



## **Peer Review of Online Teaching Guidelines for Instructor to be Reviewed (Reviewee)**

This protocol for peer review of online teaching is designed to guide UA instructors in the process of *formative review* of a peer's teaching. It can also be used for evaluation of teaching for summative review.

*Formative review* provides feedback for professional growth and development; it is usually confidential and non-judgmental and its goal is self-motivated change. It is grounded in the belief that instructors can be their own best resources for improving teaching. *Evaluation of teaching* (e.g., for annual reviews and P & T) is a more formal process; guidelines for using this protocol in that process are outlined in the document titled Evaluation of Teaching.

In selecting a colleague to review your teaching, it will be most effective to select someone in your unit with online or hybrid teaching experience and whose teaching you respect. Since this peer review is formative, the reviewer's faculty rank is not an issue. In terms of timing, it may be more useful for the review of your online course to occur at least midway through the term, so that adequate evidence of your interaction with students (e.g., discussion threads, assignment feedback) is available for review.

The process of peer review of teaching includes three stages:

1. a pre-review meeting to discuss the target course and goals for the review,
2. a review of the course site (e.g., D2L or website) and interactions with students, and
3. a post-review meeting to discuss what was noted in the review.

This protocol includes guidelines for the pre- and post-review meetings, a tool for the course review, and a summary of the process to be given to the reviewer.

Once you have identified the colleague you will invite to review your course, please provide him/her a copy of the Reviewer Guidelines and the Online Course Review Tool. The guidelines provide an overview of the Peer Review Process and include suggestions for structuring the pre- and post-observation meetings and conducting the course review.

You will also need to give your colleague access to your course site. If you are using D2L, you need to add him/her to your class list as an "Instructor Read Only." If you use a course management system other than D2L, you should consult with the system's administrator in your college on how to add an instructor.

## Pre-Review Meeting

*Why is a pre-review meeting important for the peer review of teaching?*

The pre-review meeting “sets the stage” for a productive review of your course. In this meeting, you and your reviewer will have a chance to discuss your course, including its structure, goals, role in your unit’s curriculum, and typical student reactions. You will also be able to discuss the course site and other digital resources to be reviewed. This meeting will require about an hour. Before that meeting, please provide your reviewer with a copy of the course syllabus (or access to your course site if the syllabus is only available online) and your written reflection (described below).

*Why is a written reflection about the target course important?*

This reflection is designed to spark your thinking about the ways in which teaching your course represents an act of scholarship. For your reviewer, it serves as a window into your thinking about the course. Provide your reviewer with your written reflection prior to the pre-observation meeting. Some questions are listed below to guide your thinking. **You may not need to address all of these questions to illustrate your thinking about the course; choose those questions that are the most useful to you and spend 30-45 minutes crafting your responses. If time is of concern, please review these questions and share your verbal responses to the most salient ones with your reviewer in the pre-observation meeting.**

*Possible questions for reflection<sup>1</sup>:*

- **Shape and Content:** How does the course begin? How is the course structured, in weekly activities, topics, projects, or a combination of these? What do you and your students do as the course unfolds? What are the key assignments and/or student assessments? How does the course end? What do you want your students to learn or be able to do as a result of the course?
- **Organization:** Are there distinctly different ways to organize your course that reflect different perspectives of your discipline or field? Do you focus on particular topics while other colleagues might make other choices? Why?
- **Connections:** How does your course connect with other courses in your own or other fields? To what extent does your course lay a foundation for others that follow it? How does it build on what students have already learned in other courses? How does your course fit within the larger conception of curriculum, program, or university experience?
- **Student Reactions:** What do you expect students to find particularly fascinating about your course? Where will they encounter their greatest difficulties, of understanding or motivation? How does the content of your course connect to matters your students already understand or have experienced? Where will it seem most alien? How do you address these common student responses in your course? How has the course evolved over time in response to these responses? Have you asked students for feedback on your course design and/or activities?
- **Online Features:** How do you communicate with students during the course? How do you manage the workload of an online course? What concerns do you have, if any, about the technology used in the course?
- **Metaphor:** Lastly, you might try playing with some metaphors for characterizing your course and its place in the larger curriculum or in the lives of your students. Is your course like a journey, a parable, a football game, a museum, a romance, a concerto, an Aristotelian tragedy, an obstacle course, one or all or some of the above? How does your metaphor(s) illuminate key aspects of your course?

<sup>1</sup>Questions adapted from: American Association for Higher Education. (1995). *From idea to prototype: The peer review of teaching*. AAHE: Washington, DC.

## Online Course Review Tool

The Online Course Review Tool includes items in four major areas: Course Design, Course Implementation, Interactions, and Assessment. The items are based on best practices for the design and implementation of online courses. We recommend that your reviewer look for evidence of all of the items; if any are not evident in the review of the course, you can discuss them in your post-review meeting.

### Post-Review Meeting

*Why is a post-review meeting important for the peer review of teaching?*

As the final step in the peer review of teaching, the post-review meeting is where your reviewer can share overall impressions of the course design and implementation and responses on the Online Course Review Tool, and where the two of you can have a substantive discussion about your course. This meeting will be most useful if it occurs within a few days of the review, while the course review is still fresh in your reviewer's mind. This meeting will require about an hour.

*What happens after the post-review meeting?*

If you are using this peer review as formative assessment; i.e., for professional growth and development, nothing needs to happen after the meeting, beyond your own reflection on the review and any subsequent adjustments to your online course. However, many instructors expand on this first peer review cycle and go through the cycle again with the same reviewer. If you add new best practices to your course, it might be helpful to invite your reviewer to do a second review. You also might both benefit by exchanging roles so that your reviewer invites you to peer review his/her course.

If you do ask your reviewer to do a second (or third) peer review, you wouldn't need to prepare another reflection on the same course. However, it is still important to hold another pre-review meeting to inform your reviewer about changes to your course, and another post-review meeting to discuss the second review.