment results to make course adjustments?

Mentoring and Advising

- What are your aims/goals for working with students that you mentor or advise?
- How have you worked with these students in defining appropriately challenging goals?
- As a mentor, how do you measure your students' progress and help them measure their own progress?
- What advising practices do you employ when working with undergraduate and/or graduate students?
- What efforts have you made to create a supportive and inclusive environment for student success?
- How have you helped to prepare your advisees for graduation and future career goals?

Teaching Service and Scholarship

- What contributions have you made to the broader teaching community on campus (e.g., mentoring others about teaching, developing curricula/courses, service on teaching-related committees, etc.)?
- What efforts have you made to disseminate your teaching contributions to the external teaching community (e.g., peer-reviewed publications, published curricula/textbooks, consultation to other institutions, etc.)? What impact have these efforts had (e.g., curricula in use at other institutions, supporting faculty at another institution, etc.)?
- How have you contributed to educational outreach in your discipline (e.g., presentations, publications, social media, etc.)?

Five-Minute Reflection

This exercise helps faculty quickly reflect on their teaching in real time. When used daily or weekly, the collected notes provide evidence for drafting a longer teaching statement and support both formative assessment of instruction and summative assessment of course goals. In other words, these notes might jog your memory when you are required to write a teaching statement and wish to recall efforts undertaken to improve teaching over time.

Please note that this document is for personal use only, and not intended for submission with promotion and tenure materials or for merit review. The reflection structure provided below is only a guideline. You may prefer to keep a teaching journal. Whatever the method, your notes should record:

- the date
- the unit/topic for the session being described
- a highlight to help jog the memory (e.g., good, bad, surprising, humorous, etc.), and
- a brief reflection on the day (e.g., what went well/not so well; ideas for how to change).

Also code yourself for the domains of the Quality Teaching Initiative: *Scholarly, Goal Oriented,* and *Inclusive* (definitions below) and perceptions of Overall Impact of Instruction for the day/week by using (+) Positive, (=) Neutral, (-) Needs Work.

Topic/Lesson/Unit:
Day's Highlight:
Reflection:

Date	**Overall Impact (+)(=)(-)**	**Scholarly (+)(=)(-)**	**Goal Oriented (+)(=)(-)**	**Inclusive (+)(=)(-)**	**Notes**

Department of Sociology Classroom Interview Guide[1]

Classroom Interview Process

Option A: Takes approximately 10 minutes) In advance of the classroom interview and in consultation with the instructor to be observed, select 2 questions from the list on page 2 and insert them into the classroom interview form on page 3. Print out the classroom interview form and have each student complete the form at the end of the class period observed (5-10 minutes). Please ensure the faculty member being observed leaves the room before beginning and then briefly explain the purpose of this process to students before passing out the form. Collect all responses and summarize them in your notes from the classroom observation.

Option B: Takes approximately 20 minutes) Dedicate the last 15-25 minutes of classroom time to a focus-group-style interview. In advance of the classroom interview, in consultation with the instructor to be observed, decide how much classroom time you will use and select the questions you will ask. Depending on how much class time you have allotted for the process, select 2-3 questions from the list of items on page 2 (2 questions are recommended for 15-20 min, 3 if 25 minutes are available).

In-class process for Option B:

a) Ensure that the faculty member being observed leaves the room before beginning.

b) Briefly explain the purpose of this process.

c) Form students into small groups, depending on class size. Where possible, groups of 5 or more are recommended.

d) Pose your chosen questions to the class.

e) Have each group discuss (allow several minutes of free discussion) and identify important trends and divergent views.

f) Have each group share out their responses to the whole class. Write these responses where everyone can see (e.g., whiteboard/chalkboard, PowerPoint slide).

g) If time you may lead a discussion on these items and/or ask for clarification regarding group answers.

h) Ask students to vote on most important responses for each question asked.

i) Record the questions asked during the interview, the group responses/key takeaways, and the vote on most important responses in your notes.

[1] Developed in partnership with the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative with sponsorship by the National Science Foundation Award numbers: DRL 1725946, 1726087, 1725959, and 1725956. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

Classroom Interview Questions

Select 2 or 3 of the following questions to include in your classroom interview (ideally make this decision in consultation with the observed instructor; 2 questions are recommended for Option A and if 15-20 min are available for Option B, 3 if 25 minutes are available for Option B). You may tailor any question specifically to the instructor's or to your interest.

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) What could [insert faculty member's name] do differently to improve learning in this class?

4) How would you describe [insert faculty member's name] level of interest in helping students learn? Explain and provide example(s).

5) What could students do to help improve the learning environment in this class?

6) How has [insert faculty member's name] worked to ensure members of the class were engaged during the semester?

7) [Insert faculty member's name] 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?

8) 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 no, what was missing or unclear.

9) 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.

If using Option A), insert your selected questions below and print out enough copies of this form for each student in the class you will be observing.

Classroom Interview Form

Course number and title:

Faculty member name:

Semester:

1) [insert question choice from above]

2) [insert question choice from above]

Department of Sociology
Template for Soliciting Student Letters of Support[2]
(Includes Guidelines for Students writing Faculty Letters)

Dear XX,

The Department of Sociology at the University of Colorado Boulder is considering the promotion of Assistant/Associate Professor xxx to Associate/Full Professor. As part of our review process for making personnel decisions, we contact current and former students of courses taught by Professor XXX. As the representative of the department's personnel committee, I would like to request your help in our evaluation of Prof XXX's teaching and/or mentoring. I hope you will find the time to give us your candid impressions. Your statements will serve only as part of this review process. The statements are considered confidential under the policies of the University and are not subject to disclosure under the Colorado Open Records Act, except as otherwise may be required by court order or by law. I therefore hope you will be quite candid in your comments.

See below for suggestions for writing your letter and aspects to consider when writing about Professor xxx's teaching and mentoring.

Please use the following honor statement at the top of your letter:

> I pledge the highest level of ethical principles in support of the Department of Sociology's academic excellence by upholding honesty and integrity in all my statements in this letter.

Please respond with your evaluation via e-mail attachment (xxx@Colorado.Edu) by xxxx

Sincerely,

XXX

Suggestions for writing your letter

1. Start with a brief statement of who you are and how you know Professor xxx (e.g., how long have you known them and in what capacity?), and a clear statement of support (or not) for Professor xxx (e.g., "I am pleased to strongly recommend Professor xxx for promotion to the position of [position title]" or "I respectfully do not recommend Professor xxx for promotion to the position of [position title]").
2. If you can describe some particularly memorable examples about Professor xxx's teaching, advising, and/or mentoring, they should be included to give your letter more substance and provide support for your opinions. The examples need not be elaborate. More aspects to consider are given below.
3. End with a paragraph that includes a summary of your review and reiterates your recommendation. In other words, briefly restate 1-3 key points, experiences, or interactions with Professor xxx and how they demonstrate why it is important to keep Professor xxx on campus (or how they demonstrate why you do not think Professor xxx should be promoted).

[2] Developed in partnership with the Teaching Quality Framework Initiative with sponsorship by the National Science Foundation Award numbers: DRL 1725946, 1726087, 1725959, and 1725956. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

End by clearly re-stating your recommendation (as in 1. above).

4. A good length is between half a page (minimum) and two pages. A one-page letter is typical.

Additional aspects to consider when writing about Professor xxx's teaching and mentoring

Please note you are not required to address all of the following in your letter. Instead, pick a few that are most relevant to your experiences with Professor xxx. If your experiences with Professor xxx were not positive, or if they made improvements in regard to any of the following please explain why/how.

1. If you worked with Professor xxx on research projects, how did they encourage you to explore different and challenging research projects? Describe that experience and what you learned from your involvement.
2. Explain how Professor xxx's teaching activities, content, and materials they provided, and/or their creative teaching techniques helped you to become immersed in course content and/or develop your knowledge, comprehension, conceptual understanding, and/or new skills.
3. Explain how Professor xxx provided students with opportunities to practice important skills and concepts by applying meaningful assignments (e.g., that connect to real world applications, prior knowledge, and/or future course applications), welcoming and encouraging students' feedback, and incorporating feedback to improve the learning environment.
4. In what ways did Professor xxx adequately prepare you for exams and/or other assessments? For example, you may explain how they helped you prepare for exams (e.g., did what they teach in class align with what you were tested on?), answered questions in ways that were helpful and improved your understanding of content, and/or provided feedback on your work that helped you improve your performance.
5. What has Professor xxx done to enhance your sense of belonging and create an inclusive, respectful environment in and outside of the classroom (e.g., team projects, advising, etc.) and why was it important to you?
6. How has Professor xxx made an impact on who you are as a student, your understanding of what you want to do after graduation, and your future career path?
7. Highlight unique activities Professor xxx did that had a positive impact on students (e.g., guest lectures, planning and attending events, etc.).