



Managing Teaching Evaluation During COVID

MRFA PD Get Cracking Session Event Notes
November 13, 2020

Panelists:

ADC Faculty Development Consultants:

- Jennifer Boman
- Michelle Yeo

MRFA Representatives:

- Lee Easton - MRFA President
- Renae Watchman - FEC Chair

Key Resources for Further Reading

- ADC [Preparing for Online Learning](#):
- Document on [Best Practice in Synchronous and Asynchronous Delivery](#):
- Extension of [Covid MoU](#)

Key Takeaways

- Evaluation processes during the pandemic require members to be generous, supportive and kind. If we do not engage in this process in this spirit it will be deleterious over time.
- Evaluators should approach peer evaluations from a point of curiosity and compassion, and should consider how remote delivery is being provided in the best possible ways for our students and for ourselves.
- Members being evaluated should take every opportunity to clearly indicate the impact of the pandemic on their teaching.

Jennifer Boman – How to Facilitate Pre-Observation Conference during Covid

General Remarks about Peer Evaluations:

- Peer evaluations are an opportunity for feedback in your teaching
- The same principles for Peer Evaluation in the Face to Face environment still apply online but the context is more important to consider in the online environment.

Elements of the Peer Evaluation Process:

1. Pre-Observation Conference
2. Observation
3. Post-Observation Conference

Pre-Observation Conference

How this part of the process is managed is particularly important online.

It is valuable to have a virtual Face to Face meeting to delve into context in which the member being evaluated is teaching. This is an important opportunity to provide support to colleagues and get a deep and rich understanding of the full context in which and how they are approaching online/remote teaching.

- At this point in the process, the evaluator should provide support and reassurance to the colleague being evaluated. Members may be highly sensitive about being evaluated in this context; so, it is very important to take some time to develop rapport.
- The evaluator should ask questions around how people are finding teaching online, what are the strengths and challenges. Ask them what the format of the course is, ask them what tools they are using.

Recommendations for the individual being evaluated:

- Consider what you can do to showcase what you are doing in your course
- Think about what else the online course entails and review all facets of your online delivery
- Clearly note how the pandemic/remote delivery has affected your teaching

Recommendations for the Evaluator:

- Ask about all the ways the faculty member is communicating with students and what ways students are communicating with each other (emails, discussion boards, detailed feedback mechanisms, curation of resources).
- Try to get a sense of the full picture of all the ways course content is being delivered.
- Set the parameters for the observation – have practical conversations about whether the observer will have camera on or off and how that person would be introduced to the class. Also discuss how much of the course they will be observing or focusing on (e.g., resources and material within a particular module, discussion boards or other means of communication over a specific time period, etc.).

Michelle Yeo - How to Facilitate Observation and the Post-Observation Conference

The Peer Evaluation process is an opportunity to provide support and guidance and to remind faculty of the resources that are available to help them through this.

Key points about the Observation:

- Faculty do not need to set up a special class for the evaluator to observe: the process should be as authentic a representation of online delivery as possible. If there is a lot of asynchronous delivery in a course, the faculty member being evaluated does not need to do a synchronous lecture just because there is an observation taking place.



- There is such a broad spectrum of the way people are conducting their courses that we need to challenge observers to evaluate things along many different modalities

Post Observation Considerations:

The post observation conference and discussion is very critical

Before the formal post observation conference takes place, the evaluator and member being evaluated should touch base first to see how the faculty member felt and how it went. Chat about the class informally to hear some of the basics of what the evaluator saw and how the member being evaluated felt it went. This will help the member being evaluated feel less concerned when it comes to the formal review of the draft report in the post-observation conference.

Important Considerations:

- Some people are enjoying the online teaching and others are finding it very difficult.
- Online delivery presents many challenges and faculty do not necessarily know how to handle all of the issues coming up.

Lee Easton – MoU and Collective Agreement Considerations

It is crucial that we acknowledge the dynamics that are at work here. Many faculty feel very vulnerable that they are being evaluated during a pandemic, and this vulnerability extends to full time and contract faculty. Contract faculty members' anxiety about how SPoTs will affect their reappointment may be exacerbated by the pandemic. We need to acknowledge this anxiety and sense of worry.

It is important to maintain emphasis on being supportive in the peer evaluation process and focus on what is going well.

Covid MoU

The Association has tried to deal with anxiety and concern around Peer Evaluations and the administration of SPoTs in negotiating MoUs to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and remote delivery. Text below provided from the MoU (the full MoU is available [online](#))

F. Student Evaluation of Teaching (Article 28.4)

i. Instead of one (1) evaluation in Fall 2020 and one (1) evaluation in Winter 2021, Tenured Employees may choose to do two (2) evaluations in Winter 2021 or, if applicable, one in Winter 2021 and one in Spring 2021.

ii. The Chair, Dean, Tenure Committee, Promotion Committee and all other applicable committees shall take into consideration the impact of COVID-19 when interpreting Student Perceptions of Teaching (SPoTs) conducted during the term of this MOU. When the Committee convenes, the Committee Chair shall remind committee members of this obligation in exercising their deliberations; weighing SPoTs as a lesser criteria where the impacts of the pandemic are seen to be a factor.

G. Peer Evaluation of Teaching (Article 28.5)

Employees conducting peer evaluations of teaching per Article 28.5 shall review the best practices for evaluation of online instruction document prepared by the Academic Development Centre (ADC).

Article 28 is the baseline from which we work and the Covid MoU provides some options and parameters that mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on faculty. During Covid, Fall 2020, there will be peer evaluations for contract and for tenure track faculty and there will be the administration of SPoTs. The University had agreed to suspend these in Winter 2020 and Spring/Summer 2020; however, in the extension we were not able to maintain this suspension. When we negotiated the extension of the MoU the University just wanted to refer back to using article 28 without any amendments.

Recommendations for Faculty Regarding Peer Evaluation Process

- Faculty being evaluated should speak specifically about the amount of work being done and the difficulties presented by technology and how that has effected what they are doing.
- Faculty being evaluated should provide details about the challenges faced and how they were addressed. In responses to evaluations, make a separate section on the impact of the pandemic – make this clearly visible – how specifically the pandemic has affected your teaching.

Recommendations for Faculty Regarding SPoTS

- It is important that people recognize that faculty should be given the right to talk about the impact of the pandemic on their teaching.
- Form 300 available on mymru allows faculty to speak to the impact of any kind of context that they think is important to draw people's attention to. On this form, faculty should outline the impact of the pandemic on teaching, the impact of delivering remotely with unfamiliar technology, work in converting the course to remote delivery, and challenges presented by student participation.
- Regarding any process that evaluates teaching, committees are required to appropriately take into account the effects of the pandemic in evaluating teaching. Chairs are to write up their reminder to this effect and to get members to sign it. The Association is trying to ensure that the processes we have developed are going to be followed so that there is a clear line of accountability



Renee Watchmen – MRFA Faculty Evaluation Committee Updates and Considerations

Presentation available [online](#)

Review from Higher Education Websites¹

Jodi Greene asks “How might we rethink and remake our practices of ‘evaluating teaching effectiveness’ during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in the years ahead?” Her advice is twofold:

- If we’re going to assess anything about this year’s teaching, let’s limit it to a cautious and compassionate evaluation of what — if anything — we have learned about *specific* technological tools and flexible teaching practices. What worked in this crisis? What didn’t?
- Don’t imagine that we can meaningfully assess the capacities of people rapidly deploying those tools and practices, with minimal support, in conditions unlikely to be repeated (one would hope) in quite this way ever again.
 - She proposes we shift from rankings and metrics to narrative and reflection

Three suggestions for instructors:

- Keep detailed records.
- Check in with your students
- Don’t be afraid to course-correct frequently.

Three suggestions for evaluators:

- Be compassionate, but mostly, be amazed.
- Put student complaints about a course into context.
- Be more interested in learning than in grading.

Greene highlights the following to frame your narrative reflection:

- The attention, reflection, and care you brought to both your teaching and your students during this time.
- The help you received and the help you gave.
- The things you learned that will change your pedagogy.

Teaching Evaluation at this time with an EDI Lens:

Naffi and a global team of co-authors from centres of teaching and learning looked at equity issues during COVID-19 and how students needed accommodation and support for their academic success. Of

primary importance was how the pandemic accelerated issues of systemic racism and what role centres have to support students who experience racism, reduce systemic racism in teaching and learning contexts, and how to spread awareness of systemic racism in online contexts. Given this spotlight on systemic racism, the authors came up with eight priorities “to ensure an equitable and accessible online learning experience for students:”

1. Create accessible materials.
2. Choose adequate digital technologies
3. Record lectures, and caption videos and audio content
4. Adopt inclusive culturally responsive teaching
5. Adopt a flexible approach to student participation
6. Ensure financial support and equipment
7. Understand student needs
8. Address systemic racism

Considerations around SPoTs

NOTE: the deadline for task list completion (to modify and customize your SPoTs) is tonight at midnight.

Refer to the question bank to customize your SPoT questions (pdf pg. 5)

172 The tutor explained the goal of the tutorial clearly.

Distance/Online

Note these items are specified for online learning environments; instructors should review other sections of the Bank for items related to communication, organization, respect for students, etc.

173 Online course technical support was available throughout the course.

174 The course instructor's online communications to students (*discussion posts, video capture, email, announcements, etc.*) were clear.

175 The course instructor's use of the online environment facilitated my understanding of the course material.

176 The course instructor encouraged online consultation with students through email, chat or other communication tools.

177 The course instructor encouraged online interactions among students within the course.

178 The course instructor responds in a timely manner to comments and questions sent by students.

179 Online collaborations with my peers improved my understanding of the course material.

180 Online content resources, library references, data sources, and web site links provided by the instructor

Select Resources for further reading on this Content:

- ❖ Benton, Steve. “Comparing Course Evaluation Quantitative Data During COVID-19.” *Campus Intelligence. ReImagining Data in Higher Ed.* Campus Labs, 2020. www.campusintelligence.com/2020/08/27/comparing-course-evaluations-quantitative-data-during-covid/
- ❖ Greene, Jody. “How (Not) to Evaluate During a Pandemic” *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* April 6, 2020. www.chronicle.com/article/how-not-to-evaluate-teaching-during-a-pandemic?cid=gen_sign_in
- ❖ Lederman, Doug. “Evaluating Teaching During the Pandemic.” *Inside Higher Ed.* April 8, 2020. www.insidehighered.com/digital-learning/article/2020/04/08/many-colleges-are-abandoning-or-downgrading-student-evaluations
- ❖ Lima, Karine Ramires, et. al. “Student Assessment of Online Tools to Foster Engagement During the COVID-19 Quarantine.” *Education Research. Adv. Physiology Education* 44:679-683, Aug. 2020; doi: 10.1152/advan.00131.2020. journals.physiology.org/doi/pdf/10.1152/advan.00131.2020



- ❖ Naffi, Nadia, et. al. "Online Learning During COVID-19: 8 Ways Universities Can Improve Equity and Access." *The Conversation. Academic Rigour, Journalistic Flair*. 2020. theconversation.com/online-learning-during-covid-19-8-ways-universities-can-improve-equity-and-access-145286

Question and Answer:

Q: It is valuable to use SPoTs to gather information from students. What other types of questions should be asked?

A: Custom question on student access to broadband internet – we know a lot of students are having issues with access. As you think of the impact of the pandemic on your work – your students may be accessing it under very difficult circumstances – so a specific question about this could be added.

- Also, many students have dependent care and they may be working during the pandemic – we can also take account how the pandemic is affecting our students and this info may have more relevance in the longer term.
- We still need customized bank of questions for this moment of online delivery

Q: Is there a place where we could come up with Covid19 evaluation forms – ones that contain on them the reminders of all the points that Lee has identified and all of the things that we need to be mindful of?

A: The Academic Standards Committee will look at this.

Q: Why do we think students are not showing their video in class? There is no way to force anyone to show their video, but this has significant impacts on the classroom experience online. We need to consider creative ways around how to encourage students to show their video feed.

Q: when tenure track faculty are being evaluated whose role is it to ensure that the context at this time is taken into account?

A: The Association has been emphasizing this in tenure training sessions. We continue to remind Chairs of this obligation and are advising Chairs of tenure committees. There should be a written statement to this effect and have all members of the tenure committee sign off on it to ensure that all the agreements are being followed.

ⁱ (Greene, Jody. "How (Not) to Evaluate During a Pandemic" *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. April 6, 2020)