

Faculty Senate Red Committee

Members: Tamara M. Robertson (chair), David Denton, Eric Branscome, Elaine Berg, Alice Lin, Sergei Markov

Meetings: January 27, 2021; February 23, 2021; March 24, 2021

Charge: Provide a recommendation of best practices for peer observations/evaluations associated with the RTP process.

Current Practice at APSU: The current practice of peer observations/evaluations varies at APSU from department to department. What is the same is a faculty member must include a peer observation/evaluation in the e-dossier each year as part of the retention/tenure process. Observations/evaluations are also a part of the promotion process, but are required within two years of the request for promotion. Currently, there is no standardized evaluation tool used across disciplines.

Committee Research: The committee surveyed other institutions to determine current practices. The committee researched literature regarding best practices.

Committee Consensus: The goal of peer observations/evaluations is for professional growth/development and a part of the RTP evaluation process.

Committee Recommendation: The recommendation is broken down by Who, How, When, and Where categories for tenure track and promotion. Rationale and Challenges are provided when appropriate.

Tenure Track

Who?:

Who is evaluated? Tenure Track Faculty

Who are the observers/evaluators? The committee recommends two observers/evaluators annually rather than the current practice of only having one.

Process: There will be two observers/evaluators for each peer observation/evaluation.

The faculty member will provide the chair/director of the department suggestions for one of the observers/evaluators from within the faculty member's discipline. The chair/director will select from the suggestions.

The second observer/evaluator will be selected by the chair/director.

Options:

- Option #1- The second observer/evaluator is within the same discipline as the faculty member being observed/evaluated.
- Option #2- The second observer/evaluator is within the same college but another discipline.

The chair/director will notify the faculty member who was selected to be the observers/evaluators and allow the faculty member to address any conflicts of interest prior to scheduling the observation/evaluation.

Rationale: Two observers/evaluators will improve the reliability of the evaluation. Having the chair/director assign the observers/evaluators will improve reliability. Yet, allowing the faculty member to make suggestions for one of the observers/evaluators gives the faculty member an active role in the process. Two observers/evaluators will provide more feedback to enhance professional improvement. Option #2 above may provide a true evaluation of teaching methods/pedagogy by removing the emphasis on the content being taught.

Challenges: The committee recognizes the logistical difficulties of having two observers/evaluators but provides the recommendation based on best practices and in the spirit of professional improvement of teaching.

How?:

Process for Years 1-3: The observers/evaluators and the faculty member will schedule a pre-observation interview. The two observers/evaluators will attend an agreed-upon class session. After the first observation, the observers will provide the faculty with constructive feedback. This first observation is for formative feedback only. The committee recommends providing the faculty member with completed evaluation tools approved by the department as part of the formative feedback. The evaluated faculty will then access resources if necessary and implement the input provided by the observers/evaluators. The three will decide a reasonable time frame for the second observation, which is evaluative. **

For clarity, the two evaluators will both attend the same class sessions for each observation/evaluation.

Once the evaluation is complete, the three will plan a follow-up debriefing time to discuss the final evaluation.

Each individual observer/evaluator will give the faculty member a completed evaluation tool to place in the e-dossier.

Rationale: The above process will include an element for formative feedback allowing for professional growth and improvement. The committee also believes this process is collegial and provides the faculty member being evaluated with more input into the process. Two evaluations will give the RTP committee more data in which to make decisions.

Process for years 4-Tenure: For years 4-Tenure faculty will continue to have two observers/evaluators, but the formative aspect will no longer be required. Two observers/evaluators will be selected following the same process as years 1-3. The difference is the observations during this period will take place during two consecutive class sessions. Both observers/evaluators will attend the two sessions together. Each will complete an evaluation tool and provide it to the faculty member. **

Rationale: The committee consensus is that faculty at this point have had three years for professional improvement. Also, evaluating two consecutive class sessions allows the evaluators to assess areas such as consistency of teaching, perhaps improved assessment of student engagement, and application of student learning during the previous class period.

Challenges: The committee realizes the logistical difficulties of the number of meetings and commitments the “How” requires, but the recommendation is in the spirit of including formative feedback and enhanced faculty development.

When?

Process: The observations/evaluations follow the same timing as the current RTP process. See the example below.

Example: Fall 2020 Faculty Start

Actions	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Tenure
When is e dossier due?	Jan 2021	Sept. 2021	Sept. 2022	Sept. 2023	Sept. 2024	Sept. 2025
When should observations occur?	August-December 2020 (first semester of teaching)	Spring 2021	Spring 2022	Spring 2023	Spring 2024	Spring 2025
Evaluation Document/s in e-dossier	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Timing	Evals spaced to provide time for the faculty to include formative feedback	Evals spaced to provide time for the faculty to include formative feedback	Evals spaced to provide time for the faculty to include formative feedback	Evals consist of 2 consecutive class observations	Evals consist of 2 consecutive class observations	Evals consist of 2 consecutive class observations

Where?

Process: The annual observation/evaluation occurs during the teaching method that the faculty member is primarily/predominately assigned (i.e., traditional classroom, laboratory, online, clinical). If a faculty member teaches multiple modalities, the chair/director may require separate evaluations for each modality.

The committee is not recommending observations/evaluations for each teaching modality but would like to offer the chair/director the option if deemed appropriate. **

Promotion

Recommendation: The committee recommends that promotion-seeking faculty follow the same process for the “Who”, “How”, “When”, and “Where” as years 4-Tenure outlined above. The one recommended change is that a faculty member seeking a promotion must have a peer observation/evaluation within one year of seeking promotion rather than the current guidelines, which state, “within two years prior to the current promotion action.” The rationale is that a faculty seeking promotion should have a more recent teaching evaluation when seeking promotion.

For clarity, promotion peer observations/evaluations will include a pre-observation meeting with the faculty and observers/evaluators and two consecutive classroom observations by two different observers/evaluators. The evaluators will provide two separate evaluation tools for the faculty to place in the e-dossier.

** If a faculty member is teaching only online, the observation/evaluation sessions will need to be determined during the pre-observation meeting. The observation/evaluation methods may vary based on the class structure and must be agreed upon by the faculty and the observers/evaluators.