**CALS Policy for Improving Quality of**

**Instruction by Peer Review of Teaching**

Peer review of teaching is a vital part of maintaining the well-being of an academic institution, and it is also consistent with the processes and practices of scholarly activities in which faculty engage. Its core purpose is to improve the quality of the instructional enterprise, while cultivating a culture of learning and instructional improvement. Virginia Tech’s Promotion and Tenure Guidelines (<https://faculty.vt.edu/promotion-tenure.html>) regarding peer review of teaching state that faculty should “provide at least two letters or reports from departmental or college peer reviewers regarding the candidate’s teaching and advising effectiveness” (Section IV. Teaching and Advising Effectiveness. Section KJ. Peer evaluations of instruction). The CALS policy regarding peer review of teaching is outlined below.

[The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning](https://teaching.vt.edu/) is an additional resource available to faculty members, units, and colleges. They can provide teaching observations, mid-semester feedback, and one-on-one consulting to improve the quality of instruction.

1. **General Recommendations for Peer Review**

* We encourage the peer review of teaching for all faculty within the first 5 years of a faculty appointment and at least every 5 years after that. Peer reviews may be conducted more frequently if desired for promotion, retention, or professional development.
* We strongly recommend that at least one peer reviewer be external to the unit.
* Peer review committees should consist of a maximum of three members from any unit within the College of Agriculture and Life Science including all extension units.
* The peer teaching review should demonstrate the professional growth of the faculty member’s instruction. To accomplish this, the peer review should be for:
  + Different courses
  + Different modalities of course offering (face-to-face, online, hybrid),
  + Different semesters, and
  + Different years

1. **Process**

* Assembly of peer review committee
  + The unit leader or designee would initiate the peer review process. In consultation with the faculty member, and with unit level teaching committees (if appropriate), peer reviewers will be selected and assigned to conduct the review.
* Pre-observational face-to-face meeting
  + Reviewer(s) and faculty member meet about 1 week prior to beginning observation.
  + Faculty member provides committee with access to course materials.
* Observations
* At least two observations (class, laboratory, video/zoom) per reviewer per course
* Teaching and instruction are highly individualized activities and as such, peer review of teaching should not be highly scripted.
* Data collected for a peer review may consist of, but is not limited to:
* Classroom observations or video/zoom observations for online and hybrid courses;
* Review of syllabus and supporting course materials;
* Analysis of assignments and evaluation criteria;
* Course packets, handouts, and texts;
* Course Canvas site or website;
* Review of examples of student work and instructor feedback;
* Appraisal of online discussions or wikis (when appropriate);
* Review of printed or online content; and
* Interviews with students and teaching assistants
* Post-observational meeting - Reviewer(s) and faculty member meet within 1 week following completion of all teaching observations.
* Reviewer(s) present a draft report for discussion at this meeting.
* The final peer teaching report should be written by the committee member(s), and submitted to the unit leader (with the reviewed faculty member copied on the correspondence) prior to the start of the next semester.

1. **Written report**

The complete report (no maximum page limit) contains the following information:

**A. Executive Summary:**

* a highlight of the complete report
* a maximum of two pages
* to be used in faculty promotion materials
* The Executive Summary may or may not be equivalent to the full peer review report. If the level of detail in the full report is not deemed necessary for the faculty member’s P&T document, the committee may decide to submit the full report to the faculty member, but only the Executive Summary to the unit.

**B. Descriptive information**

* Dates of review
* Names of reviewer(s)
* Course(s) name, number, CRN, and modality reviewed
* Number of students enrolled in the course(s)

**C. Narrative**

* Describes the kinds of data collected for the peer review, as well as the reviewers’ assessment. The narrative should include at a minimum
* An overview of the goals of the course(s),
* The types of teaching strategies used,
* The methods used for evaluating students’ work conducted in the course(s),
* Examples of the kinds of discussions and dialogues among the instructor and students, and
* The ways in which the course learning activities are organized

**D. Constructive Recommendations**

* This section should include suggestions for improvement of course delivery and instruction. The recommendations should strive for a balance between praise and constructive critique.

*Developed by the CALS Committee on Academic Programs and Policies, and approved by CALS Governance Council 11/1/2022.*