

Teaching & Learning Committee Reports

Principles of Evaluation of Teaching at the University of Saskatchewan

Instructional Development Committee of Council
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Introduction

As part of our commitment to the Scholarship of Teaching and the Teacher-Scholar model, the University of Saskatchewan, through a consultation process initiated by the Instructional Development Committee of Council (IDCC), has assessed its responsibility to teaching. The institutional commitment to the evaluation of teaching should be as strong as its commitment to the evaluation of research and implemented with the same rigour. To that end, the *Principles of Evaluation of Teaching at the University of Saskatchewan* document is intended to provide guiding principles concerning the evaluation processes for teaching.

Values

Based on the University of Saskatchewan Mission Statement approved in 1993, the espoused values of the University community include the following commitments:

- We value creativity, intellectual curiosity, innovation, critical thinking and knowledge.
- We value the pursuit of high academic and ethical standards.
- We value the diversity of our University community: the people, their points of view, and

contributions they make to the realization of our mission.

- We value the ideas, continuing interest, and support of the people of the Saskatchewan and Canada.
- We value the University as a place of human dignity and fairness.
- We value the freedom and independence to engage in the open pursuit of knowledge;
- We value our campus as a place of inspiration and beauty.

Teaching and the evaluation of teaching should be consistent with other aspects of the Mission Statement including the University's Goals and Objectives.

Background

The Instructional Development Committee of Council has established an Ad Hoc Committee on Teaching Evaluations and a Working Group on the Principles of Teaching Evaluation to develop the Principles of Evaluation of Teaching at the University of Saskatchewan. Reviewing information from departments and colleges across the campus, it is evident that teaching is appreciated in different ways across the campus, that a variety of evaluation systems exist, that the information gathered for teaching evaluations from student and peer evaluations varies and that students often do not receive information concerning their participation in the evaluation processes nor are they provided with any results from evaluations of teaching. Some academic units pay a great deal of attention to the evaluation of teaching activities and some evaluate teaching on an ad hoc basis. We are recommending that the evaluation of teaching be conducted on a serial basis, that is, a series of evaluations be conducted over a period of time.

Purpose

One of the goals of the University, as set out in A Framework for Planning at the University of Saskatchewan, is to improve the quality of instructional programs. The Framework document states that the University must be governed by considerations of quality and accountability. A university that is quality conscious will be accountable to its students, its alumni and the people of the Province (p. 5).

The Instructional Development Committee of Council advocates that the thoroughness used to evaluate teaching activities should parallel those used to evaluate research and other scholarly activities. The University needs to pay more attention to a critical element of its mandate, namely the instruction of undergraduate and graduate students. Information gathered from the proper evaluation of teaching may be used for formative purposes to assist with instructional development and improvement, or used for collegial decision-making processes including tenure, promotion and salary review, and for review of academic programs. The *Principles of Evaluation of Teaching at the University of Saskatchewan* should assist academic units, academic administrators and collegial committees in their deliberations concerning the development and implementation of evaluation processes for teaching. It is intended that the document will be used in further discussions about the evaluation of teaching on campus.

The purpose of this document is to provide basic principles to facilitate excellent teaching practices, to enunciate principles for the proper evaluation of teaching and to address the development of some standardized evaluation questions for units that do not evaluate teaching on a regular basis. To complement the practice of good teaching, it is imperative to introduce guiding principles for the effective evaluation of teaching.

To achieve this end, it is important to emphasize the responsibility of students in the learning process and the importance of their informed evaluation of teachers. Evaluation of teaching effectiveness should be multi-faceted and include some or all of the following indicators: undergraduate and graduate students, self, peers, coordinators of courses, co-instructors and input from administrators involved with collegial processes and student matters. It is intended that the information from the various evaluation processes will lead to the improvement of instruction on campus.

Departments and colleges should be encouraged to explore their philosophical approaches to instructional programs and develop appropriate evaluation instruments for student and peer evaluations if they have not done so. Appendix C addresses some exceptions for student evaluation processes that should be considered by academic units. Challenges involving multi-instructor courses and graduate instruction and graduate supervision will need special attention by academic units. The intent of this document is to address matters of principles only.

Elements of Effective Teaching at the University of Saskatchewan

In order to effectively evaluate teaching, it is important to articulate elements of effective teaching. The first set of principles is designed to provide guidelines or expectations concerning university teaching.

Expectations for Teachers

1. There should be respect for the student.
2. Consistent with the teacher-scholar model, the teacher is a scholar who should bring current, innovative and relevant knowledge of the discipline to the instructional setting.
3. The pedagogically competent teacher identifies and communicates the objectives and expectations of the course to students and selects methods of teaching and learning that are appropriate for that instructional setting.
4. The teacher should create an environment that nurtures critical thinking, intellectual curiosity and scholarly inquiry. The teacher should promote student involvement in the content and encourage enthusiasm for the discipline.
5. The teacher should be reasonably accessible to the students.
6. The teacher is responsible for the assessment of students, ensuring that the assessment process is valid, open, fair and consistent with course objectives and student competencies. Student competencies may be variable based on the program and the difference between junior and senior courses and undergraduate and graduate courses. Since assessment is an integral part of learning, assessment results must be communicated to the student.

Expectations for Students

At an institution of higher learning, there is an onus for students to engage actively in the learning experience. They must assume responsibility for their own learning and strive to be increasingly self-directed in the learning process as their studies evolve. The University expects students to be:

1. Motivated to participate in an active learning community;
2. Prepared for classes, tutorials, seminars, laboratories and other learning experiences;
3. Curious about the discipline and interested in gaining new knowledge;
4. Tolerant and appreciative of diverse and divergent viewpoints;
5. Fair and constructive when evaluating teaching.
6. Respectful of the teacher.

Both the students and the teacher contribute to the creation of a positive learning environment. The expectations for students and teachers are enunciated in the University's Guidelines for Academic Conduct .

Evaluation of Teaching

The evaluation of teaching at the University of Saskatchewan may serve several functions. Most importantly, teaching evaluations are to be used to assist faculty with the development and improvement of instruction. Data collected from teaching evaluations can also serve a summative function to assist with collegial and administrative decisions. In addition to information about teaching performance, some units may choose to gather data about the course or program for the purpose of program review or development. Instructors may also be interested in gathering information about new teaching methods and approaches. Academic units should distinguish between criterion associated with course evaluations and assessments of teaching. This document will focus on the formative and summative purposes of teaching evaluations.

1. Formative assessment

Formative assessment is an evaluation process that focuses on ways of improving and enhancing programs rather than rendering definitive judgment about effectiveness (Patton, 1997, p. 67). Information from students or peers is provided to the teacher for the purpose of giving feedback by identifying strengths and weaknesses and to provide information for improving or enhancing particular teaching skills. The purpose of formative evaluation is for personal development in and through the improvement of teaching performance. It is recommended that teachers consider formative assessment during the course class to gather constructive information about teaching effectiveness. There are countless strategies and approaches to gather formative information for the teacher and it would be inappropriate if not impossible to list them. Academic units should devise their own practice and approach to formative assessment. A teacher may also choose to implement a formative assessment during a course to gain information about student learning

and ideas for the improvement of instruction. Careful attention should be paid to the practice of incorporating both formative and summative features in the same assessment tool.

2. Summative assessment

Summative assessment is an evaluation process that is conducted . . . for the benefit of some external audience or decision-maker (Scriven as cited in Patton, 1997, p. 67-8). Information for the purpose of reviewing a teacher for administrative or collegial decisions (tenure, promotion, salary review, right of first refusal, feedback for students, teaching dossiers, etc.) should be accomplished through an appropriate evaluation instrument for students and guidelines for peer assessment. The purpose of summative assessment is to contribute to personnel decisions. The reliability of data is strengthened when evaluation by students and peer assessments occur during the course and are conducted serially over a period of time.

Colleges and departments are encouraged to develop their own procedures and assessment tools for formative and summative teaching evaluations if they have not already done so. In addition, the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU) and the Instructional Development Committee of Council are committed to the development of a set of common questions for student evaluations to assist units that currently do not have a validated instrument for the evaluation of teaching by students. IDCC will also be working on a framework for teaching evaluations by peers for units that currently do not have a peer assessment tool or a regular procedure in place. Confidential evaluations are signed and may include qualitative comments from students. Anonymous evaluations are unacceptable unless the instruments are approved course evaluations; information from approved course evaluations must be aggregated or summarized and must exclude any anonymous remarks made by students. Regardless of the evaluation instrument used, the evaluation must be consistent with the provisions of the appropriate collective agreements and the University of Saskatchewan Standards for Promotion and Tenure.

It is up to departments and colleges to consider and determine the frequency of evaluations for those who have achieved tenure or permanent or continuing status and for those who have been promoted to the highest rank at the University. However, it is recommended that all teachers be evaluated at least once every three years. Teachers under review for renewal, tenure or promotion and other collegial decisions should have their teaching evaluated on an annual basis. Candidates for tenure and promotion are advised to review the sections on teaching outlined in the relevant department, college and University standards for tenure and promotion. Teachers under review for collegial or administrative decisions should be reviewed using both student and peer evaluation processes. The extent to which off-campus teaching evaluations occur should depend on the practice in each department or non-departmentalized college; units should set realistic goals to evaluate off-campus teaching by students and by peers.

Principles for the Evaluation of Teaching at the University of Saskatchewan:

1. The rights and dignity of both teachers and students shall be protected in the process of evaluation, including the collection of data and the reporting of results.

2. Teaching case files should be the standard means for documenting teaching accomplishments at the University of Saskatchewan. The file should include a variety of evidence: from the teacher, students, peers or supervisors. The case file must contain a reflective statement of teaching philosophy and an explanation of its application. The teaching case file will be assembled by the teacher and will be supplemented by evaluation material collected by the department head for the purposes of renewal, tenure or promotion (See Appendix A for details about teaching case files). Guidelines for preparation of a teaching portfolio can be found on the web site of the [Gwenna Moss Teaching and Learning Centre](#)

3. There should be clear guidelines for the conduct of peer evaluations. Departments and colleges are expected to develop criteria for peer evaluations. The teacher must be advised of the peer evaluation in advance and the evaluation should include more than one observation. For summative purposes, peer review enriches the evidence on which collegial decisions are made. It is also recognized that peer review will be valuable for formative purposes, especially for new teachers. See Appendix B for further information about peer evaluation of teaching. Assistance with teaching evaluations involving peer review is available from Nancy Van Note Chism's book, *Peer Review of Teaching*, published in 1999 by the Anker Publishing Company. This and other resources may be obtained from the Gwenna Moss Teaching and Learning Centre.

4. Student evaluation instruments must be reliable and be approved by the department or college faculty. Information gathered from instruments should be subject to an appropriate validation process. It is useful to have a periodically updated normative base for interpretive purposes in terms of understanding of the instrument's use; the department's or college's understanding concerning the interpretation of results from student evaluations should be established prior to the collection and aggregation of results. Information concerning the interpretation of numeric results and weight given to qualitative responses should be explained.

5. Teaching evaluations should also include the assessment of effective graduate student supervision and clinical supervision, if relevant.

6. Evaluation processes shall be fair and transparent, that is the processes should be explicit and understood at the outset of the evaluation process. Formative and summative information shall be provided to the teacher. Summative information shall be made available for administrative or collegial purposes at the department, college or University level.

7. To be consistent with established research procedures concerning the provision of feedback to participants of evaluations or questionnaires, summative information from evaluations by students should be made available, on a restricted basis, to all admitted and registered students of the University of Saskatchewan. Departments and colleges are encouraged to make summative information from student evaluations of teaching available to students through departmental or college offices, a department or college resource room, or through a local branch of the University Libraries. To that end, faculty rights to have a fair, candid and constructive evaluation shall be balanced with student rights concerning confidentiality and anonymity.

Strategies for Implementation of Evaluation Processes

Each department and college should develop strategies for the effective and serial evaluation of teaching. The department and college should enunciate its position concerning:

- a. Use of properly validated, department or college approved student evaluation form;
- b. Process for the peer evaluations;
- c. Development of teaching case files including a teaching dossier for the personal development of teachers and use of the teaching case file for collegial or administrative decisions;
- d. Restricted student access to information from student evaluation instruments and where such information will be stored. Access by students to information from student evaluation of teaching must recognize that the information is confidential and available on a restricted basis. The information must be stored in a secure manner and access should be available by providing identification demonstrating that the student is admitted to or registered at the University of Saskatchewan.

It is recommended that the Instructional Development Committee of Council develop common questions for teaching evaluations by students following University-wide consultation. It is envisioned that the University will develop an instrument that is reliable and valid that could be adopted by units not currently using an evaluation form, and may be considered by others to strengthen their own questionnaires. Individuals involved with the administration of the student evaluation processes in departments and colleges should receive training concerning the philosophy of the evaluation process and the proper administration of an instrument including how the information will be stored, and made accessible to students and others. It is important to support the ongoing use of such instruments and to ensure that the interpretation of information from teaching evaluations is appropriate and reasonable.

The University of Saskatchewan is committed to the improvement of teaching and the development of instructional skills for teachers. To that end, the Gwenna Moss Teaching and Learning Centre will work cooperatively with departments and colleges to deliver educational programming and support for instructional staff.