



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

COUNCIL

PRINCIPLES
of **EVALUATION** of
TEACHING at the
University of Saskatchewan

Approved March 21, 2002



Principles of Evaluation of Teaching at the University of Saskatchewan

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.

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 pedagogically¹ 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*².

¹ Pedagogy is defined as "the art or science of teaching" (Barber, 1998, p. 1071) or "the theory of how to teach" (Funk and Wagnalls, 1963, p. 993).

² University Council approved the *Guidelines for Academic Conduct* in June 1999. The document is available on the University Council website: http://www.usask.ca/university_council/reports/archives/guide_conduct.shtml.

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.³

It must be stressed that the confidential Peer Consultation Program offered through the Gwenna Moss Teaching and Learning Centre is different in nature and purpose from peer evaluations conducted for summative purposes.

Appendix A — Teaching Case File

Consistent with the teacher-scholar model at the University of Saskatchewan, the minimum elements of the teaching case file should include:

1. An up-to-date *curriculum vitae*;
2. A statement of teaching philosophy and an explanation of its application. The teaching philosophy should not be evaluated; it forms part of the record of a teacher's pedagogical development and may change over time. Writing a teaching philosophy is also an invaluable exercise in self-reflection and formative practice;
3. A record of teaching roles (including time commitments and methods of delivery) in undergraduate and graduate courses, including
 - i. Teaching and/or supervision of students performing clinical work, undertaking practica or other types of field work;
 - ii. Advising and supervising graduate students;
4. Student ratings/assessment of instruction;
5. Other information from students (letters of support, correspondence submitted in confidence, etc.);
6. Evaluations from peers;
7. Assessments, explanations or interpretations by administrators or comments gathered from coordinators of multiple sections or multiple instructors or other instructors of the course;
8. Additional supporting evidence of teaching accomplishment.

Appendix B — Peer Evaluation of Teaching

Departments and colleges should develop criteria for peer evaluations. The criteria may include review of the classroom performance, quality of examinations, course outlines and course materials, syllabi, reading materials, reading lists, laboratory manuals, workbooks and classroom assignments. To evaluate classroom performance, peers should consider preparation, presentation, teaching methods, mode of delivery, student interest and engagement. All peer assessments shall culminate in a written assessment.

Under peer review, teachers and reviewers assume new responsibilities and take new roles. It is expected that colleagues that serve as peer reviewers be given recognition for their service in the same manner that reviewers of scholarship are given. For example, service as a peer assessor should be listed on curricula vitae. Departments and colleges should seek consensus about assessment standards for the peer evaluation process. Guidelines of expectations for the teacher being reviewed during the peer review process include:

1. Teachers choose materials that best convey their teaching strengths and their efforts at improvement; materials should be up-to-date, appropriate for the level of the course, and reflect current knowledge of the discipline and its scholarship;
2. Teachers reflect on their teaching activities and justify them to reviewers to reveal their assumptions and knowledge of relevant theory and practice;
3. Teachers defend the consistency between major elements of a course including stated goals for course activities; for example, do procedures for evaluation of students match course activity and reflect course goals?

Colleagues who serve as reviewers in the peer assessment process should be expected:

1. To discuss with the teacher under review what aspects can best be assessed;
2. Determine how much time and effort are to be devoted to reviewing each teacher including the review of materials and the time allotted for classroom visit(s);
3. Confront their own assumptions and practices about teaching and learning in light of their own experiences as reviewers.

If classroom visits are part of the process, the evaluation should include more than one observation. The teacher must be advised of the peer evaluation in advance. Information about the teacher's delivery, rapport, attentiveness and responsiveness to students should be included in the assessment of classroom teaching.

It is expected that peer evaluations will result in a written assessment forwarded to the Department Head or Dean. Peers are encouraged to provide formative and summative assessment to the teacher.

Appendix C - Exemptions for Student Evaluation Processes

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 shall have their teaching evaluated on an annual basis. Evaluations by students may include the following exemptions and exceptions:

1. A course with multiple teachers should use a modified student evaluation system that will include questions related to the entire course and a set of teacher-related questions for each teacher. Departments and colleges are encouraged to develop appropriate methods of assessment in these circumstances.
2. Courses with fewer than eight students should not use the same student evaluation instrument used in larger courses. Departments and colleges shall develop open-ended questionnaires to assess the quality of the course, possible improvements to the course, the quality of the instruction and ideas for improving the instruction of the course among other things. Student evaluation outcomes with fewer than five responses shall have the aggregate data suppressed to protect the anonymity of the students.
3. It is not appropriate to use the on campus in-class evaluation for other delivery modes including online learning, satellite distance education classes, correspondence courses, etc. Other evaluation instruments should be used to assess the quality of the course, the delivery style and the quality of the instruction in these circumstances. Units offering these types of alternative delivery should consult the Gwenna Moss Teaching and Learning Centre to consider other assessment processes.
4. Evaluation results that depart substantially from the norm for a particular teacher due to unusual circumstances (for example, extended serious illness, extended personal duress, etc.) may be removed from the teacher's file by the Department Head or Dean. Skewed results from an anomalous course or results based on new or alternative approaches to delivery may be removed from the instructor's record by the Department Head or Dean. Poor teaching results are not to be removed except in exceptional circumstances. Subsequent improvements should reflect favorably on the teacher's commitment and performance.
5. Courses taught by sessional lecturers shall be evaluated in accordance with the procedures of the CUPE 3287 Agreement. Sessional lecturers may opt to be evaluated using the regular student evaluation processes in the department or college as a vehicle to gather more data on their teaching effectiveness.

These are only a few examples of the exclusions that may be adopted by departments and colleges. The department head or dean may approve other exemptions.

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