

POLICY ON ASSESSING TEACHING IN THE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

Approved by the Faculty of Engineering – November 27, 2018

BACKGROUND: TEACHING EVALUATION IN THE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

The Departmental Teaching Evaluation Report (DTER) is a component of Teaching and Promotion (T&P) dossiers used to evaluate faculty members for contract renewal, appointment, re-appointment, tenure/permanence, and promotion. The inclusion of the DTER in dossiers signals the importance of teaching in these evaluation processes. However, the extent to which the DTER actually promotes effective instruction depends on finer grain practices associated with teaching evaluation in the Faculty of Engineering.

The distinction between summative and formative aspects of evaluation is a useful one when considering how the DTER fits within a broader framework for teaching evaluation in the Faculty of Engineering. In particular, this distinction points to the idea that teaching evaluation can do more than measure teaching effectiveness – when done well teaching evaluation can also contribute to improvements in teaching effectiveness. The summative aspect of teaching evaluation is aimed at decisions about whether teaching effectiveness meets a criterion required for contract renewal, appointment, re-appointment, tenure/permanence, and promotion. The DTER itself serves this summative evaluation purpose. In contrast, the formative aspect of teaching evaluation is aimed at providing feedback to instructors that ultimately improves teaching practice. On its own, the DTER does not adequately serve this formative evaluation purpose. However, a set of well-chosen teaching evaluation activities, completed periodically, and that feed into the DTER, could serve this purpose.

This document includes two parts: 1) the formative aspect of teaching refers to annual process of evaluating teaching that provides input into the annual Chair/Director review; and 2) the summative aspect of teaching refers to the assessment of teaching for contract renewal, appointment, re-appointment, tenure or permanence, or promotion as specified in DTER part A - Executive summary of the teaching portfolio (SPS B2).

RECOMMENDED TEACHING EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

The following teaching evaluation activities are recommended: – (1) Self-reflection; (2) Peer Observation Activity; and, 3) the Chair/Director Activity. A summary of how these three activities fit together is provided.

(1) Instructor's Self-Reflection Activity

The Self-reflection activity is aimed at two issues. First, SPS B1 (Part IV) identifies seven elements that must be addressed in the DTER. Elements 3, 4, 5, and 6 in SPS B1 are often not well addressed in DTERs, possibly because the appropriate data are not gathered on a regular basis. To address this issue, the instructors themselves respond to elements 3, 4, 5, and 6 in SPS B1 prior to their annual meeting with the Chair/Director. These elements are related to: significant contributions to the curriculum; significant contributions to the development of course materials; significant participation in pedagogical discussions with students, colleagues, TAs, in the department or elsewhere; and, evidence of incorporation of some form of formative evaluation in courses and evidence of response to the concerns of students.

The Self-reflection encourages an instructor to provide annually his/her reflections on topics that include, but are not limited to, teaching accomplishments; teaching challenges; course evaluations; and, feedback from peer observations. In doing so, instructors are encouraged to take into account things going well; things that could be improved; steps to be taken toward improvement; and, innovations and plans for doing any improvement in teaching in order to enhance student learning.

The outcome of the annual Self-reflection activity is a report submitted to the Chair/Director. A template of the Self-reflection form is included in Appendix 1.

(2) Peer Observation and Feedback Activity

The Tenure and Promotion Policy (section III, article 8) indicates “the assessment of a candidate’s teaching shall be based on student and peer evaluations.” This emphasizes the importance of formative assessment through peer observation on teaching. To accomplish this policy requirement, the Peer Observation & Feedback Activity includes three to five steps: 1) Pre-observation; 2) Peer Observation; 3) Feedback meeting; 4) Post visit appraisal (optional); and, 5) Discussions within a Teaching Development Committee (optional).

Pre-observation:

The peer observer and faculty member meet prior to the scheduled peer observation in order to:

- Review course syllabus for course objectives, teaching, and assessment methods
- Discuss the types of learners in the class
- Discuss methods of instruction selected for class, and class format
- Discuss how feedback is provided to students
- Discuss areas of focus for the evaluation
- Go over peer observation forms to be used during class observation
- Discuss any concerns or issues the instructor wishes to address
- Other areas, as requested by the faculty member being evaluated

The outcomes of this meeting are documented in Part A of the Peer Observation Report. A form for this report is provided in Appendix 2.

Peer Observation

The peer observer should attend a class delivered by the person being observed. If possible, the observer should meet with a group of students for some time before or at the end of the class. The outcomes of the class visit and discussions with the students are recorded in Part B of the Peer Observation Report (see Appendix 2).

Feedback Meeting

The peer observer and faculty member should meet following the class-visit to go over the peer evaluation. Following the review and discussion, a summary should be jointly developed by the peer observer and the faculty member and should be recorded in Part C of the Peer Observation Report. This summary may include strategies for improvement as appropriate.

Post Visit Appraisal (optional)

The purpose of this step is to encourage the instructor to self-assess after the feedback meeting on several elements, including the way the course content was taught, the teaching methods employed, and the learning environment. The instructor should identify successful elements and elements to be refined on these self-appraisal elements.

Teaching Development Committee Activity (if applicable)

The aim of the Teaching Development Committee is to support instructors to achieve teaching excellence and to play an active role in enhancing the continuous improvement of all aspects of teaching. The department Chair/Director may nominate the peer teaching evaluators who make up this committee. Evaluators can be Associate Chairs/Directors or trusted faculty members with recognized teaching credibility and experience. The committee will provide recommendations for faculty members needing improvement and useful feedback for teaching and learning development plans.

The outcome of the Peer Observation & Feedback Activity is a Peer Observer Report, a Post Visit Appraisal Report (optional) and the recommendations of the Teaching Development Committee (if applicable), which

are to be submitted to the Chair/Director. Templates for the first two reports are included in Appendix 2, but the academic units should feel free to create their own templates.

(3) Chair/Director Activity

Chairs/Directors are required by policy to meet annually with all faculty members (SPS B1 – Section III, paragraph 2). The results of the discussion must be recorded in writing and agreed to by both parties (SPS B1 – Section IV, Item 1). The annual meeting plays a central role in the evaluation of teaching, serving as a hub for reports on the teaching evaluation activities described below. As such, annual meetings of the faculty members with the Chairs/Directors should cover the following:

- a. Discussion of Instructors' Self-reflection
- b. Discussion of Peer Observation Report
- c. Discussion of Post Visit Appraisal (if applicable)
- d. Feedback from the Teaching Development Committee (if applicable)
- e. Discussion of other teaching and learning related activities

The content of topics (a-d) is presented in the previous section. Suggested activities for (e) may include: mentoring undergraduate students, and graduate students, and post-doctoral fellows; mentoring peers; advising clubs and teams; community engagement; and outreach activities.

The outcome of the Chair/Director Activity is the annual report on teaching, which is a part of the annual review of the faculty member. The content of the report must be signed off by both Chair/Director and faculty member. An outline of suggested topics for this report is included Appendix 3, but academic units should feel free to create their own template.

APPENDIX 1: Self-Reflection Form

Preamble

The self-reflection is derived from the *Procedures for the Assessment of Teaching* specified in Part IV SPS B1. The document combines the requirement of the SPS B1 policy (SPS B1, Part IV, Items 3-6) along with other relevant information related to teaching and learning. Although this is a minimum requirement, a self-reflection will be completed on an annual basis to track changes on significant contributions to teaching and learning as well as reflection on innovation and improvements in teaching.

Instructor Name: _____

Date: _____

Part A (SPS B1, Part IV, Items 3-6)

1. Significant contributions to the curriculum.

Examples of such contributions might include development of new courses, contributions to IQAP reviews, participation on undergraduate or graduate curriculum committees, participation on Faculty of Engineering Teaching related Committees.

Significant contributions to the curriculum:

2. Significant contributions to development of course materials.

Significant contributions to course materials:

3. Significant participation in pedagogical discussions with students, colleagues, and teaching assistants in the Department or elsewhere.

Examples of pedagogical discussions outside the Department might include participation in professional development workshops related to teaching, and academic meetings focused on pedagogical research

Significant participation in pedagogical discussions:

4. Evidence of incorporation of some form of formative evaluation in courses and evidence of response to the concerns of students.

Examples of such contributions might include changes to courses in response to student feedback on course evaluations, or in response to peer evaluations of teaching.

Evidence of incorporation of formative evaluation:

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1. Teaching Accomplishments

List and briefly discuss your teaching accomplishments in the past year and the success factors that have contributed to those accomplishments. Possible questions to consider:

- What new effective classroom activities or pedagogical approaches have you used recently?
- How do you plan to continue developing your activities and approaches in the future?
- How might you be willing to share successful strategies with colleagues?

Teaching Accomplishments:

2. Teaching Challenges

List and briefly discuss the major challenges you faced in the past year related to teaching and/or other pedagogical activities. Explain how you have addressed those challenges. Possible questions to consider:

- Are there any learning objectives that were not met? Why? What do you plan to do in the future about this?
- What measures you have taken to mitigate the consequences of problems you might have faced in class? (e.g., were there circumstances outside your control – learning environment, external factors)
- What will you do to prevent these issues from re-occurring? What will you do to mitigate the teaching challenges associated them?

Teaching Challenges:

3. Course Evaluations

Reflect on your course evaluations and discuss any areas for improvement. Compare and contrast with past years' evaluations. Possible questions to consider:

- Is there anything particularly surprising in this year's evaluations?
- What are some of the student comments that have resonated with you?
- If you had some constructive feedback, how do you plan to change your teaching practice to respond to that?

Course Evaluations:

4. Peer observations and feedback

Briefly discuss the learning of the peer observation process. Possible questions to consider:

- As an instructor being observed: What have you learned from your peers' feedback? What is the major take-away from the observations others conducted in your classes?
- As a peer observer: What have you learned from the peer you observed? Are there any good teaching practices that you observed and would like to adopt? How about things you would like to avoid?

Peer observations and feedback:

5. Innovations and Improvement in Teaching

Briefly identify the elements that you use and consider to be innovative in teaching and learning, and reflect upon on the improvements in learning as a result of this innovation. Possible topics to address:

- Have you used non-traditional teaching approaches to lead enhanced learning such as small group learning, problem-based or project-based learning, inquiry based learning, active learning strategies, or flipped classroom?
- What worked and what didn't work?
- Suggest approaches for improvements in next year's goals.

Innovations and Improvement in Teaching:

6. Status of last year's goals (if applicable)

Reflect on your last year's evaluation and development plan, list goals achieved, goals in progress and goals unattained. Possible questions to consider:

- From a previous self-reflection exercise, identify the goals you set for yourself that have been met.
- What is the progress on the development plan you discussed with your Chair? (if applicable)
- If some goals have not been attained, what is the reason for this failure? What are your plans for the future?

Status of last year's goals:

7. Needs and Goals (optional)

The question to consider here is:

- What support do you need from the School/department in order to accomplish your teaching goals?

Needs and Goals:

APPENDIX 2: Peer Observation and Feedback Activity

Preamble:

This peer observation and feedback activity is critical for the departmental teaching evaluation report as well as the ongoing teaching development of the instructor. A set of peer observer activities, described below, can be complemented by an instructor self-appraisal of the observation and broadly supported by a teaching development committee.

Part 1: Peer Observer Activities

The activities of the peer observer include three parts:

- Part A: Gather contextual information about the course and the instructor you are observing (Pre-observation form);
- Part B: Attend a class of the instructor being observed, and provide feedback, commentary, and suggestions. If possible, spend some time (without the instructor) to obtain student feedback
- Part C: Arrange a feedback meeting to discuss your observations, and provide feedback and recommendations.

Upon completion of all three parts, the observer will send the completed form to the instructor for his/her feedback and sign off, and submit it to the department Chair/Director (as directed by the department).

Part 2: Instructor Activities

The instructor may complete a Post Visit Appraisal to self-assess on successful elements and elements to be refined during the peer observation visit.

PART A: Peer-Observation Report

Instructor Name: _____

Course Name and Code: _____

Number of students: _____ Required Course Elective Course

Name of Peer Observer: _____

* Prior to the observation, the peer observer should review the syllabus and course objectives

PART A – Pre-observation

Information	Specific Comments
Is the content consistent with the calendar description and objectives of the course?	
Has the instructor discussed the abilities of students with instructors teaching pre-requisite courses and instructors which your course is a pre-requisite?	
What contextual information does the instructor think is relevant for peer observation of this course (e.g. lab/tutorial elements, online or blended elements, assessment approaches, first time offering the course, resources, teaching strategies or method of delivery)?	
What information does the instructor think the peer observer should know about this cohort of students? (e.g. this group of students are struggling more than previous cohorts, the typical percentage of students who attend)	
What are the instructor's teaching goals for this specific class/day? (i.e. the observed class is a review for an upcoming test, trying a new teaching or assessment approach, facilitate student engagement).	
Is there any particular feedback related to teaching and learning the instructor would like from the peer observation process?	

It is recommended that the peer observer reserve some time to discuss with students about what is working well, and what they would like to see changed/improved with respect to teaching and resources.

PART B – Peer Observation

Please complete the peer observation form by providing specific comments to the suggested categories. If useful, please refer to the qualitative descriptors such as, exceptional, excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, needs improvement or unsatisfactory in completing your observation remarks.

Subject Matter	Specific Comments
Does the instructor demonstrate command of the subject matter?	
To what extent does the instructor demonstrate mastery of the subject matter?	
Is the content consistent with the course description and objectives?	
To what extent does the content reflect conventional applications of the material, state-of-the-art applications and foreseeable future applications?	
How does the instructor use experiential insights in the application of the material into the classroom?	

Classroom Management	Specific Comments
Effective Time Management (starts and ends class promptly; demonstrates good use of instructional time, etc.)	
Commands and earns respect and maintains control of classroom	
Maintains a positive and respectful classroom; handles student interactions appropriately	
Exhibits confidence as an instructor and establishes credibility	

Communication and Interaction	Specific Comments
Lesson objectives are clear	
Connects class to other areas of course content	
Encourages student inquiry/class discussion	
Expresses ideas clearly and audibly. Responds clearly to student questions.	
Shows energy and enthusiasm for subject matter	
Written communication is effective (handouts, written instructions, slides, etc.)	

Oral communication is effective (articulate speech, appropriate pace and volume of speech, pleasant demeanor, etc.)	
Non-verbal communication is appropriate and effective (eye contact, mannerisms, gestures, movement in classroom)	
Provides feedback to student on assessments	

Methods of Presentation	Specific Comments
Is well prepared and presents material in a well-organized manner	
Reads notes only a suitable amount of time	
Provides context for lecture/notes (such as course goals, curriculum, etc.)	
Provides appropriate and clear images	
Current topic is clear; explanation of material is clear	
Uses multimedia approach (if appropriate)	
Makes use of examples; relates material to real world/establishes relevance	
Uses physical resources skilfully (workspace, board, samples/demonstrations, etc.)	

Learning Environment	Specific Comments
Incorporates active learning into lectures; engages students in material	
Adjusts to individual and group needs	
Meets student needs through a range of teaching styles	
Checks for understanding by asking thinking questions	
Demonstrates respect for alternative points of view	

Additional Comments/General Comments (including student feedback):
[Qualitative Feedback is strongly encouraged-please complete this section]

PART C – Feedback Meeting

The peer observation feedback will be discussed at a follow-up meeting between the instructor and peer observer or the results will be sent to the Chair/Director. Indicate the date of the follow-up meeting below. The instructor will document this conversation in their own records.

Date of follow-up meeting: _____

Discussion topics to consider for the feedback meeting:

Topics	Specific Comments
What teaching elements should the instructor continue to use for this type of class or teaching objective?	
What teaching elements should the instructor change or avoid?	
What are some teaching elements to try in the future?	
What are some tangible steps that the instructor might implement to enhance their teaching?	
Any other discussion questions/topics.	

Upon completion all three sections, the observer will prepare the peer observation report and submit it to the department Chair/Director (or as directed by the department).

Post visit Appraisal Form (if applicable)

Preamble

The purpose of the post-visit appraisal is to encourage instructors to reflect on the feedback meeting to self-assess several elements - the way the course content was taught, the teaching methods employed, and the learning environment created. The instructor should identify successful elements and elements to be refined.

Instructor Name: _____

Name of Peer Observer: _____

1. Course Content

- Did I demonstrate command of subject matter?
- Did my content reflect current research/knowledge of discipline? (if applicable)
- Was the purpose of my session evident?
- Was my content consistent with the course syllabus?

Successful Elements:

Elements to refine:

2. Teaching Methods

- Were my transitions between ideas smooth?
- Did I give relevant examples and use them to clarify concepts?
- Was my presentation organized?
- Was I enthusiastic about the subject?
- Did I adapt material to students' needs?
- Did I use supplemental materials/visual aids/technology effectively?
- Did I notice and adapt to student feedback accordingly?
- Given the type and size of the class, were the methods I selected appropriate?
- Did I integrate an assessment tool/strategy into the lesson?

Successful Elements:

Elements to refine:

3. Learning Environment

- Was my classroom atmosphere participatory?
- Did my students seem engaged with the topic?
- Did I encourage questions and check in with students?
- Was I attentive to cues of boredom or confusion?
- Did I provide a session that was thought provoking and stimulating?
- Did I provide an environment conducive to critical thinking and student-centered learning?
- Was I sensitive to issues of diversity and inclusiveness in order to promote a safe learning environment for students?

Successful Elements:

Elements to refine:

General Comments:

Recommendations for Improvement:

APPENDIX 3: Chair/Director Activity

Preamble

The departmental evaluation of teaching comprises two phases – 1) the formative annual evaluation on teaching and learning; and 2) the summative departmental teaching evaluation report (DTER). The annual evaluation of teaching and learning is carried out by the department Chair/Director with the purpose of continuous improvement in teaching. The DTER complies with the requirements with the SPS B1 Procedures for the Assessment of Teaching (Part 1V) and completed for the purpose of appointment, reappointment, tenure, permanence and/or promotion.

1) Annual Evaluation of Teaching and Learning:

This annual review is mentioned in Part III of SPS B1 (page 3), where “yearly annual review and discussion of teaching between the Department Chair and each faculty member” is specified as a duty of the Chair. This annual meeting to discuss teaching and learning provides an opportunity to review the results of the teaching evaluations and other aspects of teaching that are forwarded to the Chair/Director. These documents include:

- a. Self-reflection Report
- b. Peer Observation Report(s)
- c. Post visit Appraisal Report (if applicable)
- d. Teaching Development committee report (if applicable)
- e. Teaching portfolio (if applicable)

The Chair/Director will deem the appropriateness of annually reviewing the Executive Summary of the teaching portfolio (according to SBS B2).

The requirement for the meeting and written record can be satisfied by annually fulfilling the following steps:

- The Chair/Director ensures that course evaluation statistics are compiled and, if applicable, the faculty member incorporates them into Part A of the Teaching Portfolio
- All relevant teaching evaluation reports are forwarded to the Chair/Director prior to the meeting
- The Chair/Director will conduct the departmental evaluation of teaching and will compile the meeting outcomes into the teaching evaluation section of the annual performance review.
- The Chair/Director sends the completed annual performance review report to the faculty member following the meeting and, if applicable, the faculty member suggests any necessary changes.
- Once both parties agree that the annual performance review on teaching reflects the content of the meeting, the Chair/Director will file into the teaching section of the faculty member’s annual performance review.

2) The Departmental Teaching Evaluation Report

The Departmental Teaching Evaluation Report is to be submitted for the purpose of appointment, reappointment, tenure/permanence and promotion, according to SPS B1 Part IV. This submission should minimally contain commentary with respect to all of the following elements that are relevant:

- Annual reviews and results of discussions with the candidate of the Executive Summary (SPS B2)
- Peer observations
- Significant contributions to curriculum
- Significant contribution to the development of course materials
- Significant participation in pedagogical discussions
- Evidence of incorporation of some forms of formative evaluations in courses and evidence of response to the concerns of students
- Review of the summative questions on the student evaluation questionnaire

Results of this discussion will be recorded in writing and agreed to by both parties.