# Peer Review of Teaching Guidelines for Remote Classroom Observations

As courses have moved into remote delivery, questions have arisen regarding about peer reviews of teaching in synchronous and asynchronous virtual sections.  These guidelines provide some suggestions for doing so within the context of the Collective Bargaining Agreement's provisions and with a focus on supporting faculty's efforts at participating in the peer review process while working remotely.

## Introduction:  The Value of Peer Reviews
Peer review is a standard in scholarship and has related relevance to teaching.  Doing peer evaluations of teaching helps to create a culture in which excellence in teaching is valued.  It can enhance campus collegiality when faculty work together to support each other in achieving that goal.  It also has practical advantages for faculty, reducing the reliance on student evaluations in the RTP process and encouraging a shared understanding about defining rigor and workload.

## Relevant CBA Sections:

- CBA 15.14,  When classroom visits are utilized as part of the evaluation of a faculty unit employee under this Article, the individual faculty unit employee being evaluated shall be provided a notice of at least five (5) days that a classroom visit, online observation, and/or review of online content is taking place.  There shall be consultation between the faculty member being evaluated and the individual who visits his/her class(es) regarding the classes to be visited and the scheduling of such visits.
- CBA 15.3, Evaluation criteria and procedures shall be made available to the faculty unit employee no later than 14 days after the first day of instruction of the academic term.  Evaluation criteria and procedures shall be made available to the evaluation committee and the academic administrator prior to the commencement of the evaluation process.  Once the evaluation process has begun, there shall be no changes in criteria and procedures used to evaluate the faculty unit employee during the evaluation process.  **Faculty members teaching online are subject to all the rights and conditions set out in Article 15 and applicable campus evaluation policies.**  The collection and use of online course quantitate data for evaluation purposes shall only occur when required in campus evaluation policies and procedures.  (**Bold** emphasis added).

Refer also to the Chairs Handbook, pg. 19-20, which describes the evaluation process.

Note that these guidelines were created as guidelines only; the CBA provisions above determine the process.  Nothing in these suggested approaches is intended or should be interpreted as being counter to the provisions of the CBA.

## Process

Choosing Reviewers
*It is helpful for reviewers to have:*
1. Institutional experience, including familiarity with the assessment goals of the program, College, or campus so that they can understand the reasoning behind the teaching choices of the person under review.

2. Integrity.  Reviewers should be fair-minded and committed to confidentiality.
3. Trust.  Peer reviewers should be able to work collaboratively with the faculty member who is being reviewed, behaving with grace and tact, and offering feedback in a way that helps advise on strategies for development.
4. Skills in being thorough so that any recommendations are specific and practical.

Preparing for the Teaching Visit

- Once assigned to do a review, the reviewer should schedule a consultation with the faculty member who is being reviewed.  During consultation, the reviewer should discuss the classes/sections that should be visited, approximate date/time, how access to the virtual classroom will be provided, and what should be viewed.  If in your College or department other items are normally obtained/viewed during peer observation (syllabi, samples of recent assignments, etc.), please also discuss that during this consultation.
- After reviewing the online classroom, the observer should meet with the faculty member so that that person can provide an overview of how their course runs and its design.  The faculty member should show the evaluator where the information resides for the items listed in the 'preparation' section below and run through the course and its design.
- Understand student demographics:  When preparing for the teaching visit, the reviewer should assess basic information about each course being reviewed:  How many students?  Is the course lower division, upper division, graduate?  How frequent and long are the class meetings?  What are the ages of students and are there any other demographic factors that may be relevant to teaching approaches?
- Inquire about Course Learning Goals:  The reviewer should obtain from the faculty member being reviewed a basic sense for how the learning goals of the course(s) have been shaped by the department, college, or discipline, whether the courses are required or electives, and the intellectual and skill outcomes that are the focus of the courses.

Observation

Granting Access to Observers:  The faculty member should add the observer to the course (ILearn, Canvas, or other platform) as a student to see how students experience the course, without gaining grade book access, etc.  If unsure about how to add this access, the Center for Academic Technologies (CAT) can provide directions.  This access can be ended when the observation is over.

*An online class can take different forms, so the following are suggestions to consider and may vary in applicability depending on various factors, including whether the course is synchronous or asynchronous. Observation can include both watching a live class and assessing asynchronous course components found in discussion forums, messages, posted announcements, syllabi, chat and virtual rooms, etc.*

*Access should mirror the access students have to the class(es) for the date/time the sections are scheduled to meet, via whatever medium the faculty member is planning to use for the day.  The goal is to "visit" the virtual class so that the evaluator can observe what would typically be seen during a classroom visit.*

*Possible areas for observation (to the degree they are consistent with the criterion pre-established and communicated at the beginning of the semester):*

- Content knowledge: appropriate context and background, citation of relevant scholarship, presentation of divergent viewpoints
- Presentation: voice, varied intonation, clarity of explanation, eye contact, effective listening, defining difficult terms, use of examples, humor used appropriately.
- Use of instructional materials: effective audio/visual, handouts that facilitate learning, adequate preparation, appropriate content, content that is appropriately rigorous and challenging
- Class organization: Clear statement of learning goals, relationship of lesson to course goals, logical sequence, appropriate pace.
- Presentation form and substance: varied methods of engagement (analysis, discussion, quizzes, writing assignments, videos, role plays, debates, case studies, book clubs, concept maps, poster sessions, etc.
- Teacher-Student interactions: effective questioning, warm and welcoming rapport, use of student names, engaged students
- Student participation: interest, enthusiasm, participation
- Assessment practices

Observation Suggestions Specific to Remote Courses*

- Introductory content and policies to determine if they include: purpose of course, required materials, institutional policies, support services, etc.
- Course and module objectives: whether the course objectives are listed clearly, if students have opportunities to reflect on course and module objectives, etc.
- Assessments and activities: are there clear descriptions that are aligned with course learning objectives, is the grading policy clear, are assessments appropriately sequenced, do opportunities exist for peer-to-peer and instructor/student communication?
- Materials/resources: are there a variety of material and media to support the course learning objective, is multimedia fully accessible, are student work samples are included where appropriate?
- Structure and navigation of the course: consider ease of use, logic and efficiency; demonstrating where students begin and how to navigate; utilizing LMS to provide self-assessment/tracking opportunities for students.

(*These suggestions are taken from the Center of Academic Technologies "Quality Assurance in Course Design & Delivery" Quality Assurance (Self Paced) Course. See their web page to enroll.)