



The University of Vermont

**College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences  
Evaluating Teaching Performance Guidelines  
March 2015**

At the core of the University's mission is the creation of knowledge, and this is most commonly manifested in the teaching of students by faculty. In order to continuously push for improvement in courses and teaching methodologies, ongoing, real-time feedback is necessary for the promotion of faculty reflection and assessment. The following is an articulation of how the College seeks to advance the formative and summative assessments of programs and instructors. It is intended to be a constructive process that celebrates success as much as it encourages improvement.

**Governing Principles of Good Metrics to Assess Teaching**

- The evaluation system should reflect the complexity of teaching and should include the assessment of relevant domains, such as:
  - The course design elements (e.g., course objectives align with program learning outcomes; alignment with accreditation requirements; effective activities and assignments),
  - The instructional delivery of the course (e.g., engages student participation and facilitates discussion effectively),
  - Grading and assessment of learning outcomes (e.g., appropriate rigor and expectations, monitors progress effectively),
  - Classroom management (e.g., creates learning environments that welcome, challenge, and support all students),
  - Mentoring and advising (e.g., keeps office hours; where appropriate, directs honors theses and individually designed projects; properly organizes co-curricular activities),
  - Professional development and the scholarship of teaching (e.g., incorporates new pedagogical advances and instructional methods)
- Multiple sources should be used in the evaluation of teaching. These sources must include:
  - Assessments by self, students, peers/external evaluators, and chair.
- An evaluation of teaching should include both formative feedback and summative evaluation. Formative feedback fosters individual improvement. The formative feedback should include a discussion of future performance goals and strategies for meeting these

goals. Summative evaluations measure the degree to which institutional standards are met and/or surpassed.

### **Proposed CEMS Model of Teaching Performance Evaluation**

Departments and programs will use a common template to organize and systematically evaluate teaching performance in their particular units. However, the evaluation is flexible enough to allow the disciplines in the College to their particular needs, goals, teaching methodologies, and desired learning outcomes. The proposed evaluation template is explained below.

**Domain indicators:** For each teaching domain, the evaluation system must name and describe the “indicators” that assess the domain, as well as the source and method of assessment. In addition, the model should describe the criteria used to determine whether the faculty member “consistently exceeds expectations”, “meets and in some cases exceeds expectations”, “satisfactorily meets all expectations”, “meets most expectations, but some improvements needed”, “needs improvement”. In the appendix are the details of the evaluation performance criteria for each of these categories.

**Sources of assessment and evaluation:** The evaluation of teaching performance must include input and feedback from students, assessments and evaluations from peers/external evaluators, a comprehensive self-assessment and teaching analysis by the instructor, and the overall evaluation by the chair.

- Students
  - Students in all courses taught through CEMS will be surveyed roughly a third of the way into the semester, to provide real-time feedback to instructors so that instructors may make mid-semester adjustments to address concerns, if warranted. In the event that serious concerns or issues are raised in a given class the program head/department chair and/or the CEMS Dean’s Office will discuss possible remedies with the instructor and may trigger an immediate peer/external review. At the end of the semester progress on dealing with the issue will be assessed.
  - At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to provide quantitative and qualitative feedback, using standardized forms and methods. The difference between the mid-semester and final course student evaluations will be one piece of evidence of the degree to which mid-semester adjustments were effective.
  - The CEMS Leadership team will develop, describe, and make public its systematic system for scoring, analyzing, and interpreting both the quantitative and qualitative feedback from students.
- The instrument and method to seek student feedback will be consistent across the College, but flexible enough to assess relevant disciplinary and course-specific feedback, as well as to assess and interpret the input within the appropriate

disciplinary context and relevant course characteristics.

○ **Peers/External Evaluators**

- At a minimum, peers/external evaluators will contribute to the assessment of the appropriateness of the course design and the instructional delivery, including the grading and assessment of learning outcomes.
- Departmental policies must specify the process and methods of the various types of peer/external evaluator evaluation.
- To increase inter-rater reliability and validity, the CEMS leadership team will develop a common rubric for all peer/external evaluator evaluations to follow.

○ **Guiding Principles for Evaluation Protocols and Frequency**

- The College and Departments will develop teaching mentoring and evaluation protocols that are not overly cumbersome, and to design the schedule of peer/external evaluation strategically and selectively, according to the following guiding principles.
  - Departments will be responsible for providing new faculty members with some form of role-modeling and/or mentoring by faculty known to be excellent teachers (e.g., through attending and observing their mentors' classes and course materials, seeking their mentors' advice on course development or pedagogy, co-teaching where appropriate, etc.) and new faculty will be required to participate in short courses related to teaching offered by CTL or other external sources (e.g., ExCEED), as available.
  - Peer/external evaluator observations will be driven by need. These will normally be more frequent and comprehensive for junior faculty (e.g. typically once each year prior to tenure) than for experienced, tenured faculty (who would only receive peer/external review prior to seeking promotion, in the case that deficiencies were identified by student evaluations or complaints, for courses that consistently fail to attract the expected number of students, or upon request by the faculty member). Mid-semester evaluations indicating teaching is less than satisfactory or insufficiently rigorous may trigger an immediate peer/external review.
  - The CEMS Leadership Team (with Faculty input) will redesign student evaluations to be more concise and easier to complete, in order to improve response rate.
  - The CEMS Leadership Team will design a concise mid-semester student evaluation form.

○ **Self**

- At a minimum, the faculty member is responsible for providing, in a timely manner, the information required by the departmental teaching evaluation model.
- In addition, as part of their annual report faculty must provide a self-reflective statement that addresses which of the departmental quality teaching indicators have been met or surpassed; e.g., new course development, updates to existing courses to keep them current, modifications to teaching in response to

deficiencies indicated by peer/external or student evaluations, new pedagogical approaches they have incorporated, what resources they have sought out to improve their teaching effectiveness (e.g., attending relevant conferences or short courses, utilizing web repositories, books, consultations with CTL), etc.

- Based on the above, the self-assessment must include a justifiable self-evaluation as to which of the 5 assessment categories the faculty member believes his/her teaching warrants.

○ **Chair**

- The Chair is responsible for organizing peer/external evaluations as necessary, per the departmental protocol. The Chair must consider all of the sources and types of assessed evidence, and provide a written summative evaluation of the degree to which institutional standards have been met and/or surpassed. The summative evaluation should be provided in writing as part of the faculty annual evaluation.
- The department must design a process to provide formative feedback in the case of junior faculty and/or in cases where evidence of deficiencies have been identified. This should include a face-to-face discussion with either their mentor(s) and/or the Chair (at the Chair's discretion) about future performance goals and strategies for meeting these goals. The substance and the outcomes of this discussion should be recorded in writing, provided to the faculty and their chair, and kept in the faculty member's departmental file.

## APPENDIX

### Evaluation Performance Criteria

1. To achieve the rating “*consistently exceeds expectations*” in teaching--denoted henceforth as “Excellent” – there should be substantial evidence of quality and rigor based on the following indicators. These are not listed in order of importance. Also, this is not an exhaustive list; *additional* indicators of excellence can be considered if appropriated. As much as possible, any one of the criteria below (including student evaluations) should be used to help assess the overall quality and educational effectiveness of the instructor's courses, keeping in mind that each of these criteria comprises just one component of the overall assessment. In evaluating teaching the chair will also consider mitigating factors beyond the control of the faculty member, such as the times and the physical support for lectures (e.g., location of a class, class size, performance of hardware, whether the course is a required service course for another major, teaching assistant support, etc.).

The faculty member who consistently exceeds expectations will exhibit many of the following indicators:

- Is a well-prepared, engaging and stimulating teacher.
- Effectively encourages independent and creative student thinking, discovery and learning.
- Works to improve courses (constructs course web pages, incorporates new technologies, incorporates current examples and applications in class, updates topical coverage in courses, etc).
- Keeps current with teaching resources (such as textbooks and websites) and with scholarly literature on teaching.
- Attends seminars, workshops, sessions at professional meetings meant to improve teaching.
- Maintains high standards for amount, level and quality of work expected from students.
- Whenever feasible, creates meaningful opportunities to build transferrable skills in students (e.g. written and oral communication, management, leadership skills).
- Receives student evaluations that, in light of both the quantitative "Overall Instructor" and "Course Difficulty" ratings as well as written student comments, indicate that students perceive the course(s) given by the instructor as being excellent.
- Receives excellent peer/external evaluations (based on class visitations or other forms of assessment).
- Generates feedback from students and other faculty members that is generally highly positive, with significant outstanding comments.
- Is successful in teaching a range of courses---by level or topic---as needed in the Department.
- Is accessible to students outside of class, including during posted office hours.
- Designs and effectively teaches new courses (if allowed the opportunity), or creates significant changes or innovations to existing courses.
- Designs and effectively implements new or innovative methods for course delivery (e.g. web-based courses or materials, hybrid or online courses, etc.).
- Proactively collects, assesses and submits accreditation-related data from the courses taught when relevant.

- Respects, supports and cultivates diversity and inclusion in the classroom setting and during other interactions with students.
- Takes on additional teaching responsibilities when the need or opportunity arises (e.g., supervises independent study, practical, or service learning courses, student research projects, honors theses, etc.), if allowed to.
- Supervises undergraduate and masters projects, master's theses, or doctoral dissertations (if a graduate faculty member).
- Communicates an interest in personal welfare and intellectual development of students.

2. To achieve the rating “*meets and in some cases exceeds expectations*” in teaching—denoted henceforth as “Highly Satisfactory” - there should be substantial evidence of quality based on the following indicators:

- Shows marked evidence of success in many of the above mentioned categories, but generally the quantity and/or quality is less than that of an "excellent" teacher.
- Receives student evaluations that are still very positive but not at same level as an "excellent" teacher.
- Generates feedback that is highly positive but to a lesser degree than for an "excellent" teacher.
- Collects, assesses and submits accreditation-related data from the courses taught in timely manner when relevant.

3. To achieve the rating “*satisfactorily meets all expectations*” in teaching—denoted henceforth as “Satisfactory” - there should be substantial evidence of quality based on the following indicators:

- Shows some evidence of success in some of the above-mentioned categories, but generally the quantity and/or quality is less than that of a "highly satisfactory or excellent" teacher.
- Receives positive as well as primarily satisfactory student evaluations.
- Generates feedback that is generally positive but to a lesser degree than for a "highly satisfactory" teacher.
- Makes themselves available to students on a basis commensurate with the faculty member's teaching and advising assignments, and maintains office hours reasonably convenient to students.
- Makes substantive and sincere adjustments to teaching in response to deficiencies identified by student and/or peer/external evaluations.
- Collects and submits accreditation-related data from the courses taught in a timely manner when relevant.

4. To achieve the rating “*meets most expectations, but some improvements needed*” in teaching, there should be substantial evidence of quality based on the following indicators:

- Shows only marginal evidence of success in the above-mentioned categories, and generally the quality is less than that of a "satisfactory" teacher.
- Receives mostly satisfactory, but a significant number of poor, student evaluations.
- Generates feedback that is generally satisfactory but with some student dissatisfaction or

complaints.

- Is minimally available to students on a basis commensurate with the faculty member's teaching and advising assignments, and office hours are sometimes insufficient or inconvenient for a significant number of students.
- Makes substantive and sincere adjustments to teaching in response to deficiencies identified by student and/or peer evaluations.
- Does not collect and/or submit accreditation-related data from the courses taught in a timely manner.

5. To achieve the rating “*needs improvement*” in teaching, there should be substantial evidence of deficiencies in quality based on the following indicators:

- Consistently receives mediocre or poor student teaching evaluations.
- Generates feedback from peers and students about teaching performance that is often negative.
- Either does not have appropriate office hours or does not reliably attend scheduled office hours.
- Does little to seek to maintain or improve present courses.
- Does little to keep abreast of important general studies, textbooks and pedagogical materials germane to the courses he/she teaches.
- Exhibits inconsistent attendance or frequent tardiness at classes (has substitutes more than a few times).
- Is unresponsive to students’ needs.
- Does not respond to normal student questions or requests in a timely and appropriate fashion.
- Does not adhere to deadlines related to courses and students.
- Is avoided by students as a teacher, advisor, or supervisor (e.g., for required research projects or theses).
- Does not cover required course material.
- Does not or neglects to collect and/or submit accreditation-related data from the courses taught in a timely manner.