

## Peer Evaluation of Online Courses

### Abstract

Peer evaluation of courses can play an integral role in faculty development. As higher education continues to move toward more online offerings of programs, peer evaluation of online courses will become an important component of teaching evaluation for faculty. This round table will focus on discussing a model of peer evaluation of online courses that is currently being beta tested. The roundtable discussion will include data from faculty whose courses were evaluated as well as feedback from the course evaluators.

### Proposal

Teaching, scholarship, and service are three areas in which faculty must demonstrate a high degree of effectiveness in order to achieve tenure and promotion within an institution. While scholarship and service tend to be areas that are relatively straightforward in terms of accomplishment, teaching can be a more difficult area to quantify. Many institutions rely on student evaluations to provide the data that indicate whether or not faculty are effective teachers. However, students do not have the expertise to evaluate content alignment, teaching strategies, or evaluation methods (Colaric and Kester, 2003). One alternative to the heavy reliance on student evaluations is the use of peer evaluation by faculty. Peer evaluations can provide additional vital data to describe teaching effectiveness. In addition, peer evaluations can provide innovative teaching strategies for faculty to share and a method to begin dialogues about best online practices (Derntl, 2006).

The literature on peer evaluation is replete with various models that can provide informative data on faculty teaching in traditional face-to-face classrooms. However, faculty in many institutions are now teaching completely online courses or teaching traditional courses with an emphasis on web-based materials and activities. The movement toward more online teaching in higher education requires a new look at this traditional practice (Lorenzetti, 2004).

Peer review of traditional classrooms usually offers a “snapshot” of the course, the instructors teaching strategies, learning activities, evaluation methods, and the response of the students. Peer evaluation of an online course however, does not offer the same time-limit exposure. Rather, peer evaluation of online courses offers the opportunity to review all components of the course including content coverage, teaching activities, communication, assignments, and evaluation strategies. Additionally, this can be viewed for the entire semester as opposed to the traditional classroom visit for traditional peer evaluation. Peer evaluations can be used to provide important feedback to faculty and to guide junior faculty to professional development opportunities. Obviously, all of these issues present considerations that must be addressed when designing a model for online teaching evaluation.

After reviewing several models that are currently in use at other institutions, components of various models were combined into a prototype. The focus of the model was to assist faculty in the development of quality online instruction. The model was reviewed by several faculty who are considered to be experienced in both evaluation design and online teaching. The online teaching evaluation model is currently being used to evaluate faculty at three levels of experience: beginners, intermediate online course instructors, and instructors who have several years of experience teaching online courses.

This round table will focus on discussing a model of peer evaluation of online courses that is currently being beta tested. The model will be presented and components will be analyzed to determine effectiveness. The roundtable discussion will include data from faculty whose courses were evaluated as well as feedback from the course evaluators.

### References

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