

Peer Observations recommendations

UFAC, May 2026

SB1 mandates that *“Each state institution of higher education shall establish a written system of peer evaluations for faculty members with emphasis placed on the faculty member’s professional development regarding the faculty member’s teaching responsibilities.”*

Many, if not most, faculty have regular peer observations in their classes already, for instance for promotion and tenure requirements. New under SB1 is that a peer observations system now needs to be in place for all faculty, and should feed in to the annual performance reviews regarding teaching. Without peer observations, the Course Feedback Survey filled out by the students will often be the sole piece of information in the annual performance review.

UFAC recommends the following guidelines for this system:

- Peer observations are part of lifelong learning, and should first be seen as a formative assessment – the summative assessment is not the most important. This means that there needs to be explicit room for critical feedback, without fear of repercussions. A good peer observation is followed up by a one-on-one discussion between the observer and the observed.
- Fundamentally, the responsibility of proper peer observations rest with the individual units. We therefore recommend that the College Faculty Affairs Committees further develop proper college specific guidelines and rubrics.
- The department Chair (or equivalent unit lead) is responsible for facilitating peer observations that happen fairly, appropriately, and in a timely fashion. This responsibility can be delegated where appropriate.
- The system should remain as simple as possible, to minimize the bureaucracy and burden on peer observers.
- Peer observations for Promotion and Tenure are also valid for annual performance reviews, and vice versa.
- It is recommended for all faculty to have at least one peer observation per year, although a faculty member without P&T requirements and with a record of good performance reviews may elect to have observations less often, but no fewer than every three years.
- In the annual performance review, peer observations are meant to complement the student evaluation of instruction (SEI). Where applicable, the questions that are asked in the SEI should also be addressed in the peer observation.
- Peer observations go beyond just a classroom visit; it often includes access to the LMS shell, syllabus, and other relevant materials. This is especially important for online and non-lecture based classes.
- Observers may be of any rank and from anywhere in the university, but it is important to avoid power imbalances (such as observers in the same unit that may go up for P&T later).
- Peer observations need to be able to be critical, but also fair – observed faculty need to be protected from observations that simply disagree with a teaching style or are otherwise inappropriate. A list of appropriate topics is attached at the front page of the form. A numerical score is discouraged.

Peer Review Form

Faculty Member Name:

Reviewer Name:

Course(s) for Review:

Semester/Year:

Date of review:

Materials Reviewed (check all that apply)

- ☐ Classroom observation (in-person or recorded)
- ☐ Syllabus and associated course information document(s)
- ☐ Access to the Blackboard course shell
- ☐ Assignments/discussion prompts/exams/rubrics (please circle)
- ☐ Student evaluation summaries
- ☐ Faculty self-reflection
- ☐ Professional development record
- ☐ Completed student work
- ☐ Supplemental materials developed by instructor (e.g. handouts, web resources, etc)
- ☐ Feedback, engagement, interaction with students in asynchronous online course
- ☐ Other: _____

Observation Guidance

1. Peer observers may review the syllabus and learning objectives before agreeing to help with peer observation.
2. Peer observers may review study materials such as Powerpoint slides, handouts, videos, etc. at the request of the instructor.
3. In the case where instructor may want peer observers to review the Blackboard shell for the course, the observer shall request limited access to the shell that restricts access to grades and content creation.
4. The purpose of peer observation is to provide constructive feedback to the instructor that helps meeting the university's mission to ensure sustained excellence in teaching.

Please comment on the following topics

These lists are intended as guidance. There is no need to comment on topics that are not applicable, and if other topics are relevant, please include them.

Specific requests by the observed faculty member:

Campus lectures and online synchronous classes

Possible prompts include:

- The instructor treats the students with courtesy and respect
- The instructor maintains student engagement and motivation
- The instructor is available for assistance and consultation
- Course expectations are clear
- The instructor is knowledgeable and well-prepared
- Experiential and applied activities are used appropriately
- Online tools (e.g., Blackboard) are used appropriately
- The topics of the course are clearly explained
- The assignments are beneficial for student learning
- The class started and ended on time, and the classroom time is well managed
- The class is well attended

Asynchronous online classes

Possible prompts include:

- The course design supports self-directed learning
- The course structured is clearly structured and organized within the LMS
- Expectations and pathways for completing the course are clear and flexible
- Learners are frequently and meaningfully asked to interact with their peers
- The instructor establishes a clear presence in the course (e.g., announcements, videos, feedback)
- Communication expectations are clearly defined (e.g., response times, availability)
- The instructor provides timely and constructive feedback on assignments and discussions
- The course materials are of high quality

Non-Lecture oriented classes (e.g., Internships, Studio Classes, Labs, Individual Projects)

There is a wide variety of different modalities, so prompts need to be specific to that specific modality.

Possible prompts include:

- The instructor treats the students with courtesy and respect
- The instructor maintains student engagement and motivation
- The instructor is available for assistance and consultation
- Course expectations are clear
- The instructor is knowledgeable and well-prepared
- The interactions between the instructor and (teams of) students are conducive to learning
- Safety and other protocols are implemented

Feedback and Recommendations

General Comments:

Strengths:

Areas for growth:

Something the observer learned from the observation that is applicable to their own teaching:

A conversation between the peer observer and instructor was held on_____.