

Report of the UBCV Working Group on Peer Review of Teaching April 17th, 2009

Peer review of teaching is a well established practice in many educational settings, including UBC. It is often used in conjunction with other forms of assessment of teaching effectiveness to inform practice and support administrative decision-making. It is widely recognized that peer review has important formative value; it also can support effective summative evaluation of teaching. Peer reviews, both formative and summative, have been conducted at UBC for a long time but the process has not been guided by a clearly articulated set of principles that would ensure a desired level of consistency across the university¹. This document outlines such principles to guide development of unit-specific procedures and practices of peer review and includes implementation guidelines that provide some detail on what these process and practices may entail.

In September 2008, a Peer Review Working Group² was established with a mandate to formulate a set of principles/guidelines for peer review at UBC Vancouver that would acknowledge and respect the diversity of teaching and learning contexts and cultures of different Faculties while introducing a greater degree of consistency in the approaches to peer review and related procedures across the university.

The Group identified the following key purposes and benefits of peer review of teaching:

- Contribution to reflection on teaching and professional development of faculty members.
- Increased awareness of the value of teaching within the university.
- Positively impact the quality of teaching and student learning experience.
- Identification of teaching development needs of faculty members.
- Enhanced evidence to support assessment of teaching for decision-making purposes (regarding tenure, promotion, career progress, merit, PSA, teaching awards, etc.).

The Working Group acknowledged the paramount value of formative peer review and peer mentoring, especially towards the achievement of the professional development goals and resulting gains in the quality of teaching at UBC V. Consequently, it strongly endorsed them as aspects of academic culture that should be encouraged and permeate all academic units across the university. The Group acknowledged the value in academic units developing or adopting formative peer review practices and models of peer mentoring that build on best practice within their disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts. It identified a role for the Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth in providing advice and support to units, as necessary, in implementing effective formative peer review and mentoring approaches.

Recognizing that when colleagues' review and feedback are used in the context of decision-making about re-appointment, tenure or promotion, the process must be fair and equitable across

¹ "the university" refers in this document to UBC Vancouver

² For Group membership please see Appendix I

the university (UBCV), the Group's work focused on the Summative Peer Review. The UBC Faculty Collective Agreement makes a reference to "assessment by colleagues" and calls for implementation of "formal procedures" whenever "opinions of ...colleagues are sought" relevant to one's teaching³. The UBCV Senate Policy on Student Evaluation of Teaching (May 2007) also calls for "an overall teaching evaluation system" that includes different forms of assessment, such as regular peer review, to be considered alongside evaluations performed by the students. In this context, the Group proceeded with discussions informed by examples of current practice and research findings on effective peer review to formulate the following set of Principles of Summative Peer Review recommended for adoption at UBCV.

Principles of Summative Peer Review⁴

1. Accuracy

- a) Process and criteria for peer review are appropriately selected, clearly articulated, and consistently implemented;
- b) Criteria for peer review are consistent with other performance review requirements so that rigorous and credible peer reviews may serve multiple purposes;
- c) Peer review teams should include reviewers who are trained/possess relevant expertise (both disciplinary and in peer evaluation) to offer reliable and valid assessments;
- d) Adequate attention is given to all relevant facets of teaching (including but not limited to observation of classroom instruction, development of curriculum materials, innovation in pedagogy, etc.) and a representative sampling of the relevant evidence is ensured;
- e) Criteria are established to define what constitutes evidence of effective teaching and that evidence is adequately documented.

2. Integrity:

- a) More than one reviewer is involved in peer review;
- b) Roles of formative mentor and summative reviewer are separated;
- c) Independent observation/assessments are conducted by the reviewers, but a team approach is adopted when writing the final peer review report;
- d) Sources of bias are identified and mitigated against, as much as possible (e.g., through involvement of arms-length reviewers; team approach; etc.);
- e) Integrity can be enhanced by involvement of an external reviewer charged with drafting the peer review report based on the input of all assessors;
- f) The report is reviewed and ideally agreed on by all the reviewers; dissenting views are clearly recorded;
- g) Confidentiality of individual reviewer's assessments and comments is maintained;
- h) Reviewers are bound to ethical conduct while performing peer reviews;
- i) Consistency of peer review practice within the unit (Faculty/School/Department) is ensured.

³ *Collective Agreement between the University of British Columbia and Faculty Association of the University of British Columbia, July 1, 2006 to June 30, 2010, Art. 4.02, p.72*

⁴ It should be noted that many of these principles also apply to effective formative peer review and their consideration in the development of formative peer review practices within the units is strongly encouraged.

3. **Transparency:**

- a) Every academic unit should develop or adopt clearly articulated policies and procedures for peer review that are consistent with the principles outlined in this document. Such policies and procedures should be readily available to faculty members in the unit;
- b) The process of peer review should be communicated to the faculty member at the onset of each summative peer review cycle;
- c) Department/Unit Head is required to provide feedback to the faculty member on his/her review results;
- d) Faculty members are to have access to the summary peer review report in the same way they would have access to external peer assessments of research;
- e) The evidence relied upon should be well documented.

4. **Diversity:**

- a) These principles and implementation guidelines should be implemented with sensitivity to the unit (Faculty/School/Department) academic/disciplinary culture and teaching contexts (i.e., type of course, discipline-relevant pedagogy, etc.);
- b) The review team will take into consideration gender, ethnicity, and other such factors which might influence the review. If a faculty member has concerns about such factors, he or she should identify the concerns to the review team.

5. **Credibility:**

- a) Accuracy, integrity, and respect for diversity contribute to credibility of peer reviews;
- b) Consistency of implementation of peer reviews within academic units as well as adherence to the principles/guidelines university-wide (UBC V) help ensure credibility of peer reviews.
- c) Peer reviews must be based on rigorous evidence and conclusions should follow logically from the evidence presented.
- d) Peer reviews should be conducted and completed in a timely manner.

6. **Usefulness:**

- a) Every summative peer review should be reviewed by the Department/Unit Head and by the faculty member being reviewed and strategies devised, as appropriate, to support faculty member's teaching development;
- b) Should the summative peer review trigger a concern, the faculty member and/or the Department/Unit Head should have an opportunity to request a follow-up formative review(s).
- c) Consistent with related UBC policies, summative peer reviews of teaching should be considered in decision-making related to re-appointment, tenure, promotion, career progress, merit, PSA, and other opportunities for recognition within the unit (Faculty/School/Department) and/or the University.

Implementation Guidelines for Summative Peer Review:

1. Summative peer reviews should complement, rather than replace, ongoing faculty mentoring and formative peer reviews.
2. The summative peer review team should consist of no fewer than two evaluators, at least one of whom has training/expertise relevant to the evaluation of teaching.
3. A pool of trained/expert reviewers in peer evaluation will need to be developed within Faculties. These reviewers should be paired with assessors from individual units to support the process and make it more feasible, especially for small departments. Large departments may develop their own pools of reviewers with both disciplinary and peer review expertise.
4. Normally, the frequency of peer review for tenured faculty should be every five years and at least two reviews should be performed for pre-tenured faculty and for those seeking promotion. Additional periodic formative reviews within a mentoring framework should be encouraged.
5. The peer review process has to be appropriately resourced. In particular, faculty reviewers' time and training costs have to be addressed.
6. Support for reviewer training needs to be provided by the university through the Office of Teaching and Academic Growth (TAG).
7. Each Faculty or department, as appropriate, needs to develop its own peer review procedure/protocol reflective of the culture of the Faculty/School/Department, based on "best practice" within the field and consistent with the university guidelines.
8. It is the responsibility of the Dean or Principal to ensure that the process is implemented within the Faculty and it is the responsibility of the Department/Unit Head or Director to administer the process within his/her unit.
9. Each summative review process should be concluded in a timely fashion
10. Results of summative peer review should be integrated into a broader teaching performance assessment. Peer reviewers should not be asked to provide recommendations regarding tenure, promotion, merit, PSA, etc. as part of their report.
11. A more complete and thorough review of teaching performance and materials that results in a narrative report should be used for promotion and tenure review, reporting for merit consideration, and/or for teaching award nomination.
12. Unit (Faculty/School/Department)-based policies and procedures should be shared and periodically reviewed, as appropriate.

Appendix 1
Peer Review of Teaching Working Group Membership

Name	Title
Dr. Ian Cavers	Associate Dean, Science
Dr. Simon Ellis	Program Director, Wood Science Dept., Forestry
Dr. David Fielding (Alt. for R. Sindelar)	Associate Dean, Academic, Pharmaceutical Sciences
Dr. Karen Gardner	Clinical Assistant Professor, Dentistry
Dr. Robert Hall	Associate Dean, Engineering Students Mining Engineering, Applied Science
Dr. Anna Kindler (Chair)	Vice Provost & AVP Academic Affairs
Dr. Dominic Lopes	Associate Dean, Philosophy Dept., Arts
Dr. Louise Nasmith	Principal, College of Health Disciplines
Dr. Linda Peterson	Interim Director, Div. of Educational Support & Development, Medicine
Dr. Gary Poole	Director, Centre for Teaching and Academic Growth
Dr. Dan Pratt	Professor, Department of Educational Studies
Dr. Thomas Ross	Sr. Associate Dean, Professor of Business Economics, Sauder
Dr. Robert Sindelar	Dean, Pharmaceutical Sciences
Dr. Robert Tierney	Dean, Faculty of Education
Ms. Fran Watters	Director, Faculty Relations
Prof. Claire Young	Sr. Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, Faculty of Law