

CLAS Peer Evaluation Best Practices

(revised and approved by CLAS Faculty Council, Spring 2023)

Purpose

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) values excellence in teaching. Such excellence can be enhanced through constructive and candid evaluation of peer teaching. Periodic peer teaching evaluations (PTE) also serve as helpful and productive supplements to student evaluations, faculty promotion and tenure packages, and faculty three-year reviews. With these goals in mind, CLAS encourages each unit to develop a system for peer teaching evaluation and offers the following as a starting point for such development. Furthermore, it is recommended that conducting peer evaluations be used in assessments of service in Annual Activity Reports (AAR).

Coordination

CLAS Units should have a coordinator for PTE, who is responsible for assigning evaluating duties to faculty. The coordinator should generally be the Chair/Director or his/her designee. The Chair/coordinator will select the course for evaluation in coordination with the instructor that reflect a representative sample of course assignments. The coordinator should pair instructors and evaluators as early in the semester of evaluation as is feasible to facilitate organizing classroom visits.

Frequency

CLAS encourages units to arrange PTE *at a minimum* for:

- Tenured faculty and Master Lecturer (Instructional Professor): Every 2-3 years
- Untenured and faculty below the rank of Master Lecturer (Instructional Professor): Every year
- Graduate instructors and adjunct faculty: each semester or every year

Suggested Best-Practice Procedures for the Peer Evaluator

Pre-Observation

- Evaluator and instructor arrange day/time for course observation at least two weeks in advance.
 - For online classes, this review may consist of attending a Zoom meeting or watching recorded lectures for asynchronous classes.
- Instructor provides evaluator with the syllabus and access to Canvas course at least one week in advance of the observation
 - Instructors should consider, in light of course content, making students aware of the observer.
- Evaluator and Instructor have a pre-meeting/consult to discuss course set-up, syllabus, and any areas of concerns about teaching /questions instructor may have.
- Evaluator consults the Pre-observation check-list and rubric to start evaluating the syllabus, Canvas page, and assignments.

Observation

- Evaluator arrives early to the in-person or Zoom class and stays for the length of a 1-period class.
- Evaluator consults the check-list on the rubric below for a comprehensive observation and takes notes.

Post-Observation

- Evaluator and Instructor have a meeting to discuss any questions regarding the course.
 - This meeting could happen prior to or after the write-up.

Evaluation Write-up

- Write-up occurs within two weeks of the observation.
- The rubric should only be used for taking notes and as a guide. The evaluation needs to be in letter/paragraph format.
- Evaluator will provide the first draft to the Instructor. The instructor:
 - Discusses the evaluation with the Evaluator prior to it being finalized and placed in the Instructor's evaluation file.
 - May submit a written reply, which shall be attached to the report.
- At the bottom of the report the Instructor and Evaluator may sign, and date a statement, with a suggested expiration date of five to ten years to allow for future evaluators to review this eval.
- Evaluators send the final observation (including any comments from the Instructor) to the department/unit chair/director/coordinator and to the instructor.

Guideline Rubric for Taking Evaluator Notes

Utilize questions that are most appropriate for the type of class observing: in-person, online synchronous, online asynchronous, or hybrid. Use this document to take notes during your class visit and while reviewing the course Canvas pages. Try to assume a student perspective as you observe the class. Be as specific and objective as you can, so as to provide the most valuable feedback to the instructor. The notes here are to be used to write the final letter of evaluation.

Class Observation

Goals for student learning

- What did the instructor want students to take away from this class session?
- Was it possible to ascertain whether the students achieved the lesson's expressed goal(s)?
- Did the lesson align with the syllabus?

Method and presentation

Modality

- Does the modality used seem likely to be effective in engaging students and facilitating learning?
- How did the instructor assure material was understood? (Use specific examples? Analogies? Ask questions?)
- Was material delivered via lecture? Class discussion? Group work? Individual exercises? Etc.
- What technology was used (e.g. PPT slides, Prezi, YouTube, Mediasite, Perusall)? Was the technology effective?

Introduction

- Did class begin on time?
- Did the instructor provide lead-in to the material for the period?

Conclusion

- Was the material covered appropriate for the time?
- Was there a wrap-up, or reminders for upcoming assignments/lectures/readings?
- Did class end on time?

Instructor knowledge and preparation

- Did the instructor demonstrate confidence/knowledge in the material? Was the instructor well prepared for class?

Interactions

- How were students involved during the class?
- Were there opportunities for students to participate?
- Were there student-to-student interactions?
- Does the design of the course reflect active instructor engagement?
- How did interactions support student learning (i.e., to what extent did the level of interaction align with the goals for student learning)?

Consider: opportunities for questions and interaction among students; answers to questions; comprehension checks; facilitation of discussion; level of student engagement; rapport; feedback to students; and assessment of student comprehension.

Classroom logistics

- Did the Instructor use the room/modality well? (e.g. seating arrangement, size of room, location of media equipment, physical access to students, sound, video, access to files, sound bites, whiteboards, chat sessions, etc.)?

Syllabus and Canvas

Syllabus

- Is the syllabus available? Structured well, easy to follow? Schedule displayed? Information on materials used for the course? Assessments described? Grading scheme/rubric?
- Are students given clear information about how their performance will be assessed?
- Do the means of student assessment target the stated goals/learning outcomes?

Communication

- Students are regularly updated? Reminded about readings, assignments, etc.? Mode of communication used? (if instructor uses email - evaluator would need to ask)

Canvas site usability

- Ease of finding materials and information?
- Are any canvas utilities used? (e.g. Turnitin, ProctorU, HonorLock, Perusall, etc.)

- Is there anything used on Canvas that is specific for this course? E.g. tutorials on resource utilization (databases, programs, etc.)

Conclusion

Areas of improvement

- What areas do you think could use improvement that has not already been discussed above?
- Would the faculty member benefit from observing a peer?

Positive outcomes

- Did the students seem engaged?
- Did observing your colleague have a positive outcome in terms of your own approach to classroom teaching? For example, did it offer you new insights into best teaching practices?