Course and Instructor Evaluation

A. **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to provide the purpose, guidelines and procedures for course and instructor evaluation.

B. **Persons Affected**

Faculty
Students
Office of Academic Affairs
College Administrators, including Department Chairs and the Dean.

C. **Definitions**

Course evaluations are paper or electronic questionnaires that require written or selected response answers to a series of questions to evaluate the instruction of a given course. The term may also refer to the completed survey form or a summary of responses to questionnaires.

Summative evaluations refer to the assessment of participants, and summarizes their development at a particular time. In contrast to formative assessment, the focus is on the outcome of a program. Summative evaluations typically occur at the end of a session or semester, usually a week or two before the last day of class. The evaluation is performed by the current students of the class.

Formative assessments are periodic assessments intended to provide constructive criticism that can result in changes to improve the faculty's teaching and students' learning. Formative assessment is typically performed by other experienced teachers who review one of their peer's instructional sessions together with the accompanying materials for the classroom session (e.g., slides, student assessments, evidence of learning outcomes). Formative assessment is typically performed by peer consultation and occurs when changes can take place during the current session or semester. While information obtained from formative assessments may be incorporated into summative evaluation reports at the request of the faculty being assessed, such information is usually considered informal and for the professional growth of the faculty being observed.

Formal peer review is the process by which individuals critically assess their colleague(s) performance to reinforce areas of strength and quality in instruction and to identify areas for development or improvement. Formal peer review of teaching is generally performed by colleagues of the same profession working in similar organizational settings who invoke common criteria and resources to make benchmark or comparative and summative evaluations. Formal peer review of teaching normally involves more than just observation of a single teaching episode, but also includes evaluation of classroom learning materials, learning assessments, organization of the course and learning sessions and its integration into the curriculum.
Informal peer observation of teaching is a formative process where a colleague (or peer group) observes another individual’s teaching and offers structured feedback on this teaching.

Educational assessment is the process of documenting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs in measurable terms. Assessment can focus on the individual learner, the learning community (class, workshop, or other organized group of learners), or the college.

D. Objectives and Procedures

1. Objectives

As a component institution of The University of Texas System, The University of Texas at Tyler is committed to maintaining a standard of excellence in all of its programs, departments and colleges. A program of course and instructor evaluation is integral to the assessment and improvement of the college’s educational function. A comprehensive course and instructor evaluation is a multistep process with multiple intended outcomes.

2. Procedures

a. Student course and instructor evaluations are conducted online every session and/or semester as required by the policies and procedures of the University of Texas at Tyler. The Office of the Director of Institutional Analysis coordinates course and instructor evaluations conducted through myUTTyler. The University has a required set of questions that are asked about every class at the University. Faculty have the right to ask additional questions separate from the University’s required questions that may provide additional information the instructor finds more useful for improvement of their own course or the questions may be better suited to alternative pedagogies (e.g., team-based learning [TBL]). Formal student course and instructor evaluation is summative and is used in personnel decisions, such as annual personnel evaluations and tenure and promotion decisions.

b. Formal peer review of a faculty’s teaching is summative and is used in personnel decisions, such as annual personnel evaluations and tenure and promotion decisions. The peer-review process yields important information that shall be combined with other sources to provide a comprehensive view of an individual’s teaching. A formal peer review of teaching is conducted annually for faculty at the instructor and assistant professor ranks and every three (3) years for non-tenure track faculty at the associate and full professor ranks. For tenured or tenure-track faculty at the associate and full professor ranks, a formal peer review will be conducted at the mid-point and at the end of the 6-year period as part of the formal periodic performance evaluation required of tenured faculty (Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 3.3.6). Formal peer review of teaching uses standardized forms and criteria to
provide consistent and standardized decisions regarding the quality of instruction in the college.

The formal peer evaluation team shall consist of three faculty members at the same academic rank or higher. One is to be selected by the faculty member under review, one by the department chair, and the third is selected jointly by the faculty member and department chair. At least one faculty member should be from outside the college.

Consistent with the evaluation criteria from (Handbook of Operating Procedures, Section 3.3.6), each faculty member will be evaluated using the following performance level categories as defined by Regents’ Rule 31102:

1. “Exceeds Expectations” reflects a clear and significant level of accomplishment beyond what is normal for the institution, discipline, unit, faculty rank, and type of contractual expectations;

2. “Meets Expectations” reflects a clear and significant level of accomplishment normal for the institution, discipline, unit, faculty rank, and type of contractual expectations;

3. “Does Not Meet Expectations” indicates a failure beyond what can be considered the normal range of year-to-year variation in performance, but of a character that appears to be subject to correction;

4. “Unsatisfactory” means fails to meet expectations for the faculty member’s institution, unit, rank, and contractual obligations, or involves professional misconduct, dereliction of duty, or incompetence.

c. **Informal peer observation of a faculty’s teaching** is conducted each semester the faculty teaches five or more classroom sessions or as requested by the faculty or the faculty member’s department chair. The peer review/observation process is intended for the professional development of both the faculty observers and the faculty who are being observed. Informal peer observation of teaching is one of the most important aspects of an academic teaching career and it is an expectation that every faculty member will participate in this important professional commitment and service. Peer observations are formative (NOT to be confused with summative peer evaluations) and are important to our colleague’s and our own individual professional teaching development. Peer observation of teaching is a professional courtesy and responsibility that we owe to each of our team members; but we can also learn from the experience – it can be a two-way street.

d. **Student learning experience interviews** are conducted each semester that the faculty teaches five or more classroom sessions. In this strategy, a colleague interviews students in the current class about what is contributing to their learning at approximately the mid-point of the semester to allow time for improvement. The outcomes of using this strategy includes identification
of successful teaching strategies, strategies that need improvement and means for making the improvements.

e. **Teaching portfolios** are factual descriptions of an instructor’s teaching strengths and accomplishments. It includes documents and materials, which collectively represents the scope, development and quality of a professor’s teaching performance. The teaching portfolio includes materials from one’s self, from others, and products of teaching and student learning.

E. **Responsibilities**
- Faculty
- Faculty Council
- Dean
- Department Chairs
- Office of Academic Affairs

F. **Review**
This policy shall be reviewed every five years or sooner if necessary by the Dean, the Dean’s Executive Committee, and the College Faculty.

**Approved: April 27, 2015**