

# Evaluating Teaching Portfolios: Moving from a Competitive to a Collaborative Culture

**David Way**

Cornell University, Ithaca, USA  
dgw2@cornell.edu

***Abstract:** The author believes that the evaluation of teaching portfolios must fit into a larger comprehensive system for evaluating teaching reliably and validly, a system that explicitly links formative evaluation efforts with summative policy. If the efforts a faculty member expends on improving teaching do not count during tenure and promotion decisions then there is little incentive for faculty to invest in the improvement of their teaching. An ideal system can reinforce a culture of cooperation among peers and between junior and senior faculty, rather than an atmosphere of competition and isolation. The author describes early experiments in collaborative peer review of teaching in several colleges at his university. Appendices identify five major dimensions of teaching that can be useful to organize portfolio contents along with a list of criteria for use in evaluating each area.*

## Issues and Assumptions

The practice of evaluating teaching in higher education is struggling through a developmental phase from a period of lack of scholarly rigor and consensus on adequate process to a period of tension between its functions in serving the practitioner, the academic unit and the parent institution (Johnson & Ryan, '00). At the same time, faculty are increasingly pressed for time availability (Reis, '99). Asking faculty to be either more rigorous or thorough in their evaluation of teaching or to put more time into it is unlikely to receive a satisfactory response.

With the advent of the teaching portfolio (or dossier, as it has been referred to in Canada; Shore and others, '86) over the past several decades, the issue of thoroughness in evaluation of teaching practice may have begun to be addressed (Edgerton, Hutchings and Quinlan, 1991). At the same time portfolios are increasing in use, current evaluation of teaching practice continues to place a strong emphasis on student evaluations of teaching (Centra, '93, pg. 50; Seldin, '99; Arreola, '00). A major advantage of relying heavily on student evaluations is that they are used widely and thus can serve as a normative means to compare faculty members on teaching skill.

The tendency to rely so heavily on student evaluation of teaching has led to several problems. The first has to do with the creation of a culture that has been referred to as "Pedagogical Solitude" (Shulman, '93). Giving heavy weight to student evaluations of teaching and misusing them (Theall & Franklin, '00) can result in a competitive culture. At my institution, a premier research university, I have seen a heavy weighting on student evaluation of teaching for tenure and promotion decisions (Way, '92). In addition, I have witnessed associate deans using student evaluation scores in a normative manner—similar to

grading on the curve—where an overall evaluation mean is calculated for all college faculty, and each individual's course scores are then compared to that mean. This practice has resulted in abuse by both faculty and students alike. Since students know their evaluations count highly in tenure and promotion decisions, they have made it known they will use them against any faculty they don't like (which could be anyone who pushes them outside of their comfort zones.) At the same time, some faculty administer their evaluations under less than recommended conditions, resorting to offering food, alcohol and other influences, like announcing they are up for review and need good evaluations to be reappointed.

Such abuses are anecdotal, but constitute cultural cross-talk between faculty and students. These anecdotes have led to faculty discussions and seminars addressing accusations of “dumbing down the curriculum” in response to threats of students giving poor evaluations of teaching. Regardless of how prevalent such a scenario is, if faculty know their teaching is evaluated with a high weighting on their students' evaluations, which are pooled and resolved down to a single number by which they are compared across the board, it is unlikely they will productively and openly discuss teaching development in an atmosphere of collaboration and mutual support, any more than students who are graded on the curve will be motivated to study together.

Other problems growing out of over-emphasis on student evaluations of teaching include oversimplifying teaching as a scholarly activity (Boyer, '90), de-emphasis of mentoring and peer review, and inadequate documentation of the time investment individuals put into experimenting with innovations and the improvement of practice. How can students effectively evaluate the out of class time invested by their instructors in class planning, office hour consultation and grading assignments? Their experience this investment on an individual basis which is not the whole picture.

Teaching portfolios provide the instructor with a vehicle to document this time commitment, as well as other aspects of teaching students are less qualified to judge. However, using teaching portfolios effectively in the evaluation of teaching, both to inform and improve practice and for making personnel decisions, has its own set of problems. Very little is known about how faculty actually review a portfolio and what kind of rationale arguments they may make in reaching their final assessments of the quality of teaching documented therein (Quinlan, in press). Just as in the practice of peer observation of teaching, portfolio review will require training of reviewers. Fortunately, on-line materials are becoming available for faculty to learn how to evaluate portfolios ([University of St. Andrews Online Guides to Creating Teaching and Course Portfolios](#), [London Guildhall University External Links on Teaching Portfolios](#), [University of Wisconsin-Madison Peer Review of Teaching: Evaluating Teaching Portfolios](#), [University of Adelaide Advisory Centre for University Education](#)) as well as on-line sample portfolios ([Randy Bass, Georgetown University](#)), ([Matthew Cumiskey, Cornell University](#), [Bruce Wagner, Iowa State University](#)).

One universal evaluative criterion mentioned repeatedly in the portfolio literature is the usefulness and necessity of reflective and self-evaluative thought (Edgerton, Hutchings & Quinlan, '91; Cannon, Knapper & Wilcox, '00; Centra, '93; Quinlan, in press). It is the belief of this author that a major criterion for evaluating teaching through a portfolio should be the degree to which the instructor can demonstrate through documentation and reflective narrative his or her efforts to improve their teaching. If such a criterion is adopted it will have a major impact both on how portfolios are constructed and maintained, as well as how they are reviewed. Faculty colleagues will play a more central role, both in helping the instructor document changes in practice over time, and in supporting experimentation to address problem areas.

If portfolios are constructed and evaluated in this way, a more collaborative culture may emerge. The more common practice of comparing instructors to each other ignores the uniqueness of the individual and fosters an isolated competitive culture. When a university or other higher education institution grants tenure to a faculty member, it is making a potential long-term and financially substantial investment in that individual. One major criterion in making that decision is the issue of long-term worth to the institution. The individual may have a goal to achieve long-term worth to their academic discipline, but from the institution's point of view, the long-term worth to the institution takes precedent. Such long-term worth is in part made up of the quality of teaching the instructor provides and how consistently and perseveringly he or she strives to continually develop and adapt instructional methods over time.

Such continual development is a necessary quality of good teaching since over the course of a faculty member's teaching career much will change, the most significant of which will be the students and the culture they represent. Consider the culture undergraduate students lived in before the advent of the personal computer compared to that of today. Technology innovations partly account for the current concern in higher education for practices like active learning (Bonwell & Eison, '91), student-centered pedagogy and the use of on-line communications (Knowlton, '00). Exemplary teachers will accommodate such changes in their instructional design by continually experimenting. New innovations and experiments will, of necessity, mean fluctuating student evaluation scores, since it can be assumed that new approaches will take time to perfect. Yet, if the criteria used to evaluate teaching are more normatively referenced to existing and traditional practices, faculty will not have incentive to explore risky new approaches. There is evidence that in the absence of explicit developmental criteria and training in portfolio review, peers may tend to compare "the reviewee's practices to their own experiences, their colleagues, and to prototypical or traditional practices." (Quinlan, in press.) For innovators to effectively document instructional development, measurable changes over time are necessary. Discussion of experimental approaches, their modification based on feedback and how best to document effective improvement is where peer collaboration can be of help, particularly when the peers are knowledgeable in the course content. Documenting such collaboration and measurable changes over time should be a major focus within a teaching portfolio.

## **Cultural Impact**

It has been suggested (Murray, 1995) that "Any evaluation process should influence the behavior of those being evaluated." as a social consequence that influences the culture and institution. To document and evaluate portfolios based on a developmental basis will require departments and colleges to agree upon categories and key dimensions reflecting the scholarship of teaching. This in turn will require faculty and administrators to assume new roles. The individual instructor must play a very active role in monitoring his or her teaching while colleagues must play a collaborative role. All decisions involved in determining what is representative of improvement, what is selected for inclusion and how it is structured should highlight the improvement of practice. These decisions will require thoughtful discourse about teaching between the teacher, his or her peers, chairperson and dean. The activity of building a teaching portfolio during the first six years of teaching practice encourages peer consultation and review, resulting in a profile of how the candidate's teaching has developed over that period of time. This can in itself lead to a kind of professional inquiry, since after enough candidates have undergone the process it is possible to gain a clearer set of standards for what constitutes effective teaching in a particular context.

Many faculty members believe that their efforts to improve teaching not only go unrewarded,

but in fact, count against them in tenure and promotion decisions. Such a culture works against efforts to be creative and innovative, which often involve taking certain risks associated with any type of experimentation. In addition, if putting time into improving one's own teaching is not rewarded, helping peers will certainly not be rewarded either. Mentoring of peers is currently emphasized in terms of conducting research, yet faculty members can benefit greatly by discussing teaching issues, sharing approaches, visiting each other's classes, and reviewing each other's teaching materials. Such activities are necessary for the professional development of instruction and ultimately contribute to assisting students' learning.

Although the peer review of teaching may not have the most impressive history (Ory, '00), when carried out in a developmental model it has many characteristics that can create a more collaborative culture, one that has been characterized by the metaphor "sitting beside" (Braskamp & Ory, '94).

"To sit beside brings to mind such verbs as *to engage, to involve, to interact, to share, to trust*. It conjures up team learning, working together, discussing, reflecting, helping, building, and collaborating." (Ory, '00, pg. 15.)

Such a collaborative culture may possess the following qualities:

- A supportive and constructive, practical, collegial activity.
- Motivates and affirms all those involved.
- Develops awareness that 'problems' in teaching are shared by others and that solutions can be found with others.
- Provides new ideas and skills.
- Builds awareness of the value of, and skills in, critical reflection and reflective practice.
- Stimulates discussion about teaching and learning within departments.
- Develops a sense of collegiality and an environment which values the sharing of experiences and ideas through teaching discourse.
- Promotes self-assessment.
- Benefits the observer by providing insights and ideas.
- Opens up the private teaching space to others.
- Supports continual improvement.
- Reassures highly self-critical teachers.
- Changes are made based on evidence.
- Can be a significant turning point. ([Bell, '02](#))

## **A Suggested Evaluation Schema**

Given these potential collaborative benefits, how might a portfolio evaluation process be carried out? Here is a brief outline of one possibility. A more detailed process is outlined in Appendix A.

### *Formative Evaluation Process*

- *Candidate* develops portfolio materials in concert with mentor during first year following departmental or institutional guidelines.
- *Mentor* meets with candidate prior to periodic classroom observation to review 1) course design skills by selecting several representative key courses to review in depth, focusing on course organization, quality of written and mediated materials, how students' learning is

assessed, intellectual breadth/depth; 2) individual class planning skills—discuss instructional objectives, teaching strategies, ways of interacting with students to verify objectives are being met of specific class to be observed.

- *Classroom observations* will produce a series of communications between the mentor and candidate including positive activities observed, opportunities for improvement, and goals for development over a specified time period.
- *Formative student surveys* of teaching and learning should be used as an aide in evaluating classroom performance improvement and course design skills
- *Time frame* for formative process: one year, before first annual performance review

#### *Summative Evaluation Process*

The *portfolio* from above process is submitted to a summative review committee at a time when the candidate is up for formal review (tenure or promotion). The procedures/criteria of this process should have been communicated to the candidate at the point of hire.

### **Teaching Evaluation Criteria**

It is necessary to establish criteria by which a review team of peers can fairly evaluate a teaching portfolio. The dictionary uses the terms "standard, rule or test" in defining criterion. Tenure decisions require a general rule for defining excellence that can accommodate the variety of disciplinary-based instructional traditions, while honoring the individual's freedom to express and develop personal style in teaching. An example of such a general rule might be, "To what degree does the data supplied support the reasoned opinion of those most competent to judge that the candidate has-and will continue to-demonstrate the capacity to improve instructional practice?" In general, criteria for evaluating teaching will be more useful in the tenure and promotion process if they:

- can discriminate between teachers in terms of specific competencies
- can reliably and consistently measure a specific competency both for the same individual over time and between individuals
- maintain a neutral orientation relative to individual style and viewpoint
- yield information about instructional situations where the teacher functions best (McNeil & Popham, 1973)

The criteria listed in Appendix B might be considered to evaluate teaching portfolio contents. Evaluation criteria should be agreed upon by department faculty and provided to new faculty to assist them in developing their portfolios and to help mentors as they work with new colleagues to document their instructional development. The same criteria can and should be used both for formative and summative evaluation of teaching so that the two parts of the system are linked.

### **Weighting of different areas of teaching**

How much weight is given to each dimension of teaching is an important consideration in the evaluation system. Weighting will be divided across core responsibilities and data sources. This avoids the current complaints associated with student evaluations since their weight should be less than 50% of the total evaluation. Depending on what stage a faculty member is in his or her career, different dimensions will play a more important role. For example, within

the first two years of an instructor's employment, more time may be invested in course materials development and planning. It is reasonable to expect that if the instructor has little previous experience, students may not rate them as highly within those first two years as different approaches are explored. Thus course materials development and planning may be weighted more heavily and classroom experience and relationship with students may be weighted somewhat lighter during this period.

Weighting of criteria is where a balance between college-level consistency and individual department flexibility is necessary. On the one hand there should be a minimum weight established for any dimension to reflect its relative overall value. How much weight is given to any one dimension within flexible limits can be negotiated between the instructor and supervisor on a yearly basis. It would be expected, however, that over time, variations between area weights should balance out. So, for example, if classroom experience and instructor-student relationships were weighted at 15 out of a possible 20 percent the first year, and materials development and course planning received a weighting of 25 instead of 20 percent, they would equilibrate the following year. A similar shift in weighting might be negotiated during a year when an instructor takes on teaching one or more new courses.

### **Experiments with the Mentoring Process**

A teaching portfolio is truly a living document in that it is a snapshot in time of a teacher's thinking and practice of teaching. As time and experience motivate change in thinking and practice, the portfolio will necessarily be revised to reflect those changes. As has been discussed, it is beneficial to enlist the assistance of an experienced peer mentor in developing the first draft of the portfolio. If the improvement and development of teaching practice is a primary criterion by which the portfolio will be evaluated, the mentor can serve in a supportive and collaborative role. To best fulfill that role, the mentor should be well versed in the department's policy on portfolio content and structure, knowledgeable about the content in the field, and be an excellent teacher. The use of mentors is an important component in assuring consistency in teaching documentation within the evaluation system and department as well as maintaining a culture of collaboration around teaching. We have been experimenting in several colleges at our own university training mentors and portfolio evaluators. We have encouraged junior faculty to participate in the same classroom observation process with their mentors—observing them and discussing their observations with them. This kind of reciprocity reinforces a collaborative spirit and the fact that the development of teaching practice is not limited to junior faculty. Over time, junior faculty will themselves be called upon to mentor their own new colleagues. For a mid- to late-career teacher, the role of mentoring junior colleagues serves an important departmental need.

Experiments in peer reviewing of teaching and teaching materials involving three colleges were motivated by an acknowledgement that prior practice was not time-efficient, created a negative climate, was not useful for anything other than granting tenure, and was not fair or consistent. Documentation of teaching in one case consisted on faculty assembling massive notebooks of teaching materials with little or no guidelines, or requirements for including reflective commentary on development. One faculty member who worked with the author in a confidential consultation process during his second year did not include any reference to that developmental investment in his teaching documentation, yet he submitted a notebook about four inches thick with all his teaching materials. I asked his department head how the faculty reviewed such materials to make their decision and he replied, "We don't."

Such experiences are what have lead to our current experiments. Our training consists of meetings to review portfolio materials including course syllabi and individual class teaching

plans, prior to classroom observations. Post observation discussions are focused on balancing positive aspects of teaching with areas where improvement is possible. The emphasis has been on reciprocity of feedback, so in addition to junior faculty receiving feedback on their teaching and materials from their senior peers, they review those same senior peers' own teaching and materials. This approach did result in a somewhat biased level of improvement comments, with more likely going from seniors to juniors than vice versa, but since an independent instructional developer was carrying out the training, the senior faculty did get developmental feedback as part of the process with their junior colleagues present.

During a post-training review of the process the group acknowledged that it was user-friendly, helpful, positive and even fun. However, they all felt they could not have carried it out as well without the guidance from the instructional developer, which again brings up the issue of the necessity of training mentioned earlier in this paper.

Another college which does a better job providing new faculty with guidelines on how to document teaching for tenure and promotion review was motivated to revise its teaching evaluation policy out of criticism coming out of an accreditation review. The issue of documentation of teaching through portfolios has been postponed while they first revise their student evaluation of teaching form and procedures.

Getting schools and colleges to address these issues and change practice takes a lot of time when carried out from the ground-up, rather than from the top down. A faculty-based approach is in keeping with our decentralized culture and is aimed at assuring, from the start, that in every instance, we have faculty buy in. Once consensus has been reached on a tentative review process, we will start carrying out trial evaluations in a more controlled and formal way.

## References

- Arreola, R. (2000). *Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Boston, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Bell, M. (1/24/02) "Peer Observation of Teaching in Australia"  
<http://www.ltsn.ac.uk/genericcentre/projects/peer-ob/>) click on the "International Experience/Australia" link.
- Bonwell, C. & Eison, J. (1991). *Active Learning - Creating Excitement in the Classroom*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 1.
- Boyer, E. (1990) *Scholarship Reconsidered*. Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Princeton, N.J..
- Braskamp, L.A. & Ory, J.C. (1994). *Assessing Faculty Work*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Cannon, R., Knapper, C., & Wilcox, S. (2000). *Preparing and Evaluating Teaching Portfolios*. <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/ltdu/staff/evaluation/portfolios.html>
- Centra, J.A. (1993). *Reflective Faculty Evaluation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Edgerton, R., Hutchings, P., and Quinlan, K. (1991). *The Teaching Portfolio—Capturing the Scholarship in Teaching*. American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C.

- Knowlton, D. (2000). A Theoretical Framework for the On-Line Classroom: A Defense and Delineation of a Student-Centered Pedagogy in K.E.Ryan (Ed.) *Evaluating Teaching in Higher Education: A Vision for the Future*, 5-14. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Johnson, T.D., & Ryan, K.E. (2000). A Comprehensive Approach to the Evaluation of College Teaching. In K.E.Ryan (Ed.) *Evaluating Teaching in Higher Education: A Vision for the Future*, 109-123. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- McNeil, J. D. and Popham, W. J. (1973). The Assessment of Teacher Competence. In R. M. W. Travers (Ed.). *Second Handbook of Research on Teaching*, 218-244. Skokie, Ill.: Rand McNally.
- Murray, John P. (1995). *Successful Faculty Development and Evaluation: The Complete Teaching Portfolio*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No. 8. ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education, Washington, DC ED 405760.
- Ory, J. (2000). "Teaching Evaluation: Past, Present and Future" in K. E. Ryan (Ed.). *Evaluating Teaching in Higher Education: A Vision for the Future*, 13-18. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Reis, R. (1999). Establishing Your Absence. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 18, 1999.
- Scriven, Michael (1991). *Evaluation Thesaurus*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Seldin, P. & Associates (1999). *Changing Practices in Evaluating Teaching*. Boston, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Shore, B. M. & others (1986). *The Teaching Dossier: A Guide to Its Preparation and Use* (Revised Ed.). Montreal, Canada: Canadian Association of University Teachers.
- Shulman, L. (1993). Teaching as Community Property. *Change*, 5 (6), p. 6. American Association of Higher Education.
- Theall, M. & Franklin, J. (2000). Creating Responsive Student Ratings Systems to Improve Evaluation Practice. In K. E. Ryan (Ed.) *Evaluating Teaching in Higher Education: A Vision for the Future*, 95-107. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Quinlan, K.M. (in press). Inside the peer review process: How academics review a colleague's teaching portfolio. *Teaching and Teacher Education*.
- Way, D. (1992). What Can Tenure Files Reveal to us About Evaluation of Teaching Practices - Implications for Instructional Developers. *To Improve the Academy*, 11, pp. 71-85. The Professional & Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.

## **Appendix A: What should be evaluated and who should do it?**

The task of evaluating an individual's teaching should be shared among individuals chosen for what they are best qualified to evaluate. Possible participants include students, peers, supervisors and chairs, alumni, and the teacher being evaluated who can provide self-assessment data. Many faculty members complain that the evaluation of teaching is a very subjective process. Given the manner in which it is often carried out, this is true. In fact, subjectivity can never be totally eliminated from such a process. The practical goal must be to minimize subjectivity rather than eliminate it. This can be accomplished by increasing the number of those doing the evaluation and by increasing the data that is reviewed as part of the process. In addition, training evaluators and standardizing procedures can improve fairness and consistency in evaluation. The inclusion of the five areas of teaching listed below provides a more comprehensive and objective data set than the common practice of looking solely at student evaluation scores. Involving peers and supervisors in the process includes individuals in the evaluation process who are more qualified than students to review course content, teaching materials and professional development of self and others.

### *1. The Classroom Experience and student-instructor relationship:*

The quality of the classroom experience is a major influence on student learning outcomes. The kind of experiences created by the teacher in the classroom and the quality of relationship between teacher and students can generate the motivation to learn course material. This dimension includes not only assessing the appropriateness and quality of in-class activities, but also outside-of-class activities like office hours, advising, individual meetings with students, and all written communication between teacher and students, including e-mails, discussion boards, and hard copy written communication. Current and past students can best evaluate this area of teaching. Surveying alumni is a possible activity that has certain logistical problems, but there are cases where colleges have gained dramatically from surveying their alumni.

### *2. Course Content:*

In addition to currency, accurateness and unbiased coverage of content is the need to consider appropriateness within the larger curriculum. Does the content taught fulfill prerequisites for other required courses? How is the content framed within the discipline? Are contrasting points of view presented? Are inherent values made explicit? Peers most familiar with the content being taught, both on and off campus, can best evaluate this area of teaching.

### *3. Course Materials and their development:*

This dimension involves much investment of time and intellectual rigor by faculty. As such it is indispensable component of evaluation. To omit evaluating faculty members' activities in this area means not providing them with assistance in continually improving course materials. In addition, the quality of course materials and the care and attention to their continual development and refinement have a major impact on other areas of teaching, including the quality of the classroom experience and the effectiveness of how student learning is assessed. This area includes such materials as syllabi, individual teaching strategies and plans, library reserve materials and all electronic information such as web sites. This dimension is concerned more with *how* material is presented and organized than *what* is presented, which is considered under the course content dimension. Peers with sufficient content knowledge may be best qualified to evaluate this area.

### *4. Evaluating Student learning and providing effective feedback:*

This dimension includes the two aspects of evaluating student learning—formative and summative evaluation (Scriven, 1991). Summative evaluation practices are those that yield a grade of relative standing by an individual student to his or her peers or a normative standard. Formative evaluation practices are intended to assist the student improve performance and maximize their learning but have no grade associated with them, such as comments on written assignments, e-mail messages, explanations on exams explaining where the student may have gone wrong and discussions during office hours. It is crucial to review both summative and formative aspects of evaluating students' learning. An evaluation system that is too summatively oriented reinforces the extrinsic motivation students are so frequently driven by: to get a good grade, often at the expense of deep, lasting learning. Summative materials like exams, assignments, homework, quizzes, projects, writing assignments, group work, along with means of providing formative feedback through e-mail and other means are included in this area. Even in large classes it is possible to increase the instances of formative feedback to students. Examples include opportunities for re-submitting homework, early drafts with written comments, e-mail and chat discussions of assignments and interactive review sessions. This dimension has a very strong link with course materials, specifically to course goals and individual learning objectives and thus is best evaluated by peers.

#### *5. Professional Development of Self and others:*

Possible activities to be included here are attendance at pedagogically-oriented events—both on and off campus, publication of articles on teaching methods, research on instructional effectiveness, use of instructional development resources, participation in peers' instructional development, mentoring and serving on teaching evaluation teams. This area is best evaluated by a combination of self, peers and supervisor.

#### Sources of Work Samples

##### *The Classroom Experience and student-instructor relationship*

Providing an historical analysis of student evaluation of teaching scores and their feedback helps the review team assess improvement in this area. It is necessary to be flexible in what can be provided in this area. Faculty members can be encouraged to develop closer, more collaborative relationships with students by using a variety of informal methods for eliciting feedback on teaching. Larger classes will use numerically scored questionnaires with a few selected open-ended questions most efficiently, whereas smaller classes of under 20 students may use open-ended questions like, "What have you liked the most so far about this course? What have you liked the least? What suggestions do you have for improvement?"

Another data source for documenting this area of teaching is a selection of communications between teacher and students, including hard and electronic copies, which reflect the quality of the relationship and influence on learning. All activities between teacher and students can be documented and summarized here, including office hour and advisory meetings.

##### *Course Content*

- readings
- guest lecturers
- field trips
- field experiences
- laboratory experiments
- public service experiences
- web site links
- texts used

A sense of how course content has changed over time provides the reviewers with a measure of how content currency is maintained.

*Course Materials and their development*

- course syllabi,
- individual teaching plans,
- teaching strategies like group learning projects
- assignments
- handouts
- presentation materials
- overhead transparencies

Showing successive versions of materials as they have been developed over time provides a measure of materials development.

*Evaluating Student learning and providing effective feedback*

- exams
- assignments
- homework
- quizzes
- projects
- writing assignments
- group work, along with means of providing formative feedback through e-mail and other means
- examples of student work (assuming permission to include it anonymously is granted)

*Professional Development of Self and others*

- attendance at pedagogically-oriented events—both on and off campus
- publication of articles on teaching methods
- research on instructional effectiveness
- use of instructional development resources
- development of a teaching portfolio
- participation in peer instructional development
- mentoring and service on teaching evaluation teams

## **Appendix B: Criteria for Evaluating Teaching Portfolio Contents**

### *The Classroom Experience and student-instructor relationship*

In addition to end-of-term questionnaires from students, the mentor will have assisted the instructor in collecting early in the term student feedback on their experiences with the instructor both in and outside of class. In order to provide the instructor with useful data with which to improve teaching practice and relationships with students a certain level of specificity is necessary in the questions students are asked to provide numerical evaluations. The following questions illustrate this:

- The instructor leaves enough time after asking questions for me to think of a response.
- The instructor makes me feel free to ask questions and express my opinions.
- The instructor provides clear, relevant and understandable responses to my questions.
- The instructor provides periodic summaries of what has been covered or discussed.
- The instructor is able to involve everyone in the class, not just the most outspoken students.
- The instructor periodically checks to make sure everyone understands what has been covered.
- The instructor listens carefully to student questions and comments.
- The instructor is readily available for help outside of class time.

To provide a measure of improvement, more than one data set will be required. These must be collected several times each term, representing the early part of the term and the latter part. A reasonable expectation of the number of data sets might be between two and three during a term. However, there are other criteria students are the best qualified to evaluate which can only be assessed at the conclusion of their experience with the course and instructor. They include:

- an estimate of progress on course goals
- information on additional learning beyond course goals
- an overall assessment of the value of the course
- an overall rating of the instructor's effectiveness

### *Course Content*

- Do the concepts and/or techniques presented represent the most current material available?
- Are relevant current industry events included and discussed in the course?
- Does the instructor explicitly address the tradeoff between depth and breadth in light of course goals?
- To what extent does the course design "push" students beyond their comfort zones? Are the demands rigorous?
- Does the instructor provide a rationale for choosing the course content taught?

### *Course Materials and their development*

- Are course goals explicitly stated in terms of learning outcomes?
- Do assignments reflect course goals and are they likely to help achieve the stated course goals?
- Are instructional approaches suitable to reach the course objectives (lecture, discussion, films, fieldwork, guest speakers)?
- Are there a variety of approaches and types of assignments provided to reach a diverse range of student learning styles?
- Are courses designed to provide activities that allow students to continually demonstrate their

learning (such as ungraded activities, interactive periods in lecture, short writing assignments, and group work)?

*Evaluating Student learning and providing effective feedback*

- How much developmental feedback do students receive during the course?
- How well do evaluation methods reflect stated course goals?
- How clearly are performance standards communicated? Are standards high enough? Too high?
- How effective is the feedback in helping students learn? Does student work show substantive improvement through the semester?
- Is there a match between intended learning outcomes and graded assignments?
- Do exams or other graded assignments adequately represent the coverage of course content?
- Is the amount of homework and assignments appropriate for the course level and credit hours for the course?
- Is the grade distribution appropriate to the level of the course and the type of student enrolled?
- Is there evidence that feedback on assignments and exams help students to improve?
- Are the standards used for grading exams and assignments communicated to the students?

*Professional Development of Self and others*

- To what extent did the instructor actively seek out feedback from colleagues on classroom pedagogy, assignment development and/or grading?
- To what extent did the instructor seek out information on pedagogy from outside sources such as conferences, consultation services, texts and articles for incorporation into teaching?
- To what extent did the instructor coach or support colleagues on classroom pedagogy, assignment development and/or grading?
- To what extent did the instructor generate and disseminate information on pedagogy through conferences, texts and articles?
- To what extent did the instructor occasionally sit in on colleagues' classes with follow-up constructive discussion

Self: Continuous and Effort

- To what extent did the instructor seek out feedback from students, peers, and others, identify problem areas, experiment with ways of improving his/her teaching such that problems were eliminated/minimized?
- To what extent did the instructor engage in activities designed to improve teaching (e.g., presentations on teaching at professional meetings, using instructional development resources on and off campus)?

Working with others:

- To what extent did the instructor regularly meet with colleagues to discuss teaching issues, problems, offer ideas, share techniques and/or review teaching materials?

Teaching Portfolio

- Does the portfolio cover the major teaching skill areas: course design and planning for instruction; classroom performance; evaluating student learning and providing constructive feedback, long-term instructional development plan?
- Does the portfolio provide annotations for all teaching documents?
- Does the portfolio include a comprehensive statement of teaching and learning philosophy?

- Does the portfolio provide evidence of continual experimentation and explanations for +/- student reactions to teaching innovations?
- Does the portfolio provide evidence of scholarly writing about teaching/learning in the instructor's field?