

General Guidelines for Implementing Qualitative Measures in P&T

By majority vote in May 2017, the Faculty Senate approved the inclusion of *two additional qualitative measures* for the evaluation of teaching in promotion and tenure review. Each department will decide what kinds of measures are appropriate for their field or fields of study, and must indicate these measures in the departmental policies which will be reviewed and approved by the Dean. These materials will then be included in the candidate's dossier for consideration during review.

These guidelines were developed by the Qualitative Teaching Measures Implementation Group convened by the Provost in Fall 2017. They are meant as a general overview for departments and colleges to guide their thinking in choosing measures appropriate for their disciplinary faculty under review.

Background: Why Additional Qualitative Measures are Necessary

In the past, teaching effectiveness at UMBC was measured largely by quantitative data (student evaluations) and the required student input in the evaluation of teaching for P&T. Faculty members are also required by the university to submit syllabi as well as additional course documents. Some departments at UMBC went beyond these basic requirements in their departmental policies, but many did not. In addition, the interpretation of what to include in the course documents beyond the syllabi as well as the processes for recruiting and instructing student delegates for the P&T process has varied widely in departmental policies.

Recent studies of best practices for measuring teaching effectiveness suggest that universities use at least three measures, including both qualitative and quantitative data, for evaluating teaching effectiveness in order to minimize bias and provide the most accurate assessment of teaching.

The quantitative data gathered from students is important, but relying solely on student evaluations as the only measure of teaching effectiveness for P&T put faculty members at a serious disadvantage. Changes based on prescribed best practices give faculty members—particularly junior faculty members—more control over the presentation of the teaching portion of their dossier. These changes also encourage faculty members at UMBC to think about our teaching as an ongoing, self-reflective practice.

There are three commonly recognized approaches to qualitative evaluation:

- (1) Candidate's Enhanced Teaching Analysis
- (2) Departmental Peer Review of Course Materials (w/protocols & criteria for evaluation)
- (3) Peer Observation (w/protocols & criteria for evaluation)

Approach #1: Enhanced Teaching Analysis*

An Enhanced Teaching Analysis provides faculty with a powerful tool to help members of the P&T process to interpret the data provided as evidence of teaching effectiveness, to explain anomalies and to emphasize aspects of one's teaching that might be otherwise overlooked. The appeal of this particular approach is that it gives faculty an opportunity to speak on their own behalf, to tell the story of their experiences as teachers. This self-reflective piece, along

with student evaluations and peer review (classroom observation or a review of course materials), brings together evidence from three sources (students, self, and colleagues) to present the fullest picture possible of teaching effectiveness in action.

Although related to the self-assessment, the Enhanced Teaching Analysis goes well beyond the self-assessment of teaching in its scope and its specificity. It has elements similar to the teaching philosophy that job candidates are often asked to include in their dossiers, but is written from the perspective of an experienced faculty member, with expanded analysis and reflection. This narrative addresses the specifics of faculty teaching, including goals, construction of syllabi, assessment feedback, instructional methodologies, interactions with students, ethics, classroom atmosphere and others. It includes both a description and rationale for course structure and content and critical reflection on outcomes and plans for improvement. For possible suggestions for drafting such a document, candidates are encouraged to talk with staff at the Faculty Development Center.

Advantages and Limitations to This Measure: The advantages to the expanded teaching analysis is that it allows the candidate to discuss all aspects of their teaching choices, their evaluation of the success of those choices, and their plans for ongoing improvement, extending beyond the overview provided in the self-assessment. A limitation to this measure is that it reflects the candidate's self-perception and interpretation of their teaching effectiveness. An additional limitation to this measure, as with other qualitative methods, is the challenge to individuals and committees in adopting clear, but non-prescriptive, review criteria. Faculty personal reflections may vary in style and emphasis. Departments opting for this qualitative measure may wish to decide on minimum, specific questions to be addressed by all candidates. Based on these questions and drawing on the department's shared vision of teaching effectiveness, criteria can be developed to be used to assess all candidates' discussions to minimize possible bias. The Faculty Development Center can provide suggestions and examples as needed.

Approach #2: Departmental Peer Review of Course Materials

One of the major benefits of this approach is its transparency. A formal review of course materials, usually conducted by the Chair of the Department in conjunction with a faculty mentor or a committee, could potentially minimize possible biases that can occur with one-on-one peer observation.

Course materials typically capture how a candidate orients students to the course and its content, gives them practice in disciplinary thinking and skills; and guides their learning through feedback. Materials included in the dossier of candidates in departments choosing this measure extend beyond the course syllabi required for all candidates. Thus, materials that are appropriate and helpful for review include not only syllabi of courses, but also assignments that address different kinds of learning goals, sample class activities that engage students in applying course content and practicing essential skills; and samples of student work (provided anonymously and with permission) that show the kind of feedback provided for different levels of achievement. Faculty may also include materials from pedagogical or curricular innovation, such as simulations or web tools, or articles and presentations on pedagogy.

Advantages and Limitations to This Measure: The advantage to peer review of course materials is that it allows candidates to demonstrate how they seek to achieve their teaching goals through the assignments and activities they provide students. It thus provides reviewers with concrete examples of a candidate's teaching practices. The limitations to this measure as with other qualitative methods, is the challenge to individuals and committees in adopting clear, but non-prescriptive, review criteria. Departments opting for this qualitative measure need to decide on specific review criteria to be used for all candidates, based on the department's shared vision of teaching effectiveness. Using such criteria helps minimize potential bias. The Faculty Development Center can provide suggestions and examples as needed.

Approach #3: Peer Observation

A number of UMBC departments already require and regularly schedule observations prior to faculty reviews. The major benefit of this approach is that it can provide a snapshot of the actual classroom experience, with a colleague describing and analyzing what is going on in the classroom in real time. An additional benefit is that this can generate meaningful discussions about different classroom techniques among faculty, creating an opportunity to share and incorporate other pedagogical approaches within the department.

As with review of course materials, an important feature in peer observation is transparency. Departments can foster a culture of scholarly teaching and help minimize personal bias of observers if they begin the peer observation process by generating a shared perception of key features of effective teaching. For example, departments may want to discuss minimum expectations for pedagogical delivery and engagement of, and interactions with, students. These key features may be captured in a list of criteria or a rubric or alluded to in open-ended questions on a form that faculty can use during observations. In addition to preliminary department conversations, pre- and post-observation conversations between those observing and the faculty member being observed can help minimize misunderstandings and provide a formative element to this summative process.

Advantages and Limitations to This Measure: The advantages to peer review of teaching is that it allows fellow faculty a direct measure of how the candidate actually implements their teaching plan, interacts with students, and guides the learning process, compared to the candidate's own self-report in the self-assessment. The disadvantages are that the criteria used for the review of the observation can appear non-transparent to the candidate and can be tainted by the personal bias of the reviewer. Departments can mitigate these disadvantages, as noted above, by creating a shared vision of essentials of effective teaching. Based on these essentials, departments opting for this qualitative measure can decide on specific review criteria to be used for all candidates. Using such criteria helps minimize potential bias. The Faculty Development Center can provide suggestions and examples as needed.

Advice for Deans, Chairs and Committees

Deans, Chairs and Committees should be transparent about what constitutes "teaching effectiveness" at the University, College and Departmental levels and how each will consider

these documents in the context of these shared values. Information from the Dean's office must be disseminated to faculty at the dossier workshops prior to P&T and information from the department should be available on the department blackboard site or in Box.

In reviewing the dossier of a candidate, Deans, Chairs and Committees should look for specific evidence of teaching effectiveness in the materials submitted, paying close attention to how teaching goals and values are reflected in the students' learning experience.

Advice for Faculty

Faculty should be familiar with the guidelines and policies established by the Department, the College and the University regarding expectations for teaching effectiveness and should discuss their pedagogical methods and practices in the context of these guidelines and policies.

Faculty should be specific when articulating their objectives and methodology, providing evidence through concrete examples of how these are realized in the classroom setting.

Faculty are encouraged, whenever possible, to provide examples of responsiveness to feedback from students and peers as well as examples of challenges and lessons learned.

Ideally, these documents, taken as a whole, should reflect a narrative of progress, demonstrating self-reflection and growth as a teacher.

Timeline:

Departments must incorporate two qualitative measures into their policies and have them reviewed and approved by the Dean by the end of the Spring 2018 semester.

First use of the two qualitative measures in P&T review will be AY19-20.

*The description of the Enhanced Teaching Analysis was adapted in part from the University of Central Florida Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning, <http://www.ftl.ucf.edu/facultysuccess/professionalportfolios/>.