Guide for Pre-Observation
How to Use this Resource

In the spirit of supporting faculty, the Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) has worked with Duquesne faculty to explain University procedures and expectations for peer evaluation and to provide a resource for faculty colleagues to consult when being evaluated or carrying out an evaluation.

This section of the resource focuses on recommended policies to review with your peer evaluator/evaluatee, as well as some suggested guiding discussion questions that can get you and your peer thinking about what excellent teaching looks like as well as how to evaluate and develop it.

While CTE does not have the capacity to set university policy, our goals are to:

- explain the guidelines found in the Faculty Handbook and the policies and procedures put forth by Academic Affairs.
- Offer recommendations and conversation starters.
- Foster a culture where teaching and learning is valued as a skill that grows over time with practice and feedback

CTE is incredibly thankful to our Faculty Focus Group on Peer Evaluation (Spring 2022) for all the feedback and input they provided in shaping the support and guidance this document provides.

If you have additional questions about peer evaluations or any of the recommendations in this document, please reach out to us at cte@duq.edu
## The Administrative Process (from Academic Affairs policies)

### Who gets evaluated and when? How often?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate Status</th>
<th>NTT Promotion</th>
<th>Pre-Tenure Review</th>
<th>Tenure &amp; Promotion</th>
<th>Promotion to Full Professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of Reviews</td>
<td>1 per year</td>
<td>1 per year</td>
<td>1 per year</td>
<td>1 per year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Reviews</td>
<td>Minimum of 2 reviews</td>
<td>Minimum of 2 reviews</td>
<td>Minimum of 5 reviews</td>
<td>At least 5 post-promotion to associate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### How does the process start?

- **Dean/chair notifies eligible faculty by Sept 1 with a list of potential reviewers.**
- **The faculty member responds by October 1 or February 1 with course(s) and indicates three reviewers selected from the list.**
- **Faculty observations occur** (see the process on the next page).

Guidelines for Peer Evaluation of Teaching are summarized in the linked document available on Academic Affairs Policies and Procedures webpage.

The charts on this slide and the next help summarize these guidelines.
As outlined above, all peer evaluations will include a pre-observation meeting, followed by a scheduled visit, an informal meeting to discuss that scheduled visit within 24 hours of the observation, a second unannounced observation (excludes black out dates), an additional informal meeting to discuss the unannounced class, and finally the submission of the written letter within 30 days of the second observation.

Pre-observation meetings and all informal follow-up meetings can be conducted in-person or through video conferencing, but they are an important step in developing trust and sharing formative feedback that should not be skipped.
The Observation Process (cont'd)

Different course structures and learning modalities impact the scope of the course evaluation. For an in-person course, class visits will be utilized to determine an evaluation of the course as a whole. For a clinical or practicum course, the practitioner and educator criteria will drive the evaluation of the course as a whole. For an online course, online sessions and/or modules will provide the basis for evaluating the course as a whole. In all cases, the entire course experience is being evaluated. Refer to the outline below for a quick-reference.
## Current Recommendations for Structure of a Summative Peer Review Letter

With Suggested Areas for Reviewer Consideration. This content is pulled from Academic Affairs policies.

### Evaluation of Class Visits
- Preparation for the class session
- Organization of the class session
- Instructor's enthusiasm for the subject matter
- Clarity of classroom communication, both oral and written
- Facilitation of student participation appropriate to the class
- Ability to make difficult concepts understandable
- Facilitation of higher-order thinking
- Mastery of the subject matter
- Integration of the individual class with course organization as a whole
- Selection and implementation of instructional strategies appropriate to learning goals

### Evaluation of Course as a Whole
- Thorough and clearly organized syllabus
- Congruence between course goals, objectives, content, and activities
- Appropriate assessment of student learning in relation to course goals and outcomes
- Appropriate assignments for students given the course objectives and course level
- Appropriate methods and criteria for grading
- Appropriate use of supportive resources throughout the semester, such as handouts, web sites, or Blackboard/Canvas
Some questions to discuss with your peer:

- What are your expectations for this process based on the outline from Academic Affairs?

- What questions/concerns do you have about how each class session will/should be evaluated?

- What questions/concerns do you have about how the course as a whole will/should be evaluated?

- The previous page uses the word 'appropriate' to describe various aspects of course design -- discuss together what the 'appropriate' methods for the course being evaluated are given how it relates to the rest of your discipline.
Feelings of vulnerability are inherent to any evaluative process. Make sure to discuss with your colleague how the formative feedback will be used and/or discussed, who will 'own' this evaluation, as well as any other concerns.

P&T Committees want to see authentic growth rather than glowing praise, but both the evaluator and the evaluated need to feel comfortable with how this growth is documented and framed.
An evaluation that only heaps praise does not encourage growth nor does it account for the effort that a faculty peer has put into refining their teaching.

An evaluation of teaching should always account for the growth that either occurred across the two observations or that has been identified for the evaluated instructor as a developmental goal along with the success plan developed together in order to achieve that goal in the near future.

"Faculty evaluation and development cannot be considered separately. The reason for this link can be succinctly put: evaluation without development is punitive, and development without evaluation is guesswork." (Theall, 2017)

"Existing evidence suggests that when evaluations are developed for predominantly summative purposes, or perceived to be used when making personnel decisions, the evaluation outcomes risk to become mediocre at best." (Mazurek, R., et al., 2021).

Summative letters can, and should, reflect on the formative growth in instruction observed and discussed across class visits.

An evaluation of teaching should always account for the growth that either occurred across the two observations or that has been identified for the evaluated instructor as a developmental goal along with the success plan developed together in order to achieve that goal in the near future.

Peer evaluations are useful for P&T committees to the extent that they identify the growth of faculty. The review process exists to ensure that growth continues to be identified, prioritized, and fostered.

An evaluation that only heaps praise does not encourage growth nor does it account for the effort that a faculty peer has put into refining their teaching.
Some questions to discuss with your peer:

- How do each of you view the role of formative feedback?

- How do you think reflections on formative feedback should or shouldn't be incorporated into summative evaluations?

- What fears or apprehensions do either of you have about formative feedback and/or summative evaluation?

- What steps could either/both of you take to make this process something you feel more comfortable/at ease with?

- After reading the quotes in the previous slide, what are your thoughts on how to productively utilize formative feedback in a summative evaluation?
Further questions to discuss together prior to the observation

- What are your expectations for this evaluation based on your prior experiences with them?

- Is there an example of a highly impactful evaluation experience that you've had, provided, or heard about from another peer? What made that experience so positive? How can this experience be guided to create a similar outcome?

- What are your expectations for communication throughout this process?