
PEER EVALUATION RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

Evaluation processes examine faculty performance in the key areas of their work such as their teaching, committee participation, professional development, and service. Evaluation looks back at recent performance to identify strengths and weaknesses and looks forward via the development of thoughtful plans for maintaining or improving performance. Those evaluated and those evaluating should share information, provide opportunity for reciprocal learning, and engage in active, structured dialogue both before and following the assessment. The dialogue should include clearly communicated expectations and transparency regarding evaluative criteria.

CONTENTS

Elements Of Effective Peer Evaluation.....	1
Student Evaluations Of Teaching: Benefits and Concerns	2
Additional Measures Of Teaching Effectiveness	3
Addressing Areas That Need Improvement.....	4
Providing A Plan For Improvement	5
Peer Review At Cuesta College (CBA; Section 7.3-7.7.2).....	6

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PEER EVALUATION

Peer review of faculty, when done well, can help cultivate a supportive and collegial environment that helps faculty improve while also feeling less judged and vulnerable in the process. The following elements are associated with effective peer evaluation:

Collaborative

- Peer evaluators should include the perspectives of the faculty they are evaluating in their reviews, through sharing details of their work, retrospective reflections, and aspirational plans for next steps (as noted in their self-evaluations). Evaluators should share feedback and review outcomes in ways that enable continuing dialogue and empower faculty agency in determining next steps in their work.

Key Point: Evaluation looks back at recent performance to identify strengths and weaknesses and looks forward via the development of thoughtful plans for maintaining or improving performance.

Accurate, Constructive, Actionable Feedback

- Evaluations should provide feedback that accurately assess actual performance relative to established benchmarks; that identifies both strengths and weaknesses; and that enables faculty to reflect on and identify their next steps for maintaining or improving performance in dialogue with their department chair and/or other supervisors and mentors.

Supportive

- Faculty are affirmed for the points of strength in their work and affirmed when they meet or exceed performance standards. When faculty do not meet performance standards, this information is shared with kind directness accompanied by support and guidance for making improvements to help meet those standards. Additional support might include new mentoring relationships, creating professional development plans, and incentivizing desirable actions.

Specific

- In contrast to broad, sweeping statements, specificity in applying performance standards results in better evaluations. For example, a faculty member may be incredibly effective at helping students with questions through diverse modes of engagement but need to provide more detailed or more timely feedback to their students on assessments; in contrast to this same faculty member being identified as generally a good teacher.

Open-Minded

- Both evaluators and those being evaluated benefit from open-mindedness. Effective teaching can look very different even between two highly accomplished instructors. Being receptive to different teaching styles can lead to growth and improvement for everyone involved with the evaluation process. For evaluators, look for how an instructor's performance and style can grow or improve, not for ways in which they can be more like you.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS OF TEACHING: BENEFITS AND CONCERNS

Student evaluation of teaching can provide valuable information, including encouragement and acknowledgement of a job well done as well as ways the instructor could modify or adapt their instruction to meet the needs of their students. Student feedback (such as “course policies aren’t clear”) can help evaluators and instructors focus on aspects of teaching that need further exploration or refinement.

While student feedback can provide useful information, there are concerns. Specifically, research suggests that student evaluation of teaching can reproduce structural biases and can be a poor indicator of teaching effectiveness due to often low response rates, and the influence of irrelevant or inappropriate factors and bias (e.g., such as those related to gender, ethnicity, or the physical appearance of the instructor). Therefore, evaluators should not rely exclusively on student feedback, but intentionally develop a rich pipeline of sources that collectively inform the evaluation of teaching. For reference, see the [“Statement on Student Evaluations of Teaching”](#) from the American Sociological Association.

Patterns in Student Evaluations

- The most effective way to use student evaluation results is to look for patterns that arise, such as multiple students providing similar feedback in the open-ended section.
- In the quantitative section, look at areas where they scored the highest versus the lowest, as opposed to focusing on the numbers themselves.

Key Point: The lower the response rate, the less representative the student responses might be. There is no justification for assuming that non-responders are like responders.

Addressing Low Response Rates

- The lower the response rate, the less representative the student responses might be. There is no justification for assuming that non-responders are like responders. Indeed, there is reason to think they are not: They were not present or they chose not to fill out the evaluation. Moreover, people tend to be motivated to act (e.g., fill out an online evaluation) more by anger than by satisfaction.

How to increase response rates:

- Make time to complete the evaluations during class (the beginning of a class is preferred to ensure students are not rushing to leave)
- If online, make the evaluation an assignment on canvas that students must open to progress in the module and access other course content
- Offer a small amount of extra credit (you can ask them to submit a screenshot of the "Thank You" that pops up after survey completion)
- Using welcoming language in your syllabus and creating partnerships in your course can lead to students being more comfortable submitting evaluations and offering constructive comments
- Communicate with students about how important student feedback is in the faculty review/improvement process
- Here is another resource to help [Increase Student Participation](#)

ADDITIONAL MEASURES OF TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

At its worst, peer evaluation may lead to faculty members feeling judged, misunderstood, or undervalued. For instance, inconsistent evaluations of teaching might occur whenever evaluations are based on a single class observation or source of data. Here are some additional ways to measure teaching effectiveness:

Self-Evaluations

- Self-evaluations provide an additional measure of teacher effectiveness. Look for the following in their self-evaluation:
 - **Self-awareness of their own strengths & weaknesses:** How does their self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses align with the other evidence provided? With your definition of effective teaching?
 - **Responsiveness to feedback from students and peers:** Does the self-evaluation address the candidate's student evaluations, classroom observations, previous peer reviews, or other feedback? If so, how effectively does it address specific concerns and recommendations? For instance, does it defensively dismiss the feedback, or does it acknowledge the feedback and offer a plan for improvement or an effective counter-perspective?
 - **Demonstration of growth over time:** How does the self-evaluation indicate that the candidate has learned something about their teaching? When reviewing the professional growth of a teacher, consider the following
 - A record of regular participation in development activities
 - A description of changes in teaching strategies in a course and the resulting changes in student learning
 - Evidence of exploring new avenues for assessing student learning
 - Incorporation of appropriate technology into one or more courses and reflection on its value for the course
 - Changes in syllabi for a single course over the years that reflect appropriate course redesign
 - A self-evaluation that demonstrates an ongoing attempt to critically examine knowledge, beliefs, and actions as a teacher

Key Point: Inconsistent evaluations of teaching might occur whenever evaluations are based on a single class observation or source of data.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations can strengthen the evaluation process by providing a peer’s perspective on a snapshot of the candidate’s teaching-in-action.

- What relevant behaviors can be observed in a single class period?
 - Fair and effective peer observations are guided by decisions about what aspects of teaching will be evaluated, what behaviors will demonstrate those elements, and how to document the observation. Here is an example of aspects of teaching to observe:
 - **Aspects of Teaching:** encouraged student [engagement and interaction](#), [created an inclusive classroom environment](#), provided students with [organization and structure](#), [rapport with students](#), [content knowledge](#), [integrated technology](#), [effective presentation and communication](#)

Artifacts of Teaching

Different artifacts of teaching — especially when candidates annotate these materials and/or refer to them in their self-evaluations— offer evidence for evaluating key aspects of and intentions for teaching, such as course design, illustrations of expectations of student learning, compliance with department/institution guidelines, disciplinary, varied assessments, approach to student feedback, patterns in student performance, rigor, attention to diversity-equity-inclusion, and more.

Departments should consider establishing benchmarks in terms of what artifacts (body of evidence) is preferred. For tenure-track faculty, clarity should be provided in terms of what artifacts of their teaching should be included in their self-maintained files.

- Examples of artifacts include syllabi, lecture notes or detailed plans for a class session, assignment prompts and accompanying rubrics, anonymized samples of student work with instructor’s feedback, and recorded class sessions, evidence of reasonable time to return graded work; plans for a class session, lecture notes
- Instructor’s curated highlights of student evaluations for a particular course, a course type, or a single question on the evaluations across time—with brief annotation about strengths, growth, and/or continued challenges

Key Point: Departments should consider establishing benchmarks in terms of what artifacts (body of evidence) is preferred.

ADDRESSING AREAS THAT NEED IMPROVEMENT

Assessing a Section as ‘Needs to Improve’

According to the Cuesta College Peer Evaluation form, a section of the peer evaluation form should be marked as “Needs to Improve” if either the majority of criteria within a section are assessed as “Needs to Improve” **or** the evaluator deems a “Needs to Improve” is appropriate due to one or more essential criteria. If a section is marked as “Needs to Improve,” add the following:

- Further explanation of what needs to improve should be documented on the peer evaluation form under **Required Improvements**. Comments in this area address specific criteria for which the instructor fails to meet standards as enumerated in any of the sections of the evaluation. (*See providing feedback below for ideas on how to constructively address areas that need to improve.*)
- Appended to the final peer evaluation will a written statement from the instructor being evaluated that addresses how they plan to resolve the required improvements.
- Also, the resolution of these specific deficiencies will be addressed on the self-evaluation form during the next regularly scheduled evaluation cycle.

According to the Cuesta College Peer Evaluation form, the peer committee should provide an overall assessment of “Needs to Improve” if one or more sections are assessed as “Needs to Improve.” This will trigger an off-cycle evaluation for sections rated “Needs to Improve.” If the overall evaluation is marked as “Needs to Improve,” then the peer evaluators need to provide the following:

- An explanation of the area(s) of substandard performance and recommendations for remediation on the peer evaluation form under: **Explanation of Overall Assessment of Needs to Improve.**
- A plan for improvement documented on the **Faculty Plan for Improvement Form** (available on the HR website). (See information below on providing a plan for improvement.)

Overall Evaluation Assessment: Unsatisfactory

According to the Cuesta College Peer Evaluation form, the peer committee should provide an overall assessment of “Unsatisfactory” if three or more sections are assessed as “Needs to Improve” or the evaluator deems performance in SECTIONS I or II is gravely deficient. This will at a minimum trigger an off-cycle evaluation and may lead to dismissal (or other action pursuant to Education Code Section 87660 et seq. and/or section 87730 et seq.) This assessment usually indicates that in the judgment of the evaluator, the instructor’s teaching ability and/or interaction with students is gravely deficient. If the overall evaluation is marked as “Unsatisfactory” then the peer evaluators need to provide the following:

- An explanation of the areas of the grave deficiency on the peer evaluation form under: **Overall Assessment of Unsatisfactory.**
- In addition, provide either a recommendation for remediation or explain why remediation in these areas would not be effective. The peer evaluation committee chair may utilize this information to develop a plan for improvement and document it on the **Plan for Improvement Form** or may recommend that the Vice President of Instruction (VPI) initiate action pursuant to Education Code Section 87660 et seq. and/or section 87730 et seq.

Off-Cycle Evaluations

A faculty member will be subject to an off-cycle evaluation review and follow-up (off-cycle evaluation) if the Overall Assessment of Performance as reported on the Peer Evaluation form, or the Dean/Director Evaluation form, was Needs to Improve or Unsatisfactory. The off-cycle peer review committee:

- For **temporary faculty** will be a three-member peer review team. The Peer Review team for temporary faculty will be selected in the following manner. The first member will be selected by the Division Chair (designee). The second will be selected by the faculty member who is being evaluated. The third member will be selected by mutual agreement of the Division Chair (designee) and the faculty member being evaluated.
- For **tenure track faculty** will be the Division Tenure Committee and the third member will be selected by mutual agreement of the Division Chair (designee) and the faculty member being evaluated.
- For **tenured faculty** will consist of the most recent peer evaluator, and the manager. A third member will be selected by the faculty member who is being evaluated. If the most recent peer evaluator does not wish to serve, or if the faculty member requests, the manager will choose a replacement.

PROVIDING A PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT

Peer evaluators should work with the faculty member to pinpoint the nature of the concerns about teaching performance to help them accurately understand areas for improvement. This collaborative work with the faculty member should direct them toward appropriate resources, clarify departmental

standards, and establish actionable benchmarks for subsequent reviews. The following questions can help facilitate this work.

- Can specific behaviors/actions be identified for improvements? For example, if students report that feedback is not returned in a timely fashion, what is a reasonable target timeline? If assignment guidelines/expectations appear to be unclear, what models can be emulated?
- Has the faculty calibrated their teaching to the audience of students actually taking their courses to achieve the best possible learning for the most students possible?
- Is the faculty member's approach to teaching, assessment, and evaluation generally within the range of practices of their department? While individual differences are hopefully welcome, notably divergent practices might merit reflection and dialogue, including how their practices are implemented and/or conveyed to students.

Key Point: While individual differences are hopefully welcome, notably divergent practices might merit reflection and dialogue.

If teaching is an area of concern, the faculty member should be directed to resources both inside and outside of the department. These resources may include:

- Teaching mentor(s) inside or outside the department, as appropriate
 - Faculty should be encouraged to observe faculty from other departments teach
- Teaching and learning center resources, as available
- Pedagogy-Teaching-Learning workshops or conferences, if resources can be made available
- Articles, books, podcasts, videos, and/or other resources to enable personal learning, reflection, and development

PEER REVIEW AT CUESTA COLLEGE (CBA; SECTION 7.3-7.7.2)

According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, there are three modes of peer review at Cuesta:

1. Standard Peer Review

- a. Used for regular (tenured) faculty
- b. Used for temporary (part-time) faculty after their second evaluation
- c. Those evaluated in this mode are evaluated at least once every three (3) academic years
- d. The peer committee includes one regular faculty member (can be a PT faculty member if instructor being evaluated is also PT)
- e. Student evaluations completed in one class section

Key Point: Evaluation processes and timelines for FT faculty are somewhat different than those for PT faculty. Find [Evaluation Timeline](#) differences on HR Website.

2. Tenure-Track Peer Review

- a. Used for full-time contract faculty members being considered for tenure

3. Expanded Peer Review

- a. Used to evaluate temporary faculty semester during the first two (2) semesters of service
- b. The peer committee includes two regular faculty members (can include PT faculty if instructor being evaluated is also PT)
- c. Student evaluations completed on two class sections

The Peer Review Process

All forms and timelines related to the faculty evaluation process can be found on the [Human Resources Website](#). The peer review committee chair (*designated by the Division Chair; **NOTE: no faculty member can evaluate his or her evaluator from the immediately preceding evaluation cycle***), is responsible for implementation of all components of the peer review process, including:

Pre-Evaluation Conference: A pre-evaluation conference shall be held between the peer review committee and the faculty member being evaluated **by the end of the 6th week of the semester**. Items to be addressed in the pre-conference will include:

- Identification of the objectives of the peer review process.
- Review of District-wide performance requirements such as committee participation (**not required for part-time faculty or first-year tenure-track faculty**), professional activities, and leadership experiences.
- Selection by the person to be evaluated of one of the following peer review observation patterns: (a) schedule a specific hour or hours for the peer review visitation, or (b) schedule a one-week period for "drop in" visits or (c) identify the DE/Hybrid course for asynchronous peer review, determine the process for the committee to gain access to the course, the duration of access, and the process for an orientation to the course by the faculty member undergoing evaluation.
 - The time and the date of the actual peer review evaluation visit (or visits)—and administration of student evaluations—will be scheduled by the committee chair during the pre-evaluation conference. Each member of the peer review committee will visit a different class session or service area function. The visitation period will be at least 50 minutes for a course offered in a Classroom/Lab or synchronous DE/Hybrid mode. (**In consultation with the faculty being observed, it may be agreed upon that an observation longer than 50 minutes is preferred.**)
 - For asynchronous DE/Hybrid courses, the duration of the evaluation period will be agreed upon in the pre-evaluation meeting and will include a review of content comparable to that of one 50-minute classroom/lab visit.
- Review of the current and applicable evaluation instruments, in the following instructional or service area:
 - **Instructional Faculty:** (i) Peer Evaluation Form (ii) Student Evaluation Form (in either Classroom/Lab or DE/Hybrid modality) (iii) Visitation Form (iv) Plan for Improvement, if applicable
 - **Service Faculty:** (i) Peer evaluation forms for Counseling, DSPS, Health Services, Library, and Student Development (ii) Student evaluation for Counseling, DSPS, Health Services, Library, and Student Development
 - **Self-Evaluation form** (the final draft to be submitted to the committee at least five (5) working days prior to the peer post-evaluation meeting).
- Establishment of a schedule of follow-up meetings and/or a post evaluation conference.

Student Evaluations: Student evaluations of teaching faculty in the standard peer review mode will be completed in one class section. Student evaluations of teaching faculty in the expanded peer review mode will be completed on the two class sections (two class sections per semester for contract faculty) mutually agreed to by the faculty member and the peer review committee. Student evaluations for DE/Hybrid courses will be made available to students via an anonymous on-line survey link administered by the Assistant Superintendent Vice President Instruction Office. Evaluations for non-teaching faculty will be based on the appropriate evaluation form.

- For face-to-face courses, they may not be administered during the 50-minute peer review visitation period but may be administered before or after the 50-minute period, if the class period is scheduled for 1.5 hours or more. For DE/Hybrid courses, the date of the release of the survey link will be agreed upon between the instructor being evaluated and the evaluators and will be available for two (2) weeks.

Post-Evaluation Conference: The post-evaluation conference shall communicate the peer review committee's assessment and evaluation of the faculty member who is being evaluated. The faculty member being evaluated shall be given a copy of the peer review committee's written evaluation.

- The completed written peer evaluation form, signed by the faculty member being evaluated, will be transmitted, along with the self-evaluation and student evaluations, to the appropriate manager for use in the management evaluation process.
- The faculty member may attach a written response to the peer review committee's evaluation provided it is submitted within ten (10) days of receipt of the completed peer evaluation.