University Council

February 5, 2025

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Arts and Sciences – Erin Dolan
                              Jennifer Rice (chair)
Business – Margaret Christ
                    Laura Little
Education – Janette Hill
Engineering – Brock Woodson
Family and Consumer Sciences – Suraj Sharma
Forestry and Natural Resources – Nick Fuhrman
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Public and International Affairs – Alexa Bankert
Provost- Jack Hu
Social Work- Rachel Fusco
            (*also representing Public Health and Environment and Design*)
Veterinary Medicine – Susan Sanchez
            (*also representing Law and Pharmacy*)
Undergraduate Student Representative – Rayna Carter
Graduate/Professional Student Representative – Marggie Vazquez

Dear Colleagues:

The attached proposal is to revise Policy 01.06.005, Improvement and Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness. This will be an agenda item at the February 10, 2025, Educational Affairs Committee meeting.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Rice, Chair
Educational Affairs Committee

cc: Provost S. Jack Hu
         Dr. Marisa Pagnattaro

Proposal to revise Policy No. 01.06.005, Improvement and Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness

November 26, 2024

Attached please find a proposed revision of AAPS 23. Both a clean copy and an edited version showing the revisions are attached. The revisions are designed to improve the policy by (1) improving the quality of feedback gathered from students about their course experiences, and (2) clarify confusions about peer observations of instruction.

UGA is adopting ACES (Assessment, Curriculum, and Experiential Systems), a central system that serves as an integrated umbrella connecting the comprehensive student record, course evaluation, curriculum mapping, and other student and course information. The adoption of ACES provides an opportunity to advance our outdated course experience survey items. The discussion of AAPS 23 prior to its ratification in February 2022 raised concerns about the items favoring instructor likeability over learning, and questions about the extent to which the items yielded useful information for improving teaching. To address these concerns, course experience surveys used by peer and aspirant institutions were examined. Universities that had changed surveys to focus on teaching elements and their utility for learning were finding that this approach yielded more useful information for improving and evaluating instruction.

To test the feasibility of this approach here at UGA, a survey was drafted that used this approach with adaptations to align with UGA's mission and priorities (e.g., active learning initiative, student success). The resulting draft was iteratively improved through focus groups with faculty representing multiple position types and ranks across **14 departments in six colleges/schools**. The refined survey was then pilot tested by **nine faculty in seven departments from three colleges** in spring 2024 (n = 429/628 students; response rate ~65%). All faculty in the focus groups and pilot preferred the new survey because it yielded more useful and relevant information, especially the qualitative feedback. Students also preferred the new approach because they perceived the list of teaching elements to be comprehensive, and they valued the opportunity to give specific qualitative feedback. Other results indicated that students were interpreting the items as intended but that the survey needed to be streamlined to reduce redundancy and length. **Importantly, no disciplinary differences were observed in how the items were interpreted.**

The survey was revised again to streamline and shorten, creating the attached version. The current version was tested this fall by **18 faculty in 10 departments from five colleges** (n=300/590; response rate ~51%). Results thus far continue to be positive and show that students complete the survey for one course in ~10 minutes. The instructor reports display quantitative data in histograms, consistent with AAPS 23, and the qualitative data is available as raw text as in course experience surveys currently in use across campus. Staff in the Office of Instruction have confirmed that the survey format can be structured as proposed in the ACES system.

Minor edits are also proposed to clarify expectations for peer observations of instruction. "Peer evaluation" has been changed to "peer observation" to clarify that observations are intended to support instructional improvement and sustained teaching effectiveness. Language has been added to clarify that units are required to have a peer observation process in place so that faculty can choose to use peer observation for improving teaching and documenting contributions to teaching for promotion and tenure, but units have discretion to decide whether peer observations are required.

Academic Affairs Policy Statement No. 23, Improvement and Documentation of Teaching Effectiveness **MARKED UP VERSION**

1. **Reference**
   a. Board of Regents Policy Manual, Board of Regents, University System of Georgia, Policy 8.3.5.1, Faculty
   b. University of Georgia Academic Affairs Policy 4.07-16, End-of-Term Course Evaluations, adopted by the University Council Curriculum Committee, February 10, 2010
   c. University of Georgia Academic Affairs Policy 1.06, Evaluation
   d. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, Principles of Accreditation 2018 Edition, Principle 6.3, Faculty Evaluation
   e. Adopted by the University Council February 16, 2022.

2. **Objectives**
   Evaluation of teaching in higher education emphasizes the use of three voices that provide distinct types of evidence: students, trained peers, and self. The systematic collection of evidence from these three voices helps improve teaching and sustain effective teaching over time and helps ensure ~~ensures~~ that teaching evaluation is systematic and equitable. This policy avoids prescribing a single, perfect or model approach while establishing guidelines on teaching evaluation processes that improve the balance and representativeness of information about teaching effectiveness and, thus, reduce the potential for bias that can occur when only one source of evidence is used. This policy provides guidance for units ~~departments~~ to establish their own approaches for teaching evaluation to improve teaching and sustain effective teaching over time and to ensure fair and equitable evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

3. **Policy**
   In order to support teaching improvement and sustain effectiveness of teaching over time and to ensure fair and equitable evaluation of teaching effectiveness, there are three sources of evidence ~~will be used~~: a) student voice in the form of student end-of-course experience surveys, b) peer voice in the form of trained peer observations and feedback on teaching and teaching materials, and c) instructor voice in the form of self-evaluations.

   A. **Student Voice: Student experience survey.** Students will complete a common, campus-wide, end-of- course experience survey, which is centralized, standardized, automated, and recorded, for all courses, including those taught by adjunct faculty and graduate assistants. For multiple-instructor courses, a separate survey will be provided for each instructor who is instructor of record for more than 10% of the course. The instructor(s) should not be present while the survey is being completed. Instructors will have access to student comments associated with their course after grades have been submitted and may download them for personal use. Access

beyond the instructor teaching the course will be determined by the units ~~College~~ and will be granted only to those having a supervisory relationship to the instructor and their designees (e.g., deans, department chairs, college and department evaluation administrators).

i. ~~**Required end-of-course experience survey questions:** The end-of-course experience survey will include the following 8 common course questions with a response scale of *Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree*, unless otherwise indicated. Units may add their own questions to the survey if desired.~~

   1. ~~The instructor clearly defined and explained the course objectives and expectations.~~
   2. ~~The instructor effectively engaged students in class.~~
   3. ~~I have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of this course.~~
   4. ~~The instructor was responsive to student inquiries in a timely manner.~~
   5. ~~What grade do you expect that you will earn in this course? *A, B, C, D, F*~~
   6. ~~What were the main strengths of the course? *(open-ended and optional)*~~
   7. ~~What suggestions do you have for improving the course? *(open-ended and optional)*~~
   8. ~~Do you have any additional comments? *(open-ended and optional)*~~

ii. ~~**Required end-of-course experience survey statement**. To make students aware of implicit biases in student experience surveys, the following statement will be included on all end-of-term course experience surveys:~~

   ~~"As you fill out this survey, please focus on the **quality of the instruction** and the **content of the course** (e.g., assignments, textbook, in-class material) and ***not*** unrelated matters (e.g., instructor characteristics such as age, race/ethnicity, or gender)."~~

i. **Required quantitative end of course experience survey questions:** For students to provide quantitative feedback about teaching, the end-of-course experience survey will include the following preamble and 10 common questions with a 3-point response scale of: beneficial to your learning, neutral for your learning, or needs improvement to help you learn, unless otherwise indicated.

"This survey is specific to [instructor name]'s teaching. Please focus your feedback on the **specific portion of the learning experience that they have control over** and avoid personal comments about the instructor.

Here is a list of **10 teaching elements**. For each teaching element, please indicate whether it has been **beneficial** to your learning, **neutral** for your learning or not applicable in this course, or **needs improvement** to help you learn.

1. Support from [instructor name] (e.g., office hours, sharing resources, etc.)
2. Amount of practice with key knowledge and skill
3. Assignments in this course
4. Degree to which [instructor name] creates a welcoming environment
5. Real-world relevance of the course
6. Feedback [instructor name] provides on my work
7. Opportunities to participate during class
8. [instructor name]'s transparency about why I'm learning particular content
9. Level of challenge in this course
10. Organization of the course (e.g., materials, eLC, class session, etc.)"

ii. **Required end of course experience qualitative survey questions:** For students to provide qualitative feedback about teaching, the survey will ask students to select 1-2 teaching elements from the list above that have been **MOST helpful** to their learning and 1-2 teaching elements that **MOST need improvement** to help them learn. They will then be asked to provide a detailed written comment for each teaching element they select (i.e., questions 1 and 2). The survey will also include open-ended to allow for feedback related to student success and their own effort to learn in the course (i.e., questions 3 and 4):

1. **"MOST helpful to your learning:** What specifically about the [element selected] helped you learn? Please provide a detailed written comment about what worked well and why."
2. **MOST in need of some improvement to help you learn:** What specific change in the [element selected] would help you learn? Please provide a detailed written comment about what specific changes you suggest and why."
3. How has this course contributed to your success as a student?
4. How did you support your own learning in this course?"

iii. **Exceptions**. The following courses are excluded from this requirement in order to protect student confidentiality and ensure fair and equitable evaluation of teaching:
  - Courses involving individual instruction, such as independent study, internships, practicums, and thesis and dissertation supervision.
  - Class sections for which the number of possible respondents to the instrument is so small as to make it possible to identify individual students, thus compromising their confidentiality and possibly biasing their responses, or render results of limited statistical usefulness, such as any course where the number enrolled is less than or equal to five.
  - Professional schools (i.e., Law, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine) are excluded from this policy if they have student end-of-course survey questions and processes in place that are consistent with their accreditation procedures.

B. **Peer Voice: Trained feedback on teaching and teaching materials.** Units will establish a peer ~~evaluation~~ observation process for full-time faculty to support teaching improvement over time and document teaching effectiveness fairly and equitably. Peer observers can be selected from within or outside the unit and are expected to complete training on how to conduct and give feedback on peer ~~evaluation~~ observations of instruction fairly and equitably. If faculty have teaching responsibilities in units other than where they are appointed or are jointly appointed, either unit may establish and carry out the process for peer ~~evaluation~~ observation. Peer ~~evaluation~~ observation processes should include:

- Multiple sources of evidence, including syllabi, instructional and assessment materials, and/or observations of instruction to maximize the trustworthiness of the ~~evaluation~~ observation and reduce potential for bias;
- Any observations of instruction should be preceded by a brief pre-observation meeting with the instructor to discuss goals for the observation and followed by a brief post-observation meeting with the instructor to discuss findings, answer questions, and discuss possible approaches for teaching development.
- A brief written summary of the findings to be shared confidentially with the faculty member.
- A method, to be determined by the Unit, for using formative feedback from peers in summative teaching evaluations, such as promotion dossiers.

Units may establish their own timelines for peer ~~evaluation~~ observation for promotion (e.g., Assistant to Associate, Associate to Full, Lecturer to Senior Lecturer) and during continuing review periods, while ensuring that peer ~~evaluation~~ observation is conducted in a way that allows for teaching improvement and

sustained effectiveness of teaching over time and enables identification and documentation of changes in teaching effectiveness (i.e., at least two peer ~~evaluation~~ observations). Exceptions to the two peer ~~evaluation~~ observation requirement can be made with justification for faculty who are being considered for promotion before 2025, who are being considered for early promotion, and/or who were hired with credit toward promotion and thus will not have sufficient time for two peer ~~evaluations~~ observations. Units are required to have a peer observation process and faculty should have a process available to them. Whether faculty are required to engage in the process is at the discretion of the unit as faculty can use other sources of evidence to inform teaching improvement and sustained teaching effectiveness over time and to document teaching effectiveness.

C. **Instructor Voice: Self-evaluations.** All faculty members are strongly encouraged to reflect in writing annually on their teaching efforts, with the goal of improving teaching effectiveness over time. Self-evaluations provide a venue for the instructor to explain their thinking about their teaching as well as how they are making teaching decisions over time based on evidence gathered from student end-of-experience surveys, peer observations ~~evaluations~~, or other sources of knowledge about teaching effectiveness such as those described in the University Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure Guidelines on Contributions to Teaching. Self-evaluations can be included in annual progress reports and in summative teaching evaluations, such as promotion dossiers, as a complement to and context for evidence from students and peers ~~student and peers evaluations~~. Units may establish their own processes and formats for documenting and using written self-evaluations.

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