

Psychology Department
Departmental Guidelines for Formative Evaluation of Teaching
Revised - January 22, 2003

Objective: All faculty aspire to be good teachers and all can benefit from thoughtful evaluation and feedback. The purpose of this plan is to create a strategy whereby faculty are guaranteed the opportunity for support and feedback directed at teaching improvement. A peer review system is to be used. Components and procedures of the plan follow.

I. Departmental Mentors

Junior Faculty

All junior faculty will be paired with a senior faculty mentor from the department. Junior faculty will be encouraged to participate in the university mentoring program such that a mentor from outside of the department is also available. The hope is that these pairings will be maintained throughout the years before tenure review. When the departmental mentor is on leave, a replacement mentor will be designated.

Responsibilities of departmental mentors include:

*Regular meetings to discuss teaching concerns, questions generated by the junior faculty member.

*Negotiating/mediating opportunities for reciprocal classroom visits/observations; junior faculty members can observe other classes taught by both junior and senior members of the department. Of particular interest will be coordinating classroom visits/observations between instructors teaching the same classes (e.g., General Psychology, Research Methods).

*Reviewing syllabi, course assignments, exams, teaching materials and giving feedback on that review.

*Reviewing student evaluations with the junior faculty member; discussing possible interpretations of data and ideas for addressing any concerns.

*Making classroom observations each semester.

Senior Faculty

All senior faculty will be paired with another senior faculty member for a two year time period. In the first year of the pairing, one member will serve as the mentor; in the second year, the roles will be reversed. Every other year, the pairings will be changed.

Responsibilities of mentor:

- *Regular meetings to discuss teaching concerns, questions generated by the instructor.
- *Reviewing/commenting on syllabi/assignments at the request of the instructor.
- *Making classroom observations each semester.

Non-tenure Track Faculty

All faculty members in non-tenure track positions will be assigned a mentor from the department to give advice and offer support. The instructor and mentor will negotiate activities to promote peer support of teaching.

II. Classroom Visitation/Observations

All mentors will be responsible for visiting classes taught by the junior or senior faculty member each semester.

For the junior faculty member, **at least one series of classes for each course taught during each semester** will be observed by the mentor. "Series" will be determined by the junior faculty member and the mentor, such as a 2-3 day period when a particular topic will be covered from beginning to end.

For the senior faculty member, a course to be observed each semester will be identified (by the senior member being observed).

For the junior faculty, mentors will allow the junior faculty member to observe at least one series of classes for a course being taught by the mentors. Mentors will also help negotiate observation by the junior faculty member of other courses being taught by other members of the department.

Mentors are expected to give feedback on the observations in a timely manner; preferably on the day of visitation; minimally within one or two days of visitation. This feedback should focus on the observations of both the instructor and the observer. Some recommend that the instructor be given the first opportunity to reflect on the experience (i.e., what went well, what went not so well, what I particularly liked about the class, what I would change about the class). This can be followed by the observer's reflections on these same questions.

Prior to all observations/visitations a meeting/discussion should occur between the instructor and observer. This meeting is needed to allow the instructor an opportunity to set the stage for the observation. It is important that the faculty member offer a statement of teaching philosophy to the mentor and in particular, the goals for the course to be observed and the goals for the days of observation.

Any handouts or course assignments to be addressed during the observation days should be provided to the observer during the pre-observation meeting.

These observations should be documented - date, time, class. Documentation will be forwarded to the Department Chair.

Members of the department who are not designated mentors may also make classroom visitations. Of course, these observations should follow the guidelines established for mentors - that is schedule a discussion before observing, observe a series of classes rather than just one, provide post-observation feedback. It is important that junior faculty members are not "bombarded" by requests to observe. It is also important to provide opportunities for junior faculty members to observe your classes should they so desire.

III. Portfolio of Teaching Materials

The junior faculty member will keep a portfolio of teaching materials for each course taught. The portfolio will contain the course syllabus, examples of exams and assignments, and other materials deemed relevant by the junior person.

A personal statement of teaching philosophy should also be included with the teaching materials.

This will be made available to the mentor at least once per year for review and comment.

IV. End of Year Review

At the end of each academic year, the tenured members of the department will meet to discuss the progress of each junior faculty member. The mentor, chair, and others who have observed and/or worked with the junior faculty member will provide information to others.

Following the departmental meeting of tenured faculty, the junior faculty member, mentor and chair will meet to review the year. They will discuss the progress and accomplishments for the year and will consider goals for the next semester or year.

V. Departmental Discussions

Each year the department will engage in a series of pedagogical conversations about specific courses. All members of the department will participate in a conversation about Psychology 100 - Introductory Psychology and other courses as identified (i.e., seminars, History and System). All faculty members teaching Psychology 200- Research Methods in Psychology will meet to discuss the content, teaching techniques, assignments, goals and objectives for that course. These faculty will share with the full department the outcome of that conversation. All faculty members teaching 200 Level Research Courses and all faculty members teaching 300 Level Research Courses will meet to discuss the

expectations, goals, and objectives of these courses. All members of the department will also hear about those conversations.

VI. Instructional Resource Center

The department maintains and will continue to maintain an instructional resource center. A manual of successful laboratory assignments for Psychology 100 is available online and in hard copy. This will be reviewed and updated periodically. Departmental handouts to be used in 200 and 300 level Research Courses will be available. Other materials that faculty recommend for "community" taught courses (i.e., Methods, Psychology 100, etc.) will be available for sharing. The departmental secretary maintains a file of all course syllabi; these are available for review by any member of the department.

VII. Important Areas for Reflection

Peer review will support reflection on the following questions:

For the instructor:

- What are my strengths?
- What are my weak points?
- What might I do to enhance my teaching?
- What do I enjoy most about teaching?

For the mentor:

- Does the instructor establish clear goals that are communicated to the students?
- Do the course assignments fit with the goals for the course?
- In the classroom does the instructor use time well, is the presentation well organized and clear, is she/he respectful and encouraging of student engagement?
- Does the instructor give timely and helpful feedback on assignments/exams?

VIII. Feedback

It is important to consider carefully the feedback that is given. Feedback that involves specific examples is likely to be most useful. Specific recommendations for changes that might lead to improvement are important. It is also critical that the person receiving the feedback be given ample opportunity to discuss the feedback, ask questions, and receive clarification. Feedback should focus on specific teaching behaviors (e.g., encouraging student discussion, responding to student questions). Feedback should begin with strengths and attempt to build on those strengths.

IX. Evaluation of Plan

A periodic evaluation of the plan will be made. Each year - preferably early in the fall semester - discussion of the process will be a focus of a departmental staff meeting. Particularly, junior faculty will be encouraged to talk about what seems to be helpful, what is not, and what might need to be added to the program.