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"Secrets" Of A Good Peer Review

Conducting a Fair Review of Teaching

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- **http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/Peer_Review_Resources.docx**

- **http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/Peer_Rev_TP2013.pdf**

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Here's what we'll talk about today.

➤ Purpose of Peer Reviews
➤ What is Effective Teaching?
➤ Components of Peer Reviews
➤ Characteristics of a "Good" Observer
➤ Managing the Consultation Process
➤ Providing Useful Feedback

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How is Peer Review of Teaching defined?

"Informed peer judgment about faculty teaching for either fostering the improvement of the person being reviewed (formative) or making personnel decisions in their case (summative)."

(Chism & Chism, 2007)

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Teaching should be evaluated over time from multiple perspectives:

➢ Course Materials
➢ Portfolio / Teaching Statement or Philosophy
➢ Teaching Improvement Activities
➢ Student Evaluations
➢ Peer Reviews

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▪ **Student evaluations, though very important, represent the learner's perspective.**

▪ **A peer observer is better able to judge:**

➢ Depth, breadth, & currency of subject matter knowledge
➢ Assessment of student learning
➢ Course design skills

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Well done peer reviews provide an *opportunity* to:

➢ Improve quality of teaching and materials
➢ Share teaching ideas
➢ Discuss teaching as scholarship
➢ Provide professional service in support of teaching mission
➢ Articulate and align teaching values
➢ Respond to accrediting organizations

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Peer reviews can help create a campus environment that *supports* teaching.

➢ Teaching as community.
➢ Atmosphere of collegiality.
➢ Atmosphere of trust.
➢ Teaching improvements DO result.
➢ Motivation for change to occur.
➢ Evaluations are helpful, specific and realistic.
➢ Source of information, as well as process, can be trusted.
➢ Reciprocal in nature.

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Peer review is actually a shared perspective on effective teaching.

Consensus exists about the characteristics of effective teachers:

> Competent in subject matter
> Well-prepared and organized
> Presentations and explanations are clear
> Enthusiastic
> Excellent interpersonal rapport with students

(Chism, 1999)

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What constitutes effective teaching?

Seven characteristics to evaluate:

1. Encourages student-faculty contact.
2. Encourages cooperation among students.
3. Encourages active learning.
4. Gives prompt feedback.
5. Emphasizes time on task.
6. Communicates high expectations.
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning (i.e., creates a positive environment for learning.)

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The foundation of the Peer Review process:

➢ Criteria

➢ Evidence

➢ Standards

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The five components of peer review

1. **First Consultation**
2. **Pre-class Visit**
3. **Classroom Visits**
4. **Second Consultation for Follow-up**
5. **Written Letter**

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Materials to be reviewed during first consultation:

➢ **Syllabus (Goals & Objectives, Texts, etc.)**
➢ **Presentations**
➢ **Course Handouts**
➢ **Multimedia Materials**
➢ **Quizzes, Tests, Examinations**
➢ **Assignments, Projects**
➢ **Student Work with Instructor Comments**

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Managing the consultation process:

Create a comfortable environment for the discussion

➢ Conduct all discussions and feedback in civil and constructive terms.
➢ Be enthusiastic about the review process.
➢ Be as specific about the process as possible.
➢ **Respect /value** differences in teaching style, disciplinary approaches to knowledge/teaching, etc.

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During the Pre-Class Visit discuss the peer review process.

Discussion topics may include:

➢ Experience of candidate with this course.
➢ Observations about this particular class/section.
➢ Goals/objectives for the class to be observed.
➢ Teaching method(s) and planned activities.
➢ Topics covered in prior classes.
➢ Preparation.
➢ Role of the peer reviewer while observing the class

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Other topics you might discuss.

➢ Philosophy of teaching
➢ Rationale for course design
➢ Past student comments/ratings
➢ Expectations for student success
➢ Assessing student learning outcomes
➢ What methods work (or don't) for *these* students in *this* course.
➢ Program goals or stakeholders expectations of graduates

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Tips:

➢ The candidate may be experiencing anxiety!
  ▪ Meet in his or her office, if possible
  ▪ Describe the process
➢ Respect and value differences in teaching styles.
➢ Discuss your differences and biases.
➢ Put yourself in the other's shoes.
➢ Take notes

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Microbiology 202

Practicum 1: Wednesday September 30th

Objective: The purpose of this activity is to familiarize students with the techniques of performing a sterile bacterial transfer.

Grading: Up to 30 points will be given to the student for sterilely transferring bacteria from an inoculated culture in a test tube to 1)a new test tube containing broth and 2)streaking for isolation on a plate.

Point deductions:
-5 for unsterile loop dip
-5 for failing to flame tube
-5 for not allowing loop to cool
-5 for not following streak plate guidelines
-5 for no isolated colonies

Upon entering lab on Wednesday, you will receive an inoculated culture, a sterile broth tube, an agar plate, and a loop. Once the instructor is in front of you and tells you to begin, you will do the sterile transfer and streak for isolation. There will be no open notebooks, books, or help from lab mates. This is your chance to demonstrate quality lab techniques!

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Your attitude as a "good" peer observer is important. A good peer observer:

➢ Critically thinks about effective teaching.
➢ Considers improvement of teaching an important objective for the individual faculty member as well as the campus, college, and university.
➢ Understands role is to collect and summarize data as **one** source of information about quality of an instructor's teaching.

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A good peer observer also…

➢ Accepts the value of teaching methods different from one's own personal teaching style and preferences
➢ Takes the process seriously.
➢ Enters the classroom with an open mind; disregards extraneous information such as the reputation of, or rumors about, the instructor.

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The *behaviors* of a good peer reviewer include:

➢ Prepares for each element in the process.
➢ Does not disrupt class: plays the role agreed upon with candidate in pre-class visit; stays for entire class session.
➢ Focuses evaluation on the overarching experience in the class; does not slant positively or negatively because of one outstanding aspect or a mishap
➢ Offers descriptive*, specific*, constructive criticism.
➢ Provides comments that are professional and collegial.
➢ Listens and communicates well

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Attitudes a good peer reviewer avoids like the plague:

➢ **Halo Effect** - one positive factor outweighs all others
➢ **I Don't Like It** - one negative outweighs all others
➢ **Tunnel Vision** - focus on one part vs. big picture
➢ **Observer as Expert** - base judgment on your own preferences
➢ **Go Through Motions** - not taking process seriously
➢ **Ostrich Effect** - uncritical to avoid confrontation
➢ **Lean Toward the Mean -** everyone is average
➢ **Gotcha –** uses evaluation for political purposes

(Thanks to the University of North Carolina at Wilmington)

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More tips:

➤ Take notes during observation
➤ Write down specific examples
➤ Review notes as soon as possible

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Discussion suggestions for the second consultation and follow-up.

Sample questions to ask the instructor:

➤ How would you assess the class?
➤ Were your learning goals accomplished?
➤ What worked? Do you know why?
➤ What did not work? Do you know why?
➤ What would you do differently?

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What did you, as the reviewer, think?

- ➢ What went well?
- ➢ What did not work well?
- ➢ What suggestions you have for improvement?

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Writing the letter.

Purpose:
- ➢ Provide a **fair and objective** perspective on the abilities of the instructor reviewed.

Content:
- ➢ Tie conclusions to evidence (documents, discussion, observation) and notes from the first consultation, pre-class visit, classroom visits, and second consultation.

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What should go in a good peer review letter?

How do we work compassionately and professionally with the person being reviewed?

Guidelines for effective criticism.

➢ Be specific. Provide concrete examples and quotes.
➢ Phrase comments using positive, collegial language.
➢ Target feedback toward behaviors, attitudes, and processes an instructor can change.
➢ Provide a plan of action for improvement.

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What does a good letter look like?

➢**Overview**
➢**Course Materials**
➢**Pre-class Visit**
➢**Classroom Visit(s)**
➢**Second Consultation / Follow-up**
➢**Summary and Conclusions**

Maximum of 3 Pages

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Recommendations for Professional Development

Dr. _____ exhibits most of the qualities of a master teacher and she has no problem with the "basics". She starts class on time, interacts respectfully and cheerfully with students, offers help outside of class, and grounds the class in contemporary contexts. Students felt comfortable asking questions and muddy points were always clarified, often contextualized via the instructor's own experiences within the field. Major points on subjects covered were summarized and reviewed, and students were reminded about upcoming projects and assignments. There was an excellent and appropriate (for the topic and the level of students) combination of methods - short lectures, active learning activities, and hands-on experiences. Pacing was also excellent, although there were some minor organizational problems entailing use of an obsolete PowerPoint presentation and a new version of software recently installed on the classroom computers. Both classes ended on time following a brief description of the subjects to be addressed in the next class session.

Most importantly, Dr. _____ expresses and exhibits a strong concern with critical reflection on her practice as evidenced in our post-visit conversations. In light of the topics we discussed at length and her interest in critical reflection on teaching and learning, I would make the following suggestions for professional development:

1. Develop better grading policies to explain how assignments will be evaluated. Clear explanations that delineate and describe what components are being evaluated and what a student must to do to obtain a grade or acquire points are needed.
2. Investigate validated student techniques for feedback to faculty by attending workshops available through Penn State on readily available feedback instruments (i.e., Assessment Survey Kit (ASK), Student Assessment of Learning Gains (SALG));
3. Develop a teaching portfolio. Teaching portfolios, as I have found in my own experience, afford an opportunity to reflect on one's own practices and identify directions for change. Portfolio workshops are offered by several teaching and learning units within the university, including The Schreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence;
4. Focus some of her critical reflection on how to engage students across cultural and age differences; attend campus, university, or community events or workshops related to this concern.

In short, Dr. _____ continues to make a significant contribution to the teaching of computer science, as well as a significant contribution to the underlying campus teaching and learning environment. Thank you for the opportunity to address and consider important elements involved in teaching and learning. I hope the results for this peer review process provide an overall picture not only of the instructional effectiveness of Dr. _____, but also supports the underlying goals of instructional evaluation – i.e., to improve teaching and to help realize the mission of the University College.

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BIG TIP!!!

➢ Write the Peer Review Letter
As **S**oon **A**s **P**ossible

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*One of the biggest benefits of the peer review process is that it helps us to create and sustain a **culture of critical reflection about teaching***.

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