

Reviewing Teaching Materials and Artifacts

Course materials and artifacts can include syllabi, learning outcomes, assessments (e.g., assignments, exams), grading procedures, content (e.g., handouts, texts, recorded videos, lecture notes), policies and procedures, and more. You may also want your reviewer to review samples of student assignments, as well as the feedback you gave students in response to their work. Reviewers can look for alignment between the course learning outcomes and the selected assessments, activities, and content, as well as confirm that the course materials are academically rigorous, yet appropriate for the students' level of study. For an online class, peer review of teaching materials can include a scan of the layout and organization of your asynchronous online course site.

When selecting reviewers for your course materials, you will want to select a peer who makes sense for your teaching goals and objectives for the observation of the materials. Peers from within the same discipline will tend to focus on course content, while peers from different disciplines tend to focus on strategies and practices (source). It may be important, too, that peer reviewers be able to comment on how a course is positioned within its program(s) and department to meet disciplinary standards and support Faculty/program outcomes and broader teaching and learning initiatives (Smith, 2014). In such cases, peer reviewers may offer feedback on how the course aligns with the intended program outcomes and highlight opportunities to adjust course content and/or teaching and learning activities to improve student learning throughout their program. In addition to a review of the teaching resources for rigour and appropriateness, course materials can serve as ways for reviewers to understand more about a course (e.g., its learning outcomes, assessments, activities) and about the instructor (e.g., teaching strategies employed, choice of content) in advance of a teaching observation (Carter, 2008).

In a sample "Course Material Checklist," in addition to two long-answer questions that seek qualitative information on the strengths and areas of improvement for submitted course materials, areas of review include:

- Learning outcomes
- Course topics
- Content and supplementary resources
- Assignments and exams
- Student work that aligns with course outcomes (Brent & Felder, 2004)

The University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, College of Letters & Sciences, [outlines questions](#) a reviewer may ask themselves when evaluating a peer's course materials. For teaching materials, questions focus on the clarity, appropriateness, and level of aspects of course design, such as the learning outcomes. When assessing the chosen assignments, projects, and exams, a reviewer may look at the alignment of these elements with course outcomes and content, as well as the number and respective weighting of each assignment. Finally, a reviewer, when looking at student work samples, may ask, "Do these samples show evidence that students achieved the

course learning outcomes?” or “Did the instructor give formative feedback on this work that would further student understanding and learning?”

See the [Guides, Rubrics & Templates](#) page for relevant materials.

References:

Carter, V. K. (2008). Five steps to becoming a better peer reviewer. *College Teaching*, 56(2), 85-88.

Smith, S. L., (2014). Peer collaboration: Improving teaching through comprehensive peer review. *To Improve the Academy: A Journal of Educational Development*, 33(1).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/tia.17063888.0033.106>