**Resolution to Implement the Recommendations of the Academic Policy and Process Group
Regarding the Instructional Evaluations**
Executive Committee
Faculty Senate
March 1, 2021
First Reading


*Whereas* Ohio University faculty continue to work on revisions to policies affecting the academic mission of the university,

*Whereas*, instructional evaluations are a critical part of the faculty's assessment of performance and faculty-student engagement,

*Whereas*, the COVID-19 pandemic continues throughout the current academic year and limits the structure and delivery of most courses,

*Be it resolved* that the Faculty Senate adopts the recommendations of the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) committee to the Academic Policy and Process (APP) group for Spring AY 2020-2021 as follows:

**INTEROFFICE MEMO 1**

| | |
|---|---|
| DATE: | December 1, 2020 |
| TO: | Faculty Senate |
| FROM: | Academic Policy and Process Group |
| SUBJECT: | Spring 2021 Instructional Evaluations |

The purpose of this memo is to support recommendations from the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) committee about instructional evaluations for Spring 2021. (Please refer to *Interoffice Memo 2* of this document.)

Specifically, the TLA recommends that Ohio University:
1. Collect and record instructional evaluations of Spring 2021 courses online.
2. Continue to allow instructional evaluations to be an *optional* documentation of teaching effectiveness for the purposes of annual evaluations and promotion and/or tenure requirements.
3. Require instructors to demonstrate teaching effectiveness using instructor-selected documentation.

**Rationale**

According to the Ohio University Faculty Handbook, all faculty are required to be evaluated annually and are required to participate in instructional evaluations. Specifically:
- o Section II.3: Procedures for Tenure and Advancement in Rank and Recommendations for Salary Increases requires that all faculty must be evaluated annually by department chairs.
- o Section IV.A.8: Instructional Evaluations states that instructional evaluations are a vital component of instructional assessment of each course and that instructors are expected to cooperate in all phases of their colleges' instructional assessments.

For the vast majority of faculty members, annual evaluations include an evaluation of teaching using specified criteria based on department and/or college requirements and TRS workload distributions / expectations. In fact, for many faculty members (e.g., instructional faculty), teaching represents the majority of their workload by contract (see *Section II.C.3.b*).

The TLA and APP recommend temporarily modifying existing requirements to allow for flexibility while maintaining accountability.

- o *Flexibility*. Given the unusual nature of teaching contexts and circumstances during AY20-21, instructional evaluations may be insufficient to assess effective teaching. Demonstrating effective teaching using other measures (instead of or in addition to instructional evaluations) allows faculty to provide a more holistic assessment of teaching.
- o *Accountability*. Although teaching contexts and circumstances during AY20-21 are atypical, the university has remained open and continues to deliver courses, programs, and learning experiences to students. Students have been charged tuition (variable by circumstance), have enrolled in courses, and have been held accountable for achieving course learning outcomes. Consistent with the Faculty Handbook, faculty have been employed through contracts that specify TRS workload distributions / expectations. Accordingly, the recommendation to require faculty to demonstrate teaching effectiveness using instructor-selected documentation that maintains accountability in the system.

| DATE: | November 10, 2020 |
|---|---|
| TO: | Academic Policy and Process Group |
| FROM: | Teaching, Learning, and Assessment Committee |
| SUBJECT: | Spring 2021 Instructional Evaluations |

The purpose of this memo is to offer recommendations to the Academic Policy and Process (APP) group from the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) committee about instructional evaluations for Spring 2021. The TLA recommends the following:

1. Collect and record instructional evaluations of Spring 2021 courses online.
2. Continue to allow instructional evaluations to be an *optional* documentation of teaching effectiveness for the purposes of annual evaluations and promotion and/or tenure requirements.
3. Require instructors to demonstrate teaching effectiveness using instructor-selected documentation.

**Background: Existing Policy**

Ohio University requires the collection and use of instructional evaluations. Specifically, the OHIO Faculty Handbook (Section IV.A.8) states:

> **Instructional Evaluations**
> Instructional evaluations contribute to faculty professional development and students' educational experiences. One vital component of this instructional assessment is anonymous student evaluation of each course. Instructors are expected to cooperate in all phases of their colleges' instructional assessments.

Furthermore, Ohio University requires annual evaluations of each faculty member. Specifically, the OHIO Faculty Handbook (Section II.E.3) states:

> Annually, the department chair shall ensure that a departmental promotion and/or tenure committee evaluates all probationary faculty and all tenured faculty eligible for promotion using the departmental criteria for promotion and tenure. Tenured faculty status is required for membership on departmental/school/division promotion and/or tenure committees.

Likewise, the Ohio University Faculty Handbook (Section II.C.3.b.v) states:

> Instructional faculty must be evaluated annually by the chair or director according to departmental or regional campus guidelines and in accordance with Section II.E.1 of the Faculty Handbook.

**Recommendations**

Recommendation 1: Collect and record instructional evaluations of Spring 2021 courses online.

> *Rationale*. As described in the Faculty Handbook, instructional evaluations contribute to teachers' professional development and students' educational experiences. This process allows learners to provide valuable feedback to teachers, departments, and colleges. Within the context of modified course content and/or instructional pedagogies, this feedback mechanism is essential to allow learners to share praises, criticisms, and ideas.

Recommendation 2: Allow Spring 2021 instructional evaluations to be an *optional* documentation of teaching effectiveness for the purposes of annual evaluations and promotion and/or tenure requirements.

*Rationale*. Although ensuring learners have the opportunity to provide course feedback is essential, the data's validity, using the University's current instructional evaluations, as a wholistic representation of teaching effectiveness may be questionable. As examples, data errors may result from biased samples[1], recency effects[2], hindsight bias[3], omission effects[4], halo effects[5], and horn effects[6]. Although these errors currently exist within our university's instructional evaluation system, it is reasonable to assume the margin for error may be increased due to course content and delivery modifications with this year's university-wide shift to distance teaching and learning due to COVID-19.

With the potential for increased error in current instructional evaluations in mind, teachers should be permitted to use data and feedback from these evaluations as evidence of teaching effectiveness only if they chose to do so. If for example, learners provide information through scores or comments highlighting successful, effective course content transitions, student engagement, and communication, teachers should then be permitted to use this feedback as evidence of their efforts to deliver students' learning experiences successfully.

Recommendation 3: Require instructors to demonstrate teaching effectiveness using instructor-selected documentation.

*Rationale*. Although the use of instructional evaluations should be *optional*, teachers should be required to document teaching effectiveness for the purposes of annual evaluations and promotion and/or tenure requirements. If not already permitted through existing policies and procedures, departments, colleges, or other academic units should allow faculty to decide how to appropriately document teaching effectiveness. Examples of alternative documentation for demonstrating teaching effectiveness are described in the Appendix[7].

---

[1] A biased sample occurs when the group does not properly represent the larger population.

[2] The recency effect is an order of presentation effect that occurs when more recent information is better remembered and receives greater weight in forming a judgment than does earlier-presented information.

[3] Recollection or reevaluation of past events can be affected by what has happened since. In particular, once people know the outcome of an event, they tend to overestimate what could have been anticipated in foresight. This effect has been termed hindsight bias.

[4] Omission neglect refers to insensitivity to missing information of all types—including unmentioned or unknown options, alternatives, features, properties, characteristics, possibilities, and events. When people fail to think about what they do not know, they underestimate the importance of missing information, and this leads people to form strong opinions even when the available evidence is weak. This can lead to bad decisions that people later regret.

[5] The halo effect is a cognitive bias that occurs when a positive judgment about a person unconsciously colors the perception of the individual as a whole

[6] The horn effect, closely related to the halo effect, is a form of cognitive bias that causes one's perception of another to be unduly influenced by a single negative trait

[7] A version of this information was originally shared with the OHIO community in Fall 2020.

<center>**APPENDIX**</center>

For the past several years, Ohio University administrators and faculty have reviewed policies and procedures on how they can improve and enhance how to document our faculty's wonderful teaching strategies reliably. The TLA committee recognizes that student evaluations are a common source, sometimes the only source of data used by departments to evaluate teaching effectiveness. However, the research indicates that this method is not always a reliable source. Therefore, other activities should be equally or more so considered and documented when evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Therefore, in recognition of the wealth of faculty teaching innovation and to promote a time of celebration of all the hard work and sacrifices the faculty have made, the TLA committee is providing a quick guide and resource for faculty to use when they document their teaching effectiveness.

This resource list was created for faculty to use when they document all the other teaching effectiveness activities for their annual Faculty Annual Reports. The committee hopes that as faculty move down this list, they will recognize all the hard work they have done to move their classes to an online environment and celebrate their accomplishments.

The suggested activities were compiled from various peer-reviewed sources and in consultation with various faculty groups on the Ohio University campus.  It is not an exhaustive list but meant as a general guide to other teaching activities that can be used as sources to document teaching effectiveness.

Although the TLA committee believes this list will help faculty reflect on teaching transformations, we also urge faculty and administrators to embrace the activities listed as evidence that may demonstrate effective teaching and could be incorporated into the future teaching evaluations.

**Activities Related to Moving to Online Instruction**
- Adapting the curriculum for online delivery
- Converting lectures and other content delivery and assignments for online delivery
- Developing alternate instructional delivery options for labs and other experiential activities
- Modifying assessments for online implementation
- Meeting with students during virtual office hours
- Learning alternate ways to deliver the curriculum through video sharing and conferencing
- Changing teaching based on feedback and reflection
- Creating an online teaching portfolio
- Participating in virtual workshops for how to use online teaching platforms and tools (e.g., Teams, Blackboard, Panopto, etc.)
- Creating virtual assessments
- Supporting students during the transition to online learning
- Directing students to online university resources

**Activities Related to the Practice of Teaching**
- Designing curriculum, courses, modules, and/or lessons
- Creating syllabi meeting department, school, college, and/or university standards for compliance, content, and rigor (refer to section IV.A.3 of the Faculty Handbook)
- Creating and using new student engagement activities (e.g., project, assignments, role-plays, etc.)
- Creating and using new assessments (e.g., exams, rubrics, performance evaluations, etc.)
- Revising or improving curriculum, courses, modules, and/or lessons based on feedback and/or reflection
- Demonstrating improvements in the quality of instruction
- Writing a self-evaluation / reflection about teaching

- Creating a teaching philosophy or portfolio
- Developing and using innovative classroom assessment techniques
- Using evidence-based teaching practices
- Serving effectively as an advisor for undergraduate theses, graduate theses, and/or dissertations

**Activities Related to Sharing Teaching & Learning Practices**
- Mentoring or collaborating with peers
- Participating as a subject or reviewer in a peer evaluation
- Teaching and/or learning theory-driven teaching practices
- Sharing classroom action research and projects with others
- Writing/Publishing peer-reviewed empirical research on teaching
- Writing/Publishing case studies related to teaching
- Writing/Publishing chapters or text related to teaching
- Writing/Publishing essays about teaching
- Sharing teaching portfolio
- Presenting or publishing about teaching strategies
- Sharing about community education
- Writing an online blog about teaching
- Participating and sharing knowledge as a peer reviewer of teaching
- Attending a teaching conference
- Earning teaching awards from department, college, university, or external organizations

**Suggested Teaching Effectiveness Assessment Outcomes**
- Student access and use of blackboard
- Course retention rates and grades
- Student achievement of learning outcomes
- Experiential learning experiences
- Peer review evaluation summary data
- Creative documentation strategies such a screen captures, videos of lectures, and saved classroom chats