

School of Education Teaching Assessment Plan – April 2021

Section 1: Academic Unit's Definition of Teaching Effectiveness

Core Principles of Teaching Effectiveness

The School of Education (SOE) articulated the following dimensions of teaching effectiveness:

1. **Alignment with the SOE mission-vision's emphasis on equity, justice and anti-racism:**
 - Developmental, student-centered stance toward curriculum and instruction.
 - Equity- and justice-focused content integrated with specific practice spaces, contexts, and applications to practice/praxis.
 - Humanizing, equitable, and just experiences for students including classroom climates.
 - Create community in classes that builds collective, participatory voices of students in the classroom, a sense of belonging and being heard
 - Embody a stance that knowledge is co-created
 - Elevate and recognize multiple knowledge traditions.
2. **Student agency and engagement in course content:**
 - Instructors create conditions that enable students to be agentic in their learning experiences
 - Students personalize their learning experiences and co-construct course content and learning opportunities
 - For example, faculty approach syllabus creation as dialogic engagement with students (i.e., living syllabi)
3. **Effective pedagogy:**
 - Experiential and/or active learning opportunities
 - Effective facilitation of in-class discussions and sessions
 - Ongoing guidance and feedback to students about their progress toward their individualized learning and developmental trajectories
 - Authentic assessment
4. **Authentic/purposeful curriculum and classroom experiences:**
 - Prepare students for future careers and a lifetime as engaged community members
5. **Teaching as scholarship:**
 - Faculty take a reflective stance toward their teaching and actively engage in continuous learning and improvement
 - Commitment to testing and modeling innovative instructional practices and learning environments

- Faculty commit to sharing what they are learning about teaching with colleagues in the SOE community and beyond

Section 2: Methods of Assessment

Formative Methods to Improve Teaching Effectiveness

The School of Education will promote a menu of formative assessment options and supports to develop teaching. These options will be available to all instructors in the School of Education including faculty, part-time instructors, and graduate students. The options will be shared in a context of increased attention to teaching as a scholarly practice. These methods will be opportunities to improve, deepen, share, and experiment with teaching across the School and elevate attention to teaching in a relational practice that encourages engagement and dialogue amongst instructors and with feedback from students and community partners.

Faculty reviews in the School of Education require faculty to document progress toward meeting annual goals and set new goals for the upcoming year in consultation with Department Chairs. This is one opportunity for faculty and chairs to identify areas of development related to teaching. A prompt specific to annual teaching goals was recently added to the faculty review to emphasize the focus on teaching as a scholarly practice. In the annual review process, faculty will be encouraged to identify specific processes from the Development of Teaching Menu in their goals for and reflection on their teaching. Chairs will recommend specific processes from the Development of Teaching Menu to faculty based on current performance and stated goals with the intention of structuring ongoing opportunities for formative assessment in the upcoming academic cycle.

Development of Teaching Menu –

1. **Opportunities for conversations about teaching.** These conversations will likely begin during the faculty review process when faculty will review teaching goals, student surveys, and personal learning goals with their supervisors and use the following options to further refine and evaluate teaching each year:
 - **Student feedback.** Faculty will be encouraged to engage in and initiate mid-term surveys or reflective conversations to be able to respond quickly and efficiently to student feedback.
 - **Peer review.** Instructors will be offered opportunities to learn with a peer mentor and/or department chair through classroom observations and dialogue about teaching.
 - **Debrief with part-time instructors.** At the end of each semester, program faculty, coordinators, division leads, and/or department chairs will meet with part-time instructors and doctoral students to review the semester and OMET results and provide support and this menu of options to continually improve their teaching.

2. **Opportunities for programs/program coordinators to facilitate teaching improvement through feedback from stakeholders:**

- Program advisory boards which include alumni, employers and community members will be invited to review syllabi, curriculum and student work, student vitas, and exit data to provide feedback.
- As a professional school that prepares students for careers in education, health, and wellness, it is important to listen to our partners' thoughts about the needs and opportunities in our region and beyond. Community partners who host our students in internship, practicum, and student teaching experiences will be surveyed and/or interviewed annually by department chairs and/or program coordinators about desired student competencies, skills, and knowledge that should be considered and provide feedback on faculty/program teaching.

3. **Opportunities for faculty to learn and develop their teaching practice.** Pedagogical development opportunities with a focus on inclusive and equitable classrooms will be advertised and made available so that faculty may have opportunities to learn and improve following their teacher assessment. Some of the workshops will be offered by the SOE Associate Dean for Equity and Justice's office and others from the University Center for Teaching and Learning. In addition, the SOE will provide faculty development and support related to educational technology through workshops offered by our Director of Online Learning and Innovative Technologies. Examples of these workshops and trainings include *Building a Living Syllabus*, *What are Anti-racist Approaches to Syllabus Development?* *Becoming a Grading Guru*, *Designing Better Test Questions*, *Introduction to Canvas and Panopto*, and *Creating Accessible Content Workshops*.

In addition, Educational Technology faculty will be available for individual consultation with faculty to increase and improve implementation and integration of educational technology by School of Education faculty. They may request support and technology to record their own classroom teaching for further assessment and evaluation.

Summative Assessment of Teaching

Faculty teaching will be summatively assessed yearly as part of faculty evaluation and also as part of tenure and/or promotion. For both processes, there are two sources of evidence: Student evaluations of teaching and faculty personal statements that reflect upon their teaching and efforts to improve their teaching. As a School of Education, we are aware of limitations in evaluation data and engage leadership in continual conversations around equitable evaluation practices. Personal statements would be expected to draw upon evidence from student evaluations as well as evidence generated as part of the formative activities described above.

Yearly Evaluation of Teaching

Department Chairs and **Associate Chairs** are in conversation with faculty about their teaching and plans for improvement, and are responsible for yearly faculty evaluation. They have access to all student evaluations for faculty in their department and for all courses taught in their department. **Division Leads** also have access to all student evaluations for courses taught in their divisions. Division Leads do not formally evaluate faculty, but can be consulted by Chairs and Associate Chairs as needed. Leads may use student evaluation data as they coordinate their divisions in course planning, assigning instructors, and identifying opportunities to involve division faculty in professional development activities around teaching.

As part of the annual review, faculty members write a reflection on their teaching that can respond to student evaluations, reflect upon any improvement activities with which the faculty member engaged, and post new goals for teaching for the upcoming year. Chairs and Associate Chairs will provide written feedback on the teaching statement, as part of their yearly letters to faculty, and, where appropriate, provide guidance with respect to improvement activities, teaching duties, and preparing teaching materials for tenure and/or promotion dossiers.

Promotion-Related Review of Teaching

As a premiere public institution, one of our major responsibilities is the teaching and mentoring of students. All faculty are expected to be committed to excellence in teaching. Evidence of this commitment listed in our current promotion and tenure guidelines includes developing new courses and instructional innovations, integrating emerging technologies into teaching, active and competent mentoring and advising of students, student evaluations of teaching, and peer evaluation of teaching through formal review processes or by working with more experienced mentors. Faculty are also required to include teaching as a major topic in their personal statements for promotion and tenure. The “development of teaching menu” described in the formative evaluation section provides opportunities for faculty to draw upon as they reflect on their approach to teaching and provide examples of how they are working to continuously improve their teaching.

Student Evaluations of Teaching

OMETs are required for every course offered in the School. Beginning in September 2021, we are updating the standard questions to a new set. See Appendix A for the draft set of new OMET items. Instructors can still add additional questions as they wish, guided by established Teaching Center processes.

The new OMET questions provide multiple opportunities for students to write comments, as comments are helpful context for understanding the numeric ratings, and comments also provide space for students to identify specific areas for potential improvement. As summarized in the table, questions cover the instructor, course objectives, course environment, and alignment of course to the School’s mission-vision and the items in each area are aligned with the core principles of teaching effectiveness (see table below). The new questions have the goal of systematically focusing on these four areas as a way to engage students in thinking about the whole course rather than focusing mostly on the instructor. A sole focus on the instructor’s role

could introduce bias in student responses. We will use a single set of questions for a course, regardless of delivery format. This recognizes that both face-to face and online courses have synchronous and asynchronous content and activities. The survey begins with an open-ended question about mission-vision so that students start by thinking about the big picture and their subsequent responses are then, hopefully, informed by attention to the mission-vision as well.

	Core Principles of Teaching Effectiveness			
	Alignment to Pitt Ed mission-vision: emphasis on equity and justice & anti-racism	Student agency and engagement in course content	Effective pedagogy	Authentic / purposeful curriculum and classroom experiences
Instructor		X	X	
Course Environment		X		
Course Objectives	X		X	X
Mission/Vision	X		X	X

Section 3: Assessment Results & Continuous Improvement

All aspects of our teaching assessment plan aim to create and sustain a culture in the School of Education that promotes a scholarly stance toward teaching, in which instructors engage in an ongoing inquiry process aiming for teaching excellence. We plan to initiate routines at multiple levels of the school in order to pursue continuous improvement of teaching:

- Program** – Programs can be a prime locus for the continuous improvement of teaching given their close ties to students, their understanding of curricular content, and their shared commitment to preparing students for future careers and societal engagement. When appropriate, program faculty, supported by departmental leadership, will engage in collaborative teaching improvement routines aimed at reflecting on the effectiveness of course offerings provided to students. Program coordinators will have access to selected and/or aggregated OMET data for the courses taught in their programs and can work with departmental leadership to initiate collaborative improvement routines. This may also include looking to other sources of data, such as, creating connections to partners to support continuous teaching improvement. For example, they might draw in alumni and potential employers to review syllabi and other curriculum documents.

- **Department** – The departments will lead teaching improvement aimed at supporting the professional practice of faculty and other instructors. Grounded in the annual review process, department chairs will engage faculty in reflection on teaching successes and areas for improvement through dialogue around annual faculty teaching reflection statements, and support faculty in selecting options from the menu described in section II to improve their teaching. Faculty will be also encouraged to engage in data-based inquiries targeting teaching improvement and have opportunities to share what they are learning about pedagogical practice with colleagues in the department.
- **Division** – Divisions will lead teaching improvement routines that look across the courses offered within each department. For example, the research training division head will lead examination of the way that research methodology courses are taught, based on review of syllabi, OMET data, and possibly student work products.

Appendix A: School of Education Standard OMET Questions

“We ignite learning. We strive for well-being for all. We teach. We commit to student, family, and community success. We commit to educational equity. We advocate. We work for justice. We cultivate relationships. We forge engaged partnerships. We collaborate. We learn with and from communities. We innovate and agitate. We pursue and produce knowledge. We research. We disrupt and transform inequitable educational structures. We approach learning as intertwined with health, wellness, and human development. We address how national, global, social, and technological change impacts learning. We shape practice and policy. We teach with and for dignity. We think. We dream. We lead with integrity. We are the School of Education at the University of Pittsburgh.”

Think about Pitt Ed’s mission-vision (above) and your experience in this course. To what extent do you think this course exemplifies/aligns with the mission-vision? What would make it better aligned, if anything?

Course Environment

Survey Scale: hardly at all (1), to a small degree (2), to a moderate degree (3), to a considerable degree (4), to a very high degree (5). If an item does not apply to the class select N/A]

1. The instructor was enthusiastic about teaching the course.
2. The course was well organized.
3. The instructor maintained an environment where students had equitable opportunities to participate.
4. The instructor maintained an environment where students felt supported asking questions and seeking assistance
5. The course supported a learning community where students were an important part of each other’s learning experiences
6. The course included materials, readings, and resources that reflect the experiences of historically minoritized communities, cultures, and ways of knowing.

What was strongest about this course environment?

What would improve the course environment?

Instructor

Survey Scale: hardly at all (1), to a small degree (2), to a moderate degree (3), to a considerable degree (4), to a very high degree (5). If an item does not apply to the class select N/A.

To what extent did the instructor manage **synchronous** and **asynchronous** learning activities effectively in the context of [If an item does not apply to the class select N/A]:

- Using online communication tools to build community and reduce isolation
- Providing opportunities for collaboration (e.g. class discussion, lectures, projects, and labs)
- Facilitating synchronous whole class discussion
- Including diverse instructional content beyond text (video, podcasts, graphics, etc.)
- Maintaining frequent communication between faculty and students (e.g., present and active in discussion forum, announcements, etc.)
- Showing consideration for the questions and perspectives of students.
- Providing opportunities for application of course content
- Providing timely feedback on student work
- Providing constructive feedback that helped students improve their work/learning
- Providing accessible course materials (e.g., closed captions/transcripts for videos, alternative text for images, searchable pdf documents)

What was strongest about this instructor?

What ideas would you share with this instructor about how to manage the course more effectively next time they teach it?

Course Objectives

Survey Scale: hardly at all (1), to a small degree (2), to a moderate degree (3), to a considerable degree (4), to a very high degree (5). Each also as N/A.

- The course developed my ability to apply theory to practice/praxis
- The course developed my problem-solving skills
- The course developed my critical perspectives towards theory and/or practice
- The course developed my writing
- The course developed my ability to provide constructive critiques to others
- The course developed my communication/presentation skills
- The course developed my awareness of inequitable educational structures

What learning objectives do you think should be added or removed from this course, if any? Why?