

## **Proposed Teaching Evaluation Policy for the Department of Sociology**

The Department of Sociology and Appalachian State University view teaching as the primary responsibility of the faculty. In accordance with this expectation, the College of Arts and Sciences provides guidance on how to measure and evaluate teaching excellence (see below). Following these guidelines, the Department of Sociology will collect and analyze data on faculty teaching using three assessment methods: course feedback, peer observation feedback, and a comprehensive self-evaluation.

This data will be compiled with the goal of evaluating how effectively an instructor contributes to student learning and will examine at least, but not limited to, three indicators of teaching excellence as prescribed by the College's statement on teaching excellence: professional expertise, sound instructional strategies, and inclusive student-centered learning environment.

Effective teaching will be recognized during the annual review by the Chair. However, if the three indicators of the multifaceted evaluation system indicate deficiencies in teaching effectiveness, the Chair will recommend measures to rectify the deficiencies during the annual performance review. The Department of Sociology will use this policy for annual reviews, contract renewals, promotion and tenure decisions, and post-tenure reviews.

### **Indicator 1 – Course Feedback:**

As noted in 4.3 of the Faculty Handbook, The UNC system requires that Appalachian State University establish regular reviews of faculty teaching. In accordance with this mandate, Appalachian State University collects student feedback (i.e., course evaluations) every fall of each academic year. However, in the Department of Sociology, we contend that collecting these evaluations more frequently leads to more consistent feedback, increasing faculty effectiveness in teaching. Therefore, Sociology will collect student feedback for every course (including undergraduate and graduate levels) during each semester (Fall, Spring, and Summer).

Sociology will use the standard course evaluation system provided by Appalachian State University to solicit student feedback each semester. However, the items in this course evaluation system will be monitored and changed when necessary. The Department will decide which course evaluation items will be necessary to best capture the indicators important for obtaining student feedback. Also, Sociology will rely on both quantitative and qualitative feedback from students, giving no particular weight to either form of data but will view these ratings as ways to encourage further course and pedagogical development for instructors. In addition, given that the American Sociological Association acknowledges that student evaluations of teaching are only weakly related to student learning and often disadvantage faculty from marginalized groups, these should be understood as opportunities for students to give feedback and not as stand-alone measures of teaching effectiveness. Thus, the purpose of student feedback is to inform faculty how students view the learning experience in the course. Student feedback should not be understood as evaluative but informative.

## **Indicator 2 – Peer Observation Feedback:**

Faculty will collect peer feedback on teaching through peer observations in accordance with the Faculty Handbook and College of Arts and Sciences guidelines. The purpose of peer observation feedback is to provide faculty with information and support to help improve their teaching with the understanding that excellent teaching is an ongoing process and an aspirational goal. Peer observation feedback should not be the only source of evaluation, but rather as one data point that evaluators can take into consideration in the context of a multifaceted evaluation of teaching.

## **Indicator 3 - Self-Evaluation of Teaching:**

Each faculty member is required to submit a self-evaluation of their teaching as part of the annual review process. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to help instructors make informed decisions about how to improve their teaching. It will also be information that can provide evaluators evidence to holistically assess teaching effectiveness for annual reviews, contract renewals, and promotion and tenure applications.

In their self-evaluation, instructors should provide an analysis and evidence of how they work to promote significant student learning in their courses and meet the learning objectives of their courses and the department. This self-evaluation requires instructors to engage in an extensive examination of their course learning objectives, a review of students' work as a reflection of their learning, an analysis of the standards and methods used in assessing that work, and a close look at the levels of learning required in the course. Instructors should also include and analyze appropriate forms of evidence including course and peer evaluations, syllabi, assignments, assessments, and any other evidence of student learning, in order to develop their self-evaluation. Self-evaluation of teaching should be understood as one of three indicators of teaching excellence and evaluators can take into consideration in the context of a multifaceted evaluation of teaching.

## **Procedures for Conducting Peer Evaluations**

### **1. Frequency of Peer Observation.**

- *Full-Time Tenured Faculty.* Full-time tenured faculty will be evaluated pursuant to this policy in at least two different courses every three academic years when possible.
- *Full-Time Tenure Track Faculty.* Full-time tenure track faculty will be evaluated pursuant to this policy in at least two different courses per academic year when possible.
- *Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Senior Lecturers.* Full-time non-tenure track senior lecturers will be evaluated pursuant to this policy in at least two different courses every three academic years when possible.
- *Full-Time Non-Tenure Track Lecturers.* Full-time non-tenure track lecturers will be evaluated pursuant to this policy in at least two different courses per academic year when possible.
- *Part-Time Faculty.* Part-time faculty will be evaluated pursuant to this policy for each course taught.

### **2. Observation and Evaluation Procedures**

*Peer Evaluator Selection.* Peer observations of faculty will be conducted by colleagues who hold a rank at or above that of the individual being evaluated. Faculty members may select their own peer evaluators within these parameters. Faculty also may select peers who serve on department committees that conduct faculty reviews including the Departmental Personnel Committee, Promotion and Tenure Committee, and the Post-Tenure Review Committee. However, the Chair of the Department cannot serve as a peer evaluator because this position is responsible for independent and separate reviews for faculty members during annual reviews, contract renewals, and promotion and tenure applications.

*Selection of Classes or Courses for Observation.*

**Full-Time Faculty:** Full-time faculty members shall select the classes or courses in which observations are to take place. Observations in selected classes or courses must be completed prior to any reappointment, contract renewal, promotion and tenure, or post-tenure review. These observations can occur during in-person and online course delivery modalities. However, peer observations may not be possible for some course delivery methods that are off campus such as study abroad, study away, and internships.

**Part-Time Faculty:** Part-time faculty shall be reviewed in every course taught.

*Evaluation Instrument.* The Department of Sociology has two peer observation instruments. Faculty should select either the in-person or online teaching peer observation instrument for each review (see attached instruments).

*Submission of Evaluation.* Within seven days, peer observers shall provide the observed faculty member and the Chair with written copies of their evaluation and recommendations. Peer observations should be constructive in that they should provide faculty with information and support to help improve their teaching. Faculty are permitted to submit a response to their peer review prior to the review being used for evaluation purposes in a personnel decision.

**Appalachian State University  
College of Arts & Sciences  
Teaching Excellence Statement and Policy**

Appalachian State University views teaching as a core value and primary responsibility of its faculty. The College of Arts and Sciences expects all instructors to strive toward teaching excellence by facilitating and evoking transformational educational experiences for all students. Teaching excellence comprises three critical themes: maintaining professional expertise, implementing sound instructional strategies, and promoting an inclusive student-centered learning environment. Each theme is described below.

Instructors will exhibit **professional expertise** by demonstrating mastery of content knowledge and thorough understanding of how concepts are relevant to broader disciplinary or interdisciplinary contexts. They will continue to advance their subject matter expertise by maintaining engagement in new developments in the discipline or by making original contributions

to the field in order to inform their classroom instruction. Their professionalism will be demonstrated through confident and appropriate presentation and communication skills in and out of the classroom.

Instructors will use **sound instructional strategies** to facilitate and enhance student learning. They will establish and communicate applicable student learning goals and objectives, and they will develop appropriate assessment tools to evaluate student learning and understanding. Instructors will provide a supportive and structured learning environment conducive to the understanding of complex ideas and concepts. They will use a variety of robust and effective instructional methods, materials, technologies, or activities applicable to student learning. They will strive to consistently enhance and improve their teaching strategies over time.

Instructors will promote an **inclusive student-centered learning environment** that encourages participation and engagement of all students. Understanding that students may have diverse lived experiences, skill levels and backgrounds, instructors will be transparent in their expectations for student success. They will commit to creating a learning environment that is accessible, sensitive, and relevant to a variety of student identities and demographics. Instructors will model methods that promote active processes of student self-reflection and evaluation to encourage continued academic growth.

Finally, to encourage the continuing evolution of teaching expertise, the three themes will be assessed using a comprehensive model determined by departments. This multifaceted approach will specifically incorporate feedback from students and from peers (in accordance with the procedures and intervals stipulated in the Faculty Handbook), as well as a self-evaluation that synthesizes and responds to all available constructive comments. Moreover, evaluations of teaching quality may include a review of classroom teaching methods (e.g., lectures, discussions), course materials (e.g., syllabus, assignments, activities), and assessments (e.g., exams, papers, presentations). Although specific parameters may vary across the College, departments shall have teaching and corresponding assessment policies in place that align with these themes.

*(Approved by CAS Council, 2020.05.05)*