

## SWDE Roundtable Discussion: Peer Evaluation of Online Teaching (April, 2016)

General conversation topics that came up:

Lead faculty model is utilized in multiple universities

Union challenges (in peer review process)

Formative versus Evaluative review purposes

Question #1: How important is it for peer reviewers of DE or hybrid courses to be DE or hybrid educators themselves? (pros and cons)

- Having someone who understands the agreements of the timeliness factors of good communication would be a better reviewer (pro).
- Understanding where to look for communication in the online environment (pro)
- Looking at pedagogy – are you facilitating an interactive environment? Does the reviewer understand how much time it takes to communicate and facilitate well in an online environment? (pro)
- Allowing the reviewer only to review one week of the online course, due to continuity (comparability) between face to face review and online
- Having summative and informative reviews in face to face courses– can we do this in the online environment?
- Differences between the tenure—track faculty verses the adjunct faculty in how we evaluate them

Question #2: What are the critical elements of the DE/hybrid courses around which the peer review process should be structured?

- Using Community of Inquiry model to assess their teaching approach
- How do you incorporate self-assessment? Some have faculty fill out a rubric pre-review and then a rubric fill out post assessment?
- Do we add the peer reviewer to the online course, and if so, in what role? Guest – due to FERPA reasons? Instructor to gain more full access?
- Looking at adding to the process what the professors were asked to improve from the year before (longitudinal)
- Looking at how peer reviews drive Promotion & Tenure process
- Union involvement can cause a stop due to the voice behind creating the process of peer review and promotion and tenure.

Question #3: What are the sources of evidence a peer reviewer might seek to inform the review?

- Online Delivery – what are the unique factors associated with that particular delivery?
- Facility with technology and investment of learning it.
- Competence of the student and willingness to use technology. Forms of classroom management. (synchronous at least, maybe asynchronous, too)
- Using intervention within the class with students that are having issues.
- Letting the faculty identify the barriers to learning
- What mechanisms of communication they use
- How they convey the expectations of themselves (not just expectations of the students)
- Garrison’s social/cognitive/teaching presence
- Critical self-reflection components



The Ohio State University  
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Peer Review Online Courses

With the growing number of courses offered in an online format it is necessary to expand upon our guidelines for *Peer Review of Instruction* that was based on classroom observations. This addendum supplements the earlier document and provides suggestions for conducting a peer review of online teaching.

Online courses at the College of Social Work differ significantly in a number of ways from on-the-ground equivalents in terms of the teaching modality and the strategies required for successful online instruction.

The success of online courses is directly related to the sense of community that is created in the online environment and the instructor's "presence" in the course. Therefore, evaluating online instruction focuses on the areas where faculty has the most presence and impact:

- the amount and quality of feedback provided to students;
- timeliness of grading;
- communication with students via course announcements, email, or other means; and
- quality of any supplemental materials provided in addition to course content

Selecting a peer reviewer

All tenured faculty are eligible to serve as peer reviewers but, if possible, the peer-reviewers chosen should have experience in the online environment. The other steps in selecting a peer reviewer will be the same as those previously set out by the P&T committee.

The peer review activity consists of four components (1) a pre-review conference, (2) a review of the online "classroom" instruction, (3) a post-review conferences and (4) a written summary to the candidate.

Pre-Review Conference Meeting

During the pre-review conference the reviewer and course instructor should discuss the structure of course content, course assignments, and communication strategies, and how these factors contribute to the overall goals of the course. The instructor should explain to the peer-reviewer how communications with students are handled in the course and what tools are being used. After this initial orientation, the peer-reviewers may take the time to independently review the course structure. The instructor and peer-reviewers can then decide when the peer-evaluation will occur. During the meeting the instructor identifies a time in the course that would be representative of their online teaching. This should occur after the instructor has had time to build rapport, as well as grade and provide feedback on several assignments in the course.

### Review of the online “classroom” instruction

The overall goal of the review is to assess the instructor’s presence and impact in the course. Peer-review should only occur after the instructor has had the opportunity to develop a rhythm in the course. Although an online course will contain ALL of the components of an entire semester of teaching, it should be conducted to mimic an in-person classroom observation by evaluating a specific point in time. The peer-review in an online course should focus on areas where the faculty member has the highest degree of influence in the course; including, the amount and quality of feedback provided to students, timeliness of grading, and their communication with students. If the course has synchronous elements, one or more of those might be ideal to “observe” as well.

### Post-review conference

Shortly after the review the reviewer and instructor will meet to discuss feedback. This meeting addresses the following:

- the instructor’s presence and impact in the course;
- the completeness and timeliness of communications with the students;
- the frequency and quality of the instructor’s online presence through regular, frequent communications with students;
- the timeliness of grading; and
- the quality of supplemental materials available to students.

### Written Summary of the Review

Within one week of the review the faculty reviewer will prepare a written narrative.

- The narrative is based only upon the course review and pre and post-observation conferences.
- The narrative summarizes the review, the post-observation discussion, identifies the strengths of this instructor as well as opportunities for improvement.
- The reviewer provides a copy of the narrative to the faculty member, and to the College CAO. The individual being reviewed has the prerogative to respond to the written peer reviewed document with two weeks of its receipt. A response is not a required portion of the review, but is available to faculty members who wish to clarify, or further comment upon their review. This written response is provided to the CAO and placed in the candidate’s dossier.