

## Faculty of Arts and Science Holistic Evaluation of Teaching Policy – Pilot

Note: at the May 2024 meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, this policy was approved for piloting during the 2024-25 academic year. The policy will be reviewed in the late winter. In the meantime, please direct any feedback to Lindsay DuBois as Associate Dean, Academic. After piloting, any revisions suggested in the wake of the pilot, and adoption by majority vote in a FASS Faculty meeting, the policy will be submitted to Dalhousie Senate for ratification.

### Procedures

#### 1. Definitions

Chairs = Most academic units in FASS are led by Chairs. When we refer to Chairs in this document, we mean the individual who is in a chair-like supervisory role to colleagues in their unit. This might be a Director, in the case of FSPA, for example.

FASS = Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Formative review = Activities whose principal aim is improvement of teaching effectiveness. The emphasis is on process.

Holistic Evaluation of Teaching (HET) = the documentation, review, and evaluation of teaching through multiple sources of evidence. At Dalhousie, this includes three types of evidence: from students, peers and the self. See [CLT Holistic Evaluation of Teaching](#)

SLEQ = Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (the course evaluations administered by the Center for Learning and Teaching)

Summative review = Activities designed to assess the quality of teaching effectiveness at a given point in time, for example for tenure.

#### 2. Goals

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences sees teaching as core to its mission in the University and in society. It values high quality teaching as well as thoughtful reflection on teaching practice. FASS has long understood that student teaching evaluations, such as the former SRIs (Student Ratings of Instructors) and the current SLEQs (Student Learning Experience Questionnaire) are biased and flawed mechanisms for evaluating the quality of teaching, both for formative (developmental) and evaluative purposes. The holistic evaluation of teaching, taking into account evidence from students, peers and the self, is a much better strategy for reflecting upon, evaluating and improving teaching.

There are moments in a faculty member's career when teaching must be evaluated – for tenure and promotion, for example. The current policy clarifies that the holistic evaluation of teaching is integrated into these existing processes.

FASS also endorses the value of developmental models of evaluation as separate from formal evaluation processes. A new section will be added to the annual report in order to offer faculty members a venue

for reporting the work they are doing in this area (see appendix). FASS also recognizes that becoming a good teacher is an ongoing process and that individuals will benefit from the feedback provided by holistic assessment of and reflection on teaching.

The holistic evaluation of teaching, at its best, can,

- Improve student learning by cultivating teaching excellence;
- Acknowledge that effectiveness in teaching cannot be assessed by a single source of evidence but instead requires a multifaceted approach;
- Support a culture of enthusiasm for teaching development through ongoing reflection on pedagogy, professional development, and collegial sharing of practice;
- Collect feedback to support ongoing development;
- Create and sustain a supportive community of practice, incorporating ongoing observation, peer assessment, and other techniques to inspire and model teaching excellence;
- Provide evidence of teaching effectiveness for the purpose of considering appointments, re-appointments, tenure, promotion, teaching awards, and other assessments that consider teaching effectiveness

### 3. Overview of Faculty Procedures for the Holistic Evaluation of Teaching

Faculty members should reflect on their teaching, employing varied forms of evidence on teaching effectiveness to develop and improve in response. We recognize that the culture of teaching is everchanging, and therefore that good teachers will be trying new things that might not work, reflecting and evaluating the balance between old and new methodologies in teaching. We encourage innovation, change and managed risk-taking in teaching, encouraging iterative processes where the response to feedback is often more important for evaluation of teaching effectiveness than the feedback itself. In the context of formal evaluation of teaching, candidates should include three types of evidence: evidence from self, evidence from peers, and evidence from students.

#### 3.1 Frequency and Timing of Teaching Evaluations

- SLEQs are administered by the Center for Learning and Teaching for each course taught (with occasional exceptions, for example, very small class size).
- Faculty are also invited to include other evidence of teaching effectiveness in their annual reports (see below for more detailed description of what these may be) which also include summary SLEQ data.
- The holistic evaluation of teaching (as described in Presentation of Evidence, below) is required for purposes of renewal, tenure and promotion. They should also be employed in dossiers submitted for teaching awards. Teaching dossiers are submitted by candidates on schedules determined by the terms of their appointment. Candidates craft their dossiers to highlight their own perspectives on teaching. However, the material included will be generated over time. Department chairs or their designates will ensure that activities such as peer review are carried out as part of their responsibility for mentoring colleagues.

#### 3.2 Guidelines for Peer Review of Teaching

##### 3.2a Frequency and Timing of Peer Review

The holistic evaluation of teaching (as described in Presentation of Evidence, below) is required for purposes of renewal, tenure and promotion. They should also be employed in dossiers

submitted for teaching awards. Faculty members are encouraged to get informal feedback on their teaching early and often to build a comprehensive teaching dossier and to have evidence of progression.

### 3.2b Options for Formative Peer Review of Teaching

Faculty are invited to include peer review as evidence of teaching effectiveness in their annual reports (see below for more detailed description of what these may be).

### 3.2c Approach to the Summative Peer Evaluation of Teaching

Formal peer review is an expected element of the Holistic Evaluation of Teaching in the cases of Tenure and Promotion. Such review must:

- Be conducted by a peer reviewer selected by the faculty member, free of conflicts of interest (as defined by the University Policy on Conflict of Interest), and qualified. DFA members within Dalhousie are assumed to be qualified peer reviewers; a brief description of qualifications is required if using evidence from other peer reviewers. Faculty are encouraged to select peer reviewers with teaching expertise and/or lived experiences that will support teaching development.
- Use an agreed-upon rubric or checklist. Departments are responsible for identifying, modifying or creating rubrics suitable for their discipline(s). Note that The Center for Learning and Teaching curates resources related to the Holistic Evaluation of Teaching, see, for example, [CLT Guide, Rubrics and Templates](#). Faculty members should avail themselves of the tools most relevant and helpful to them.
- Include, at minimum, one recent in-class observation and relevant course materials such as sample syllabi, exercises, and assignments.

## 3.3 Teaching Evaluation Procedures Summative Assessment of Teaching Report

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences endorses a holistic evaluation of teaching effectiveness that enables the candidate to showcase the elements of their teaching practice that best embody their commitment to enriching the student learning experience. Candidates for tenure and promotion are encouraged to compile a teaching dossier that conveys the full range of their teaching activities, accomplishments, and contributions. This dossier should integrate multiple sources of evidence that document teaching practice and development across multiple points in time, including evidence from all three categories outlined below. (See also, the FASS Rules and Procedures Manual, Tenure Procedures section.)

**i. Evidence from self:** For the purposes of tenure and promotion, candidates are required to include the following forms of evidence from self:

- record of teaching responsibilities, including a list of courses taught with numbers of students, details on particular challenges or considerations associated with specific courses, and a list of honours and graduate students supervised, indicating form of responsibility
- teaching philosophy statement designed to articulate a coherent, thoughtful and critical reflection on the candidate's own teaching values and approaches, their importance to student learning and assessment, and evidence of how these are enacted in practice
- teaching artifacts showing how the candidate brought their teaching philosophy to life, including recent versions of course outlines and other items such as course development efforts, innovative projects and assignments, etc.

In addition to these required forms of evidence from self, candidates may choose to include, but are not limited to:

- contributions to programmatic and curriculum development, including curriculum mapping, program and curriculum review, course design, development of new programs, etc.
- reflections on teaching practice, including explanations of course innovations, an articulation of how teaching practice has evolved over time, self-perceived strengths and limitations, response to challenges encountered, adaptation of teaching practice and course design to meet the needs of diverse students, etc.
- educational service and leadership, including teaching-related committee work, to units on campus related to teaching, informal or formal mentorship of peers and students, etc.
- professional development around teaching, including certifications received, conferences or workshops attended, evidence of informal or formal knowledge-sharing or mentoring designed to enhance teaching practice, etc.
- engagement in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

**ii. Evidence from students:** For the purposes of tenure and promotion, candidates are required by Dalhousie Senate ([Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy](#)) to provide data from the institutional Student Learning Experience Questionnaire (SLEQ), in the form of summary sheets of all course evaluations with departmental means and all signed qualitative comments for all classes. However, we recognize their limitations. Current scholarship suggests that various biases compromise the value of SLEQs as indicators of teaching effectiveness. Such biases include but are not limited to gender, race/ethnicity, and language, as well as the perceived difficulty, size, and required/elective status of the course. Low response rates further complicate their interpretation. **SLEQs should be interpreted as a measure of students' satisfaction with their experience in a course, not as a measure of a faculty member's teaching effectiveness.**

In addition to these required forms of evidence from students, candidates may choose to include, but are not limited to:

- reflections addressing any major outliers or irregularities in SLEQs and/or any additional context required for interpreting SLEQ data
- attainment of learning outcomes, including examples of assessed student work attesting to the pedagogical success of the course, etc.
- evidence of effective mentorship, including student testimonials, accounts of student achievements that were influenced significantly by the candidate's mentorship, etc.
- solicited formal feedback from students, including midterm course evaluation, results from CLT's Diagnostic Evaluation of Teaching, teaching awards from students (either nominated or received), etc.
- unsolicited and/or informal feedback from students, including letters or emails received from students, or other formative feedback gathered from students as part of the teaching process.

Evidence from students should be either aggregated, anonymized, or used with student permission.

**iii. Evidence from colleagues/peers:** Applicants for promotion and tenure must include reviews and evaluations of their teaching by colleagues or peers. These materials must include:

- peer observations of teaching, enabling a colleague to assess the candidate's teaching practice and engage the candidate in a systematic process of reflection, observation, dialogue and adaptation. (See section 5.2.)

They may also include:

- peer review of teaching materials, comprising colleagues' evidence-based judgements about the candidate's teaching materials including course outlines, student assessments, pedagogical contributions, etc.
- informal feedback or testimonials from colleagues or other formative feedback gathered from peers as part of teaching, including reflections on willingness/abilities to teach difficult courses
- invitations to present or teach at events or workshops based on the candidate's contributions to teaching and student learning
- teaching awards or certificates adjudicated by peers.

### 3.4 Procedures for addressing Issues of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility and Bias

FASS recognizes that evaluations from students, peers, and self will vary due to factors other than relative teaching effectiveness. The impacts of bias are most acutely experienced by members of equity-deserving groups, but may be experienced by anyone (e.g., bias due to the reviewer subscribing to different pedagogical approaches). Any assessment of teaching effectiveness must consider bias and power imbalances in the evaluation process. The Faculty will work to mitigate these influences by:

- Recognizing peer evaluation in annual reports.
- Acknowledging that various forms of evidence may need to be weighted differently depending on the potential for bias in that evidence (for example, there is ample evidence of bias in student evaluations of teaching).
- Having members curate their own teaching dossiers (see the different types of evidence suggested above).
- As in any interaction with other members of the Faculty, concerns about peer reviewers can be raised following appropriate channels.
- Chairs review annual reports where peer review activities will be recorded. They should be attentive to the risk that some individuals may be called on excessively to conduct reviews, although the diversity of disciplines and approaches in FASS mitigate this risk.
- Please note that the Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy does have a Deletion of Discriminatory or Harassing Comments procedure (F.3(5)) for SLEQs. See: [https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university\\_secretariat/policy-repository/Student%20Feedback%20on%20Learning%20Experiences%20Policy%20rev%202021.pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university_secretariat/policy-repository/Student%20Feedback%20on%20Learning%20Experiences%20Policy%20rev%202021.pdf)

### 5.5 Procedures for Addressing Bias and Inequities

In the event that a faculty member has experienced or potentially will experience bias in teaching evaluation, they have a number of possible places they can direct their concerns, depending on the situation. These include: informal or formal discussions with their Chair, the Dean, Human

Rights and Equity Services, and the Dalhousie Faculty Association. The Faculty's Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Committee may also be a source of information and support.

The Student Feedback on Learning Experiences Policy has a Deletion of Discriminatory or Harassing Comments procedure (F.3(5)) for SLEQs. See:

[https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university\\_secretariat/policy-repository/Student%20Feedback%20on%20Learning%20Experiences%20Policy%20rev%202021.pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university_secretariat/policy-repository/Student%20Feedback%20on%20Learning%20Experiences%20Policy%20rev%202021.pdf)

#### 4. Presentation of Evidence

Individuals should construct their teaching dossier as best suits their department and their profile. FASS recognizes the authority of the collective agreement and departments to set the criteria for promotion and tenure. (Note that Faculty guidelines can be found in the "[FASS Rules and Procedures](#)" document available on the FASS website). Departments may choose to have candidates use existing teaching dossier templates. FASS also acknowledges that that these documents can be onerous to compile and suggests that faculty members' dossiers, employing the holistic evaluation of teaching, be tailored to the candidate's needs.

#### 5. Communication of Holistic Evaluation of Teaching Procedures

These procedures have been reviewed and approved by the FASS Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility Committee, the FASS Professional Development Committee (which oversees tenure and promotion), the FASS Academic Development Committee (which oversees curriculum and teaching) FASS Council of Chairs (and advisory body, consisting of all chairs and coordinators), and the Faculty Council which includes all current faculty members. They will be included in the FASS Rules and Procedures Document, available on the Faculty website. Chairs will share this document with department members, ensuring that new appointments are directed to it as part of their supervisory responsibilities.

#### Appendices: Holistic Evaluation of Teaching Toolkit

##### Appendix A: Rubrics

The Centre for Learning and Teaching offers support for units as they develop, implement, and review their holistic evaluation of teaching and peer review procedures. It also curates support materials such as guides, rubrics and templates. See: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/clt/holistic-evaluation-of-teaching/guides-rubrics-templates.html>

##### Appendix B: Additional questions on the FASS Annual Report

Faculty members already report summary information on their SLEQs in their annual reports in Appendix A. New open-ended questions will be added to the annual report.

Part VII, which currently refers to the SLEQs exclusively, will now include the following:

1. Complete summary information on SLEQs, appendix A.
2. If you would like, provide additional information contextualizing these results here.

3. List any other activities you have undertaken to improve your teaching. This may include peer review, self-reflection, experimentation with new teaching strategies, etc. (optional)
4. List any activities you have undertaken to contribute to the holistic evaluation of other people's teaching. This may include peer review, advice, syllabus review, etc. (optional).