

Annual Teaching Evaluation **Draft** Proposal

for the

Florida International University
College of Business
International Business Department

1. Context

In a broad sense, the purpose of FIU's vision of teaching excellence is to showcase the impactful and meaningful teaching that happens behind closed classroom doors. This is our opportunity as faculty to demonstrate how we create high impact (perhaps everlasting) impressions on our students within the confines of our classrooms (whether brick and mortar or virtual).

There is strong evidence in the literature suggesting that the evaluation of teaching and learning should include three critical domains: 1) learner-centeredness, 2) evidence-based practice, and 3) cultural responsiveness. More specifically, the literature suggests that each of these critical domains can be operationalized to design optimized learning opportunities for our students. Moreover, there are three sources of evidence each with numerous activities that can be considered individually or in combination to measure whether or not we have designed an optimized learning environment for our students inclusive of learner-centeredness, evidence-based practice, and cultural responsiveness. The three sources of evidence are: 1) peer evaluations, 2) student evaluations, and 3) self-evaluations.

For the purposes of brevity, the three critical domains: learner-centeredness, evidence-based practice, and cultural responsiveness are defined below:

Learner-centered teaching (LCT): According to Doyle (2011), "learner-centered teaching (LCT) is about optimizing the opportunities for our students to learn. This means figuring out the best possible ways to get them to do the work."

Evidence-based practice (EBT): Also known as "scholarly teaching," evidence-based teaching means thinking about courses as scholarly projects. This requires designing courses based on evidence to inform instructional design. Blumberg (2011) defines evidence in two ways: (1) external evidence from pedagogical research on higher education and (2) internal evidence based on the faculty's exploration of teaching practices from their own courses to determine what students are experiencing, and how or why students are learning.

Cultural responsiveness: Hammond (2015) defines culturally responsive teaching as, "an educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and respond positively and constructively" with teaching practices that "connect what the student

knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing” (p. 15).

Our attention is now drawn to the three sources of evidence: 1) peer evaluations, 2) student evaluations, and 3) self-evaluations which when coupled with appropriate activities should aid in our understanding of whether or not we have successfully designed an optimized learning experience which captures the fundamental aspects of learner-centeredness, evidence-based practice, and cultural responsiveness.

As to peer evaluation, our colleagues are in a unique position to provide expert feedback and help us improve our teaching. For instance, Paulsen (2002) affirms that “peer review brings content-based contextuality to the evaluation of teaching” (p. 10). Other scholars explain that peers are especially equipped to provide feedback on course materials and measures of content knowledge such as syllabi and copies of completed student exams or assignments. Berk (2005) extends this argument, drawing a parallel between peer feedback on teaching and the peer review process used in other forms of scholarship.

In a study of peer observation, Donnelly (2007) found that instructors whose teaching was observed and received peer feedback were more likely to apply theory to practice, reflect on the rationale behind their practices, and develop increased confidence and feelings of self-efficacy in teaching. Most recently, Fletcher (2018) found that engineering faculty who developed and implemented a collaborative model for peer review not only used the feedback to improve their teaching, but also cited an increased sense of collegiality within their department as a key outcome.

As to student evaluations, students are uniquely positioned to provide useful insights on our instruction because they spend the greatest amount of time engaging with our teaching—and in contrast to our peers, can offer feedback from the perspective of the naive learner (Supiano, 2017; Weimer 2010). Fink (1999, p. 5) specifies that, compared to other data sources, “students are the best source for understanding the immediate effects of our teaching; i.e. the process of teaching and learning.” Findings from the literature suggest that using student data as formative feedback to evaluate and improve teaching can be highly effective in refining good teaching practices (Clayson, 2009; Finelli et al., 2008).

Students are also a useful data source when we move past our traditional reliance on student perspectives and include evidence relating to their learning, growth, and development. Braskamp and Ory (1994) suggest that “if faculty who teach...focus on student learning, they are more likely to improve their teaching” (p. 101), and the faculty evaluation scholars conclude that “the student perspective, particularly when it reflects their learning, has high inherent credibility and considerable utility” (p. 101) in faculty assessment.

As to self-evaluations, as teaching evaluation expert Peter Seldin (1999) points out, faculty are equipped with self-knowledge and beliefs that influence their interpretations of their teaching experiences, ones that are likely unknown by their peers or students. This includes what motivates them to teach, why they use certain instructional practices over others, the types of

learning objectives they prioritize, and so much more. In their study of faculty assessment broadly (including but not limited to teaching), Braskamp and Ory (1994) are even more emphatic, writing that “faculty themselves are the most important assessment source because only they can provide descriptions of their work, the thinking behind it, and their own personal reporting, appraisals, interpretations and goals” (p. 102).

Others call attention to research on self-reported data, indicating that it can be associated with some degree of bias. And it is the case that select teaching evaluation studies have found that faculty give themselves higher ratings than their students do (Seldin, 1999). For instance, Arreola (1995) found that faculty assigned themselves higher ratings than their students did, particularly in regard to their rapport with students and the quality of their feedback.

Given these limitations, Berk (2005) affirms that, for personnel decisions, the information provided by faculty “should be critically reviewed and compared with the other sources of evidence” (p. 52). Other teaching evaluation scholars not only echo this recommendation, they stress the value of using self-evaluation to complement the feedback yielded from other sources, in our case, students and peers (Arreola, 1995; Braskamp & Ory, 1994; Seldin, 1998).

We also concur with Seldin (1999) that faculty may be more open and honest in their self-assessments if the risks of doing so are minimal, such that it is made clear that the primary goal of collecting this data is to improve their teaching-- which is certainly the case at FIU. The section “‘Best Practices’ in Self-Assessment & Reporting” below shares additional ways to enhance the credibility and utility of this data source.

All in all, we feel strongly that self-assessment and reporting presents a significant opportunity for FIU faculty to shed light on their many contributions to student learning and success that often go unnoticed.

2. Current Practices

To aid in our understanding of how faculty teaching is evaluated at the Florida International University, College of Business, International Business Department we met with various stakeholder groups. The results of our understanding of the Department’s past and current practices regarding the evaluation of faculty teaching are as follows:

Past Process

When Joyce was Dean, the self-evaluation was part of the annual review process – this was informative. When Galen was Chair, there were peer evaluations – although peers generally provided positive remarks rather than substantive feedback.

Current Process

- Primary input is from student evaluations
- An average score is calculated for the department – by graduate and undergraduate levels
- The faculty is compared to the average / mean score
- There is an effect based on the student grade expected, so that is taken into consideration – when many students expect lower grades
- Also, the distribution of scores is considered – harder faculty have a split distribution
- The written comments are also considered
- Primary data is from SPOTs question 15 – other questions do not have a major impact
- Faculty are mostly consistent across courses – there is more variation in the adjunct faculty
- Bill conducted 70 evaluations in academic year 2017-2018 – with an average of 15-30 minutes per faculty
- Other evaluation tools include teaching awards which can bring a faculty's rating up

Strengths of the Current Process

- Opportunity to re-engineer the faculty teaching evaluation process to include value added activities without adversely interfering with academic freedom
- Perceived notion that the Department Chair has a “bird’s-eye” view of faculty teaching and learning practices and how faculty foment an optimized learning experience thereby upholding the tenets of academic freedom
- Less effort required by faculty to document whether or not they are able to foment an optimized learning experience
- Minimal resources required to support faculty in documenting optimized learning experiences

Limitations of the Current Process

- Student evaluations can be a “beauty contest” where personality / niceness gets weighed by students
- To earn a really high rating, faculty need to be really good and also be well liked by students
- Implementation is less consistent now that faculty evaluations is online
- Currently, timing goes beyond finals, therefore, more difficult to control for mood / timing

3. Proposed Practices

There are numerous evaluation activities that can assist with furthering our Institutional Vision of Excellence. Table 1 includes three examples per each source of evidence (student, peer, and self). Table 1 is not an all-inclusive list of activities but rather a “spring board” to identifying other relevant evaluation activities in line with each faculty’s teaching philosophy. In the weeks and months to come, we will post to the International Business Department’s Teaching and Learning Canvas course shell additional ideas as we collectively identify innovative teaching and learning evaluation activities already in use.

Table 1. Evaluation Activities Aligned with FIU Vision of Excellence			
Source of Evidence	Evaluation Activity	Alignment/Sample Ways to Align with FIU Vision of Excellence	Examples of Evidence and/or Records of Activities
Peer	Syllabus Exchange	<p>Read your colleague’s syllabus noting what you’d conclude about the course and the instructor.</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students’ learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students’ knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Gather notes from the review process and identify strengths and areas of opportunity. Choose themes that you might want to report.
Peer	Jointly Implementing Something New	<p>Schedule a brainstorming session on different teaching and learning approaches. For example, you may want to choose a different quiz delivery method and or format.</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students’ learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students’ knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Report on the innovation project with outcomes.

Evaluating Teaching Project, Fall 2018

Peer	Classroom Visit	<p>Peers can identify and perhaps record how students are engaging and behaving in the classroom.</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students' learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students' knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Request that the visitor take notes while observing the delivery of content. Review the notes with the visitor highlighting strengths and areas opportunities that you might want to report.
Student	Mid-semester Feedback	<p>Whether administered by the Center for the Advancement of Teaching (CAT) independently, or with a peer, collecting mid-semester feedback (MSF) from students presents an invaluable opportunity to respond to their suggestions in the subsequent weeks. At your request, your colleague can visit your class (at a convenient time), survey and talk with your students, and later meet with you.</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students' learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students' knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Draft a written synopsis of themes and or areas needed improvement. Identify strengths and areas of opportunities.
Student	Student Focus Groups	<p>Faculty can convene a small group of students to answer specific questions related to teaching and learning aspects of the course. The focus is not content but the delivery of the content.</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students' learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students' knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Take notes identifying strengths and areas of opportunity. Identify excerpts from the focus group that you might choose to report.

Evaluating Teaching Project, Fall 2018

Student	Questionnaires	<p>Focus on questions related to learning. For example, what is helping you learn?; What is hindering your learning?; or What suggestions do you have so that you can learn better?</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students' learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students' knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Focus on aggregated data to find themes. Identify recurring themes that you might want to report.
Self	Post-class (or module) self-check	<p>After a teaching session or online course module, take 5 minutes or so to jot down thoughts on: What went well? What could I have done differently? How will I modify my instruction in the future?</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students' learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students' knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Keep a log to track progress over time so that you can report changes.
Self	Minute Paper	<p>During or after a teaching session ask your students to take one minute to answer the following questions on a scrap piece of paper: (1) what was the most important thing that they learned in class today and (2) what still remains unclear to them.</p> <p>Learning-centeredness: Have I planned educational experiences to promote student learning and engagement, provided students with timely feedback and with reflection opportunities, and used effective processes and tools to assess students?</p> <p>Evidence-based practice: Have I examined quantitative or qualitative evidence of my students' learning? Do I have sufficient, up-to-date knowledge of the scholarship of teaching and learning/education research in my field?</p> <p>Cultural responsiveness: Have I cultivated an inclusive environment conducive to learning, one in which all parties feel respected by and connected to one another? Do teaching/learning experiences include student perspectives and values, and harness students' knowledge, abilities, and strengths?</p>	Collect the Minute Papers and read them to identify trends in knowledge gaps. Make notes on how you were able to close student knowledge gaps by revising a lecture, including more relevant examples, etc. These improvements can be used to report your progress toward creating an optimized learning environment.
Self	Journaling	<p>In general, journaling can include responding to guiding questions related to three pillars.</p> <p>Learning-centeredness:</p>	Look for trends and identify passages that you could report.

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Proposed Practices: Peer Perspective

Throughout the academic year select one or several activities to assist in your personal evaluation of your teaching and learning. During the annual review process decide which activity(ies) with corresponding feedback you would like to self-report.

Proposed Practices: Student Perspective

Throughout the academic year select one or several activities to assist in your personal evaluation of your teaching and learning. During the annual review process decide which activity(ies) with corresponding feedback you would like to self-report.

Proposed Practices: Self-reflection & Reporting

Throughout the academic year select one or several activities to assist in your personal evaluation of your teaching and learning. During the annual review process decide which activity(ies) with corresponding feedback you would like to self-report.

4. Rationale for the Changes

Based on our extensive review of our current practices of faculty teaching evaluations in the International Business Department there are many areas of opportunities that can be leveraged to further FIU's vision of teaching excellence without infringing on academic freedom as it relates to faculty pedagogical strategies, approaches, or techniques. Because our student body is diverse in many regards, it is incumbent on us as faculty and a Department to assess and continually reassess our teaching and

learning practices so that we can ensure--to the extent possible--that all students are afforded an opportunity to thrive irrespective of their knowledge, skills, and attitudes in an optimized learning environment.

The current thinking surrounding annual reviews at FIU is that during the annual review, faculty will themselves synthesize the outcomes of the student, self, and peer activities they chose to engage in and post these summaries in Panther 180, together with any supplemental documents they wish to upload.