

UBC Faculty of Applied Science

GUIDELINES ON PEER REVIEWS OF TEACHING FOR ARPT

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Background

This appendix provides guidelines for summative reviews conducted in the context of considerations for reappointment, promotion and/or tenure.¹ UBC places a high value on evidence of teaching effectiveness in its career progress review process for faculty. Peer and student evaluations of teaching constitute mandatory and significant elements of that evidence.²

Given the impact of these evaluations:

1. The review process must be consistent, fair, ethical and professional.
2. The review process must never compromise the integrity of the students' education or their relationship with their teacher.
3. Reviewers must have clear guidance with respect to what they are assessing and what would be helpful for the Dean's Advisory Committee on ARPT and SAC to see in their report.
4. Candidates must be fully informed as to the timing and protocol for peer review.

This document is designed to support clarity and consistency in those directions.

Heads³ must ensure that members of their academic unit have access to formal policies with respect to all ARPT procedures, including peer review. An academic unit may develop internal procedures that meet their unique contexts and cultures; however all such procedures must conform to university requirements and expectations. In the absence of an individualized departmental procedure that fully meets these conditions, this Faculty-wide procedure will stand.

Purpose

The aim of this guideline is to generate fair and equitable processes by which to derive rigorous, objective and thorough documentation that delineates claims as to the calibre of a faculty member's teaching performance and substantiates those claims with evidence.

Direct evidence of the quality of teaching must be carefully considered at the level of the department and the Faculty in order to reach a decision as to reappointment, promotion and tenure. Further, the Dean must defend recommendations arising from those deliberations at the level of the Senior Advisory Committee and the President. Inadequate or incomplete evidence is therefore a potential impediment to the Faculty's capacity to support faculty cases through to a

¹ Although this guideline pertains to ARPT processes, it is also recognized that summative peer reviews may be used for other purposes such as discretionary salary increases or documentation toward a teaching award nomination, as well as formal assessment of the impact of formative teaching mentorship and development processes.

² Although it is recognized that scores on student evaluations of teaching effectiveness are influenced by multiple factors, they are and will be an important component of the assessment. Peer reviews, reflexive self-evaluation as a component of a teaching dossier, and other external measures are also an important component of the context that helps evaluators understand the meaning of student scores in any individual situation.

³ UBC uses the standard term "Heads" to refer to both Department Heads and School Directors, who hold responsibility for developing and overseeing ARPT-related processes within their academic units.

successful conclusion. This document is designed to strengthen the basis for strong and defensible decisions.

Procedures

Formative Peer Reviews

Formative peer reviews constitute mentorship opportunities for teaching skill development and enrichment. They should be undertaken annually for tenure-track faculty members for the first three years following initial appointment and for any faculty members facing teaching challenges (as evidenced by low scores on student evaluation of teaching or other indicators). Formative peer reviews cannot replace summative peer reviews as evidence of teaching effectiveness for ARPT purposes. Formative reviews may serve as a basis in meetings between the candidate and the Head to discuss potential improvements to teaching.

Summative Peer Reviews

For reappointment, promotion and tenure cases, summative (“objective”) peer evaluations must be conducted during the academic year prior to the year in which the candidate is under review. In cases where the teaching dossier does not go out for external review, it is possible to conduct reviews during Term I of the academic year in which the review is taking place, if they were not completed in the previous year, or if the Head judges there to be value in obtaining additional reviews. However, because faculty are not required to signal their desire to be reviewed until after the conclusion of the spring academic term, Heads are advised to ensure that peer reviews are conducted in all cases where there is reasonable expectation of an upcoming review.

Selection of Reviewers

1. At least two tenured faculty members⁴ will conduct the review.
2. In order to ensure that candidates are well served by reviews of the highest credibility, it is strongly suggested that Heads solicit such reviews from faculty members with excellent teaching records, including those with strong external indicators of teaching excellence, such as teaching awards. Objective evidence of the calibre of the peer reviewers may become an important component within the Head’s Letter to the Dean’s Advisory Committee and the Dean’s case to the President.
3. Heads must ensure that peer reviewers are at “arms length” to the extent that they are not in conflict of interest, such as would be the case with close collaborators.
4. Heads should consider a balance of substantive expertise and consistency in the selection of reviewers. As options:
 - a. Departmental procedures may allow for candidates to propose names of prospective reviewers they believe would be well suited to evaluate their teaching, and to balance one proposed reviewer with one selected by the Head.
 - b. Departments may also establish a consistent set of peer reviewers for all ARPT cases in a given academic year to ensure fairness and consistency in assessment across cases, assuming that capacity to assess quality across multiple teaching modalities and contexts exists within the review team.

⁴ Senior Instructors and Professors of Teaching, having been tenured on the basis of excellent teaching and educational leadership are considered eligible to conduct formative and summative peer reviews for faculty members in the Professoriate stream at any rank.

- c. Academic units may consider using one peer reviewer from a different (but related) academic unit. An external reviewer can help with a focus on pedagogy rather than content, and strengthen the “arms length” perspective. This may be especially relevant in the context of smaller units.
5. In cases where there may be reason for concern, the Head may choose to appoint more than two reviewers.
6. A candidate may request a change in the assigned reviewers with a supporting rationale.

Preparation

1. As an initial step, the candidate will provide a copy of his/her teaching dossier to each of the reviewers.
2. Reviewers are responsible for assessing the teaching dossier in general with respect to the evidence it reveals in relation to teaching commitment, strategy and approach, as well as the specific course and context within which they will conduct one or more observations.
3. Reviewers are also responsible for being familiar with the specific expectations of the university with regard to teaching performance in relation to the rank for which the candidate is being reviewed.
4. Prior to the direct observation, reviewers will meet with the candidate to provide the candidate with an opportunity to comment on the nature of the course, the specific objectives of the session and/or any other aspect of the course dynamics that may influence an interpretation of teaching effectiveness.

Observation

1. Because the tone and working style of a course is normally established in the initial sessions, observations of direct teaching will not normally commence before the fourth week (assuming a full term course).
2. The candidate must be given advance warning about the time range in which the in-class visits will occur.
3. The reviewers observe the faculty member in a class (or comparable group teaching) environment on one or more occasions. This may be in a lecture setting and/or in another setting, such as a design studio, laboratory tutorial section, clinical section, etc.
4. Where insufficient evidence is obtained in a single teaching session to draw and substantiate conclusions as to observed teaching effectiveness, reviewers will schedule additional observations. Subsequent observations may be of the same or a different course and/or at a later time during the academic year.

Reporting

1. Following the observations, the reviewers then complete the Peer Review Form and submit it to the Head. The review form must address both general evidence of teaching effectiveness as interpreted from the teaching dossier and discussions with the candidate and objective evidence from direct observation.

2. Department heads may request that reviewers construct a common report or prepare individual reports. Where there are differences of opinion, separate reports in which each reviewer explicitly accounts for his or her conclusions are preferable.
3. Because the university requires evidence pertaining to a particular level of teaching quality for each rank level in the review process, reviewers are strongly encouraged to consider the explicit terminology from the rank-specific standards in explicating their claims and conclusions.
4. The Head places a copy of the evaluation in the candidate's personnel file, and transmits a copy to the candidate following the visit for ARPT cases or immediately after final marks for the course have been submitted for other scenarios where the review is not part of an ARPT assessment.
5. For cases where the summative review is not mandated for consideration for reappointment, tenure or promotion, the faculty member may include the evaluations in the cumulative teaching dossier for future reappointment, promotion and tenure considerations.
6. The Head will include the summative peer evaluations in the file submitted to the Dean's Advisory Committee on ARPT for promotion and tenure consideration. Should the candidate wish to respond in writing to the peer review, such a response can be appended to the copy of the peer review that is included in the teaching dossier.

Graduate Student Supervision

As a variant to the above process, a summative peer review of graduate student supervision may also be conducted at the request of the faculty member or at the discretion of the Head. In such cases, the reviewers meet with the faculty member and discuss the faculty member's approach to graduate supervision and supervision style. They then meet in confidence with present and possibly former graduate students, and/or request brief written confidential comments on graduate supervision from graduate students. Care must be taken to assure that feedback from graduate students cannot be attributed to particular individuals in any written report. Although evidence of effective graduate student supervision is an expected element in reviews within the Professoriate Stream, a uniform approach to this process remains under discussion at UBC.