

TO: The University Senate
FROM: University Senate Faculty Affairs Committee
SUBJECT: Teaching Effectiveness at Purdue University
REFERENCE:
DISPOSITION: University Senate

Teaching Evaluation Conceptual Overview

Be it resolved that the University Senate affirms the need for each department/school to establish criteria for effective teaching and to use periodic teaching evaluations as one tool to enhance instructional quality and to foster faculty development.

Goal

The overall goal of the teaching-evaluation initiative is *to enhance teaching at Purdue*. The overall success of this effort will hinge less on the details of the systems developed than on whether a new culture evolves in which an increasing number of faculty apply greater creativity and energy to teaching and its improvement.

Types of Teaching Activities

Classroom teaching and laboratory teaching, although important, are not the only types of teaching. Mentoring graduate students, clinical teaching, instruction in the visual and performing arts, student advising, and scholarly activities related to teaching are important as well. A teaching evaluation system will provide the basis for recognizing excellence not only in classroom and laboratory teaching, but also in these less formal types of teaching.

Issues in Teaching Evaluation

1. Both *teaching process* and *learning outcomes* are important and should be evaluated.
2. Instructors' sensitivity to *individual differences and learning styles* should be evaluated.
3. Multiple methods of evaluation should be used.
4. Confidentiality of student evaluators should be protected.
5. The system should provide the assurance that evaluation results will be properly interpreted and used.

General Concepts of the Evaluation System

A. A System Approach

There should be a university-wide initiative to improve teaching through the development and use of teaching evaluations drawn from multiple sources.

B. Local Implementation

Within general guidelines, departments should develop their own systems of evaluation. Groups of departments may collaborate if they choose. The *local development of evaluation systems is a major difference between the Purdue approach and other systems studied*, which tend to take a "one-size-fits-all" approach. The hope is that, in developing their own implementations, the faculty of the various disciplines will reflect upon and develop new insights on what constitutes good teaching in their specific areas.

C. Universality

Every course and every instructor should be evaluated by students for each offering of the course except in cases in which confidentiality of the students cannot be assured. Periodic use of other types of evaluation should be conducted for each course and each instructor (Section F). Faculty who teach new courses or courses in an initial stage of major pedagogical change, should be allowed an appropriate period of formative-only evaluation before summative evaluations are obtained.

D. Quantifiable Elements

Each locally generated system should contain some questions with quantifiable responses. These will focus on teaching process, learning outcomes, and learning environment.

E. Common Items

Each instrument used by students for teaching evaluation should contain some number of common items. These common items will be established on a University-wide basis through departmental pilot studies coordinated by University faculty committees. This feature will ensure that there are at least some questions that are asked in the same way university-wide. These questions, at the minimum, will deal with an overall rating of the instructor and the course.

F. Multiple Sources of Evaluation

1. **Evaluation by Students.** Student course evaluations will be obtained in confidence and in a uniform manner.
2. **Evaluation by TAs.** TAs should evaluate the professor in charge of a course, provided that the confidentiality of the TAs can be assured.
3. **Evaluation by Peers.** Course materials -- handouts, examinations, syllabus -- may be examined by peers and, where applicable, by departmental promotions committees as part of the promotions process.

The products of teaching scholarship, texts, pedagogical papers, multimedia presentations, presentations at meetings, grants for instructional improvement, etc., will be evaluated for impact both within and beyond Purdue. External referees can be used for these evaluations.

4. **Evaluation by Self.** Faculty should reflect on, and have an opportunity to document, their own contributions to teaching, including their formative efforts to improve teaching.

G. Nonclassroom Forms of Teaching

Forms of teaching which are, in many cases, not recognized by conventional evaluation systems--clinical instruction, mentoring graduate students, student advising, and instruction in the visual and performing arts--may require innovative evaluation systems. Although efforts should be made in crafting such systems to adhere to the general features of the Purdue approach, common sense should prevail, and student confidentiality should not be compromised.

H. Use of the Results of Evaluation

Formative Use. Opportunities should be available for faculty to conduct *formative evaluations*, that is, evaluations for the improvement of their teaching that are not used summatively. (See J below.)

Summative Use. The system should be the source of *summative evaluations*, that is, evaluations that are used for personnel decisions. Department heads will receive the results of summative evaluations and will maintain appropriate records for use of these evaluations. As appropriate these summative evaluations will be made available to committees responsible for matters of personnel management and specifically for issues of reappointment and promotion.

I. Proper Comparison of Results

Comparisons of the evaluations of different faculty should use appropriate norms that are specified locally. Another comparison will be the progress of a faculty member's evaluations over time, that is, demonstration of *improvement*.

J. Mechanisms for Improvement

The University and Schools should provide and support formative mechanisms by which faculty can assess and improve their teaching. An example used currently is the small group instructional diagnosis (SGID).

K. Prototype Development

In the initial stage of implementation of the Purdue system, volunteer departments will work out prototype systems that will be made available to other departments as models.

L. Administrative Support

The Administration should, when necessary, provide additional resources in support of greater workloads of CIS and other teaching-enhancement organizations.

M. Source of Resolution

This resolution is based on the report by the Teaching Evaluation Committee dated September 9, 1997 entitled, "A Proposal for Evaluation of Teaching at Purdue University: A Component of an Overall Learning Assessment Initiative."

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