

The University of Texas Faculty Advisory Council endorses the following model policy for Peer Observation of Teaching and recommends it for adoption at all UT System campuses.

Model Policy Faculty Peer Observation of Teaching

Evidence of peer observation of teaching is to be included in all cases for promotion and tenure in The University of Texas System. Policies developed on each campus regarding peer observation, including existing campus policies, should allow for great flexibility in department and unit level guidelines for the peer observation process. As per University of Texas System Regents Rule 31102, such polices:

...shall be developed with appropriate faculty input, including consultation with and guidance from faculty governance organizations, and shall be included in each institutional *Handbook of Operating Procedures* after review and appropriate administrative approval and submission to the Board of Regents for review and final approval.

The following model policy is recommended for all campuses.

Section 1. Purpose and Rationale

The [Institution] recognizes the essential contribution of its faculty members to the quality of students' education and learning experiences and supports faculty development in all aspects of instruction. An effective tool for faculty development is formative peer observation of teaching, which involves a frank and open review of teaching for the sole purpose of fostering improvement. This model policy provides recommendations and minimum requirements for the peer observation process to be used by departments in developing their own procedures for peer observation.

The goal of the peer observation process is to improve teaching and student learning and should serve as a tool for mentoring. The peer observation process should foster a culture of teaching excellence through collegial dialogue. Thus, the outcome of the faculty peer observation process should be a reflective summary describing any steps taken or changes made towards the enhancement of teaching and improvement of student learning.

Section 2. Scope

This policy applies to all full-time faculty whose duties include teaching of organized courses, including hybrid and online courses, and/or clinical instruction. The policy also applies to individuals holding the above titles who hold administrative appointments of 50% or less.

Section 3. Definitions

Faculty Member – the individual whose teaching is being observed.

Faculty Member Report – a report, described below in this policy, written by the faculty member whose teaching is being observed. This document is included in the faculty member's file.

Peer Observer – Individual who observes and provides feedback to faculty member.

Peer Observer Report – Oral or written report given by the observer to the faculty member. The format of the peer observer report is given to the faculty member only and is not included in the faculty member’s file.

Department or Unit Faculty – For purposes of this policy, department faculty includes full-time voting members of the department or unit.

Guidelines—Guidelines for the peer observation process developed by department or unit faculty and approved by a majority of the voting members of the department or unit faculty. Guidelines regarding peer-observation should be posted in an online location accessible to all faculty.

Section 4. Development of Guidelines

- A. Guidelines outlining the peer observation process should be developed at the department or unit level by the department or unit faculty. These Guidelines are to be approved by a majority of the voting members of the department or unit.
- B. Guidelines should:
 1. focus on faculty development and the mentoring aspects of peer observation
 2. specify that the Peer Observer’s report to the Faculty Member include suggestions and/or potential resources for improving teaching effectiveness if applicable
 3. reflect the variety of instructional delivery methods and topics within each department or unit
 4. recognize that no single teaching method or approach is inherently superior to any other
 5. protect against negative effects caused by conflict or disagreements between colleagues.
- C. Guidelines should specify the following:
 1. a timeline for the peer observation process. A recommended timeline is provided below.
 2. whether observation will consist of a single visit or multiple visits to the faculty member’s class or clinic
 3. expectations for any pre- or post-observation meetings
 4. that class visits will only occur with prior notification and discussion with the faculty member being observed
 5. areas of performance to be included in the observation process for different course formats (lecture, lab, online, hybrid, clinical training)
 6. for courses in which the Faculty Member conducts both the lecture and lab sections of the course, department guidelines shall specify whether both lecture and lab are to be included in observation.
- D. Guidelines should also make a clear distinction between what is required for the Peer Observer Report provided only to the Faculty Member and what is required for the Faculty Member Report report as described below. Only the latter report is required to be included in the Faculty Member’s record.

Section 5. Peer Observation Required for Promotion and Tenure

- A. Beginning in the Fall of 2014, all promotion and tenure review reports sent to UT System must show evidence of peer observation of teaching, including individuals with administrative appointments of 50% or less.
- B. The decision on whether to include peer observation for review of non-tenure track faculty should be made at the department or unit level.

Section 6. Frequency of Observation

- A. The following recommendations for the frequency of observation may be modified by departments or units so long as the requirement of peer observation for promotion and tenure cases is met.
- B. Individuals may also request more frequent observation to the extent that this can be accommodated by the department or unit.
- C. Recommended Frequency of Observation
 1. It is recommended that Assistant Professors be observed once per year and Associate Professors be reviewed once prior to seeking promotion to Full Professor.
 2. If Guidelines specify that peer observation be included in the Comprehensive Periodic Evaluation (CPE) review process, Associate and Full Professors should be observed once during each CPE review cycle.
 3. If Guidelines specify that peer observation includes non-tenure track faculty, it is recommended that faculty members with the rank of Lecturer I, Lecturer II, or Assistant Professor in Practice or equivalent shall be observed once per year and faculty members with the rank of Lecturer III, Senior Lecturer, Distinguished Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor in Practice, or Professor in Practice or equivalent shall be observed once during each period of appointment.
 4. The above recommendations are for a minimum number of observations. Guidelines may specify more frequent observations.

Section 7. Definition of “Peer” for Purposes of Peer Observation and Selection of Peer Observer
Department Guidelines should specify who can serve as Peer Observers. Peer Observers can be, but are not required to be, members of the same department or unit as the Faculty Member. The Faculty Member being observed should have considerable input into who will serve as his or her peer observer. Observations by non-faculty experts cannot substitute for peer observation.

Section 8. Recognition of the Time and Effort Involved in Peer Observation Process

The peer observation process involves significant time and effort on the part of the Peer Observer. This important service contribution should be recognized and reflected in the annual review of the Peer Observer.

Section 9. Availability and/or Requirements for Training for the Peer

Guidelines should specify whether there are requirements for training for peer observation. Guidelines should also direct Peer Observers to any available opportunities for training, even if not required.

Section 10. Elements of the Faculty Member Report

- A. To be included in Faculty Member Report

1. Name and signature of Faculty Member
 2. Name and signature of Peer Observer
 3. Name and course number of observed class
 4. Date of any pre-observation meeting
 5. Date of observation(s)
 6. Date of any post-observation meeting
 7. A narrative written by the Faculty Member describing what the Faculty Member has learned from the peer observation process and any plans for improvement or development.
- B. Guidelines may specify additional information that is to be provided to the Faculty Member by the Observer in the Peer Observer Report, but any such information should not be included in the Faculty Member Report. Only the Faculty Member's narrative is included in the Faculty Member Report.

Section 11. Recommended Timeline.

The Faculty Member Report should be provided to the department chair or unit head or equivalent (or to the dean in the event the faculty member being observed is the department chair) no later than the last day of classes for the semester in which the observation takes place. The department chair, unit head, or equivalent or dean will file the report with the Faculty Member's record.

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>
At least two weeks prior to first day of class.	Provide Faculty Member with department guidelines.	Department chair or unit head or equivalent
No later than the third week of the semester.	Identify Peer Observer and provide name of Observer to chair.	Faculty Member
No later than fifth week of semester.	Meet to discuss teaching materials and set date(s) for observation.	Faculty Member and Peer Observer.
No later than twelfth week of semester.	Peer observation(s)	Peer Observer
Within one week of observation.	Post-observation meeting	Faculty Member and Peer Observer
No later than last day of class.	Faculty Member Report provided to chair.	Faculty Member