



Annual Teaching Evaluation Proposal (DRAFT: DECEMBER 2018)

1. Context

FIU is committed to enhance the teaching evaluation processes, including annual evaluation, third-year review, and tenure and promotion evaluation. This proposal aims to (i) encourage and guide faculty collaboration, learning, and improvement towards learner-centered, evidence-based, and culturally responsive teaching, and (ii) provide information to administrators about annual teaching evaluation and support their decision-making.

FIU's vision of teaching excellence includes three main pillars: (a) learner-centered teaching, (b) evidence-based teaching, and (c) culturally responsive teaching. Each of these main pillars are discussed in detail in the following sections.

a) Learner-Centered Teaching

Learner-centered teaching refers to teaching practices that emphasize on knowing the students and their needs, and optimizing students' opportunities to pay attention and actively engage in the learning process. A learner-centered teaching method should enable students to perceive the link between what they learn in class and how those things are applied through real-life examples to enhance knowledge retention. The instruction delivery should be customizable to cater to the background, experience and learning ability of the students in the class.

It is found that learner-centered teaching leads to better learning outcome than traditional teacher-centered teaching. Research shows that the more "helpful" a teacher is in terms of providing students with solutions, the less the students actually learn. Learner motivation and learning performance increase when learners have a stake in their own learning and are positioned as co-creators in the learning process. In addition, learners would feel more accomplished and increase self-confidence when they attribute their good performance to their own efforts.

Learner-centered teaching practices include

- i. *active learning*, in which students answer questions, ask and think about questions of their own, discuss, explain, debate, or brainstorm during class to solve problems;
- ii. *cooperative learning*, in which students work collaboratively or in teams on problems and projects under conditions that assure both cooperation and individual accountability; and
- iii. *inductive teaching and learning*, in which students are first presented with challenges (questions or problems) and learn the course material in the context of addressing the challenges.

b) Evidence-Based Teaching

Evidence-based teaching refers to the teaching practices that are grounded in evidence that is effective to enhance the class environment and student learning. Evidence includes external evidence and internal evidence. External evidence means the effective methods from pedagogical research on higher education (e.g., American Society of Engineering Education (ASEE)'s literature), and internal evidence means the

evidence that is collected from the faculty's own courses to determine what students are expecting and experiencing, and what, how or why students are learning (e.g., a survey collects students' feedback).

Evidence-based teaching provides better learning outcomes due to three reasons:

- i. it takes advantage of established teaching methods from scholarship and research, thus enabling the faculty to make better decisions about their instructional design and practices
- ii. it collects data and feedback about student learning and performance, thus informing continual course enhancement and allowing for more targeted refinements, and
- iii. it uses and collects evidence, thus enhancing faculty confidence and self-efficacy.

There are mainly four ways to start evidence-based teaching:

- i. encouraging faculty to read discipline-specific research articles about higher education (e.g., ASEE journal articles),
- ii. collecting data on students' learning and performance (e.g., collecting students' feedback on a new class activity, gathering students' performance in certain assignments and/or exams to know if students have learned the knowledge in certain areas),
- iii. consulting with teaching and education experts (e.g., experts from Center for the Advancement of Teaching) to resolve challenges they face in the classroom, and
- iv. sharing and discussing experiences in the classroom to learn effective teaching methods from each other.

c) *Culturally-Responsive Teaching*

Culturally-responsive teaching refers to the teaching practices that account for the diverse cultural backgrounds (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, region, religion, family, work experience) of students and integrate students' cultural identities and strengths to promote and improve students' learning.

Students in Construction Management at FIU are a very diverse group of people in terms of their gender, age, race, social background, and experience. In addition, construction management is a subject that integrates knowledge from the domains of architecture, engineering, and business. Therefore, while the students with considerable experience in construction industry might struggle in a structural design or math class, they would be thriving in a project management class. Similarly, students with little or no experience in construction but come with strong academic background in high school would do very well in the math-related classes and feel overwhelmed in project management. The same could be said about other cultural factors such as gender and age for example.

It is therefore important to design and teach our classes in a way that takes this diversity into consideration and turn it into a strength rather than a challenge. Some strategies or methods to start culturally responsive teaching include:

- i. *inclusion-beginning*: encourage students from diverse cultural backgrounds to work in groups in order to help each other in what they lack,
- ii. *attitude-beginning*: build a positive attitude towards the subject and develop self-efficacy for learning,
- iii. *meaning-during*: use an intriguing problem to make instructional material more meaningful and select certain examples, analogies, metaphors, and stories, and
- iv. *competency-ending*: provide effective and prompt feedback and praise and reward learning.

The challenges of culturally responsive teaching include:

- i. the limited ability to cover everything that an instructor might want in a given class,
- ii. the interruptions caused by some groups because they finish faster or are loud, and
- iii. the instructor's ability to engage with all groups at diverse cultural backgrounds.

2. Current Practices

Currently, the faculty are evaluated qualitatively based on the students' responses to questions on SPOTS. The number of classes that the faculty member is teaching in the given semester and the faculty's graduate student supervision load also augments the evaluation. The evaluation, to some unknown extent, also considers the faculty's own assessment of his/her teaching as reported in the faculty annual report. Informal feedback from students brought directly to the chair could sometimes be considered on an individual basis.

The strengths of the practice is that the evaluation system is easy to implement and not controversial when it pertains to data collection. However, the system is not tailored to specific courses or departments. All the evaluations are submitted by students in the range of 1 through 5 irrespective of the nature of the class. Most students tend to evaluate the faculty based on their perception of teaching and their potential grades in the course and not necessarily the performance of the instructor.

3. Proposed Practices

All faculty member are expected to synthesize the outcomes of (i) student, (ii) self and (iii) peer activities that they choose to engage in and post the summaries in Panther 180 themselves. Any supplemental documents can also be uploaded according to their wish. The faculty members are expected to choose evaluation activity(ies) that aligns with FIU Vision of Excellence from the list of activities in the **appendix**. The activities can be chosen from outside the list if deemed appropriate for a class. Table 1 below shows a recommended method to organize the evaluation activities for (i) student, (ii) self and (iii) peer perspective.

Table 1. Evaluation Activities Aligned with FIU Vision of Excellence

Evaluation Activity	Source of Evidence	Alignment/Sample Ways to Align with FIU Vision of Excellence	Examples of Evidence and/or Records of Activities
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The table can list a variety of activities, sources of evidence, connection between each activity and its alignment towards learning-centered, evidence-based and culturally responsive teaching.

The activities should also be categorized and a clear distinction should be made between “*once per academic year*” and “*throughout the academic year*”. Although the activities can be and need to be conducted throughout the year, the faculty annual report is submitted once a year. Further guidelines on “*once per academic year*” and “*throughout the academic year*” activities **will be added to the proposal in coming semesters** for peer, self as well as student activities.

Proposed Practices: Peer Perspective (Example)

Due to the practical nature of construction management that is different from other engineering majors, it is hard to think of any colleagues outside of the school who can provide effective peer feedback on teaching. Therefore, if a faculty member has to solicit feedback from any group outside of the school it might be from the alumni who had at least a few years of experience after graduation. This group has the benefit of going through the classes in the school and experiencing it as students before moving on to actually implementing what they learned in real life. This will give them a unique perspective to provide this feedback based on how they benefited from what they learned in class.

Proposed Practices: Student Perspective (Example)

Anonymous questionnaires are a great activity to collect candid responses from students on their perception of teaching methods, styles, and course materials. Unlike SPOTs, questionnaires prepared by faculty will be customized to focus on questions that relate to the subject being taught and the level of students in the class. This helps to improve the learning-centeredness in classes and is evidence-based. It might not be the best activity for cultural responsiveness but instructors need to be creative in developing culturally-related questions without jeopardizing the anonymity of the responses. The frequency and timing of questionnaires in addition to the specific questions should be left to individual instructors. This proposal will include general areas of questions that all faculty members should cover in their questionnaires in future.

Pre and post tests can be a good activity to measure student learning but it might not be equally applicable to every course. Hence, it can be implemented as an optional activity for measuring student learning. This pre-test will inform the instructors about the competency of incoming students (learning-centeredness), the post-test will measure the impact of the instruction delivery on students with different starting points (cultural responsiveness) and the two tests combined will show the overall effectiveness of the teaching method (evidence-based practice).

Proposed Practices: Self-reflection & Reporting (Example)

Self-reflection of teaching can be based on journaling or teaching inventories implemented in the class. Teaching inventories can be similar to SPOTS survey but the questions can be tailored to content and nature of the class. The method will be culturally responsive because of the ability of the faculty to control the questions and change them based on the class and student body. The method, if based on findings from education research, will be evidence-based. Teaching inventories, in tandem with journaling or other methods, can deliver learning-centered outcomes that align with FIU Vision of Teaching Excellence.

4. Rationale for the Changes

The need for the change is apparent due to the abovementioned weaknesses in the current evaluation system. The need for change is also reinforced by the fact that the current system does not directly accommodate peer and actual student perspective, or even self-assessment of the faculty in some cases. The proposed practices empowers faculty members by allowing them to choose the activities that suits the nature of class and students. The proposed practices also ensure that the evaluation method incorporates FIU Vision of Teaching Excellence.

While implementing the new practices, faculty need to ensure that the following factors are considered:

- i. *Implementation feasibility*: Selected activities should be feasible to implement in terms of transparency while preserving a collegial environment between faculty members.
- ii. *Frequency of feedback*: Selected activities should be repeatable annually without losing their effectiveness or the level of faculty commitment
- iii. *Level of Effort*: Selected activities should not add too much burden to faculty providing the feedback
- iv. *Effectiveness*: Faculty should consent on the effectiveness of the selected peer feedback activity on growing and improving teaching in the school.

5. Guidelines for the Administrators

Guidelines on how the new practices can be most effectively used by the administrators to evaluate faculty teaching **will be added to the proposal in coming semesters.**