Overview

Peer review letters are required for tenure and promotion dossiers. An *evaluative review*, the letter that accompanies these tenure and promotion cases, is one that summarizes strengths and weaknesses in teaching over the period of evaluation, and includes a narrative on both professional development in teaching as well as contributions to the broader educational mission. A *formative review*, on the other hand, is often conducted confidentially by a mentor, and refers to the type of review and constructive feedback to help a candidate improve teaching.

Peer reviews are meant to provide a broad overview of an instructor’s teaching approach complemented by specific observations of the instructor in the classroom. To achieve this, the reviewer needs to examine course materials, and interview the instructor both before and after the class session to gain a sense of the overall course, the learning objectives, and the approach used, as well as observed methods and strategies.

The recommendations herein have been developed by the UTLC’s Faculty Advisory Board, based partially on peer review materials developed at long-established and nationally reputed university teaching centers.

Related documents:
- A peer-review rubric: [http://tlc.provost.gwu.edu/tenure-promotion](http://tlc.provost.gwu.edu/tenure-promotion)
- See also the UTLC’s *Teaching Portfolio Guidelines for Tenure & Promotion* on the same webpage.

Guidelines for Chairs and Mentors

- **Who should review teaching?** The ideal reviewers are experienced faculty who have a strong record of excellence in teaching. In some cases, depending on resources and availability, the UTLC can provide a formative review.
- **What and how to review.** Reviews should include an examination of syllabi, course materials, learning objectives, teaching approach and philosophy, reflection, contributions to curricula, and should consider the instructor’s efforts at development and continual improvement.
- **How often should reviews be scheduled?** It is expected that evaluative reviews will be conducted for personnel decisions such as tenure and promotion, and contract renewal. Formative reviews are encouraged well before such evaluative reviews to allow faculty enough time to act on the feedback.
- **What is development and how does one go about it?** Development refers to efforts by the instructor to learn about and try new pedagogical techniques. It is understood that exploration of new approaches is an important part of development, even if the approaches do not always produce desired outcomes, and that it may take a few attempts to adapt a

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1 In particular: the Center for Research on Learning & Teaching, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor ([http://www.crlt.umich.edu/resources/evaluation-teaching](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/resources/evaluation-teaching)), the Center for Teaching & Learning, University of Minnesota ([http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/peer/guidelines/index.html](http://www1.umn.edu/ohr/teachlearn/resources/peer/guidelines/index.html)); Center for Teaching Excellence, University of Kansas ([http://www.cte.ku.edu/documenting/observations/](http://www.cte.ku.edu/documenting/observations/)). Some of the language is also borrowed from similar documents internal to GW, such as the SMPA rubric on peer review. Note: this version (September 2014) has been edited since the November 2013 version to reflect name changes (UTLC) and a simplified peer review rubric.
A successful technique from elsewhere. The most common form of development is to attend a teaching workshop and try out some of the ideas in a course. For example, the UTLC offers such workshops each year, and for junior faculty, a more comprehensive program: the Faculty Learning Community for Junior Faculty.

- **How should teaching-focused faculty be evaluated?** Faculty who lean towards teaching in the teaching-research balance ought to contribute more towards teaching in both quantity and quality than their research-focused colleagues. Such faculty often teach broadly across the curriculum, contribute significantly to curriculum development, as well as make scholarly contributions in teaching. The UTLC offers the Peer Reviewed Explorations in Teaching (PRET) program for faculty who seek a more in-depth developmental experience featuring teaching innovations.

- **How should student feedback be included?** While numerical ratings are useful in identifying outliers, written comments are often more useful in understanding and assessing student feedback. Departments might also consider focus group interviews with students to obtain more detailed feedback.

**Guidelines for Junior Faculty**

Because junior faculty are least likely to be familiar with procedures at GW, we provide some additional guidance in the form of a timeline:

- **Years 1 and 2.**
  - As early as possible, ask your chair about getting a mentor or two appointed. Your mentors for teaching can be different than the ones for research. Read through the dossier requirements so you can plan ahead.
  - Since the first semester will be busy enough with settling in, take on your first developmental activity after that. Consider joining the TLC’s Faculty Learning Community for Junior Faculty (FLC-Jr) within your first two years.
  - Get one formative review during this time, well before your contract renewal. Be sure to show your course materials. Make note of your reviewers’ main points, especially the ones marked for improvement.
  - Make sure that student evaluations have some qualitative components such as comments. Ask your mentors or peers to review the student evaluations with you.
  - Get in the habit of reflecting, at the end of each course, on how the course went. Some departments require submission of written reflections with the annual report.

- **Years 3 and 4.**
  - Consider attending a teaching workshop, perhaps on campus, and experimenting with one new technique in one of your classes.
  - After you’ve had a chance to follow up on suggestions from the review, request another developmental review. This might also be a good opportunity to demonstrate your incorporation of the new technique, as well as explain how you’ve followed up on suggestions. Make sure you understand what, if anything, you need to address for the most important evaluative review: the one for tenure.
  - This is also a good time to draft your Teaching Statement, or at least make notes. Try to summarize what you’ve learned so far, and what you expect to work on.

- **Year 5.**
  - Start putting your dossier together. Begin by collecting information on courses taught and elaborating on a few (Part B of the teaching portion of the dossier). Complete your teaching statement (Part A) and get it reviewed by your mentors.
  - Be proactive about asking for the evaluative review. Completing this early will let you focus on the other items in your dossier.