

Evaluating Teaching Guidelines Proposal

FIU Department of Modern Languages

Section I: Context

The Department of Modern Languages at FIU aims to prepare culturally conscious, competent citizens to meet the challenges of today's societal and global problems through human interaction. This inherently involves cultural and inclusive awareness, cultural humility, and an appreciation for the world's diverse geographic, ethnic, and social linguistic varieties. Excellent teaching means setting our graduates up to be able to collaborate for today's and tomorrow's challenges while respecting others' cultures, identities, forms of self-expression, and diverse views of the world.

FIU is putting forth the novel, grounds-up approach to more holistically evaluate how we do excellent teaching. FIU defines excellence in teaching via three pillars:

- (1) Learning-centeredness, which is defined as a focus on optimizing student learning, growth, and development*
- (2) Evidence-based practice, which refers to instructional practices informed by existing educational research, and/or both quantitative and qualitative evidence collected while teaching, and*
- (3) Cultural responsiveness, which is teaching that recognizes the significance and value of students' cultural identities to their learning and strives for equitable outcomes.*

As such, each department is putting forth their interpretation of FIU's vision of excellence in teaching. This new measure, which will be three-fold in the area of self, student, and peer feedback, will be qualitative and shall serve to provide a better overall vision of teaching.

This will be methodologically combined with the SPOT instrument as approved by the faculty.

Section II: Current Practices

At present, the sole way that the Department of Modern Languages evaluates teaching is via SPOTs - Student Perception Of Teaching quantitative surveys. This number is multiplied by 19 and serves as a 'base score' on the Annual Evaluation instrument – comprising 95% of the 'teaching' component, component A1, of the Annual Evaluation instrument.

At the end of this instrument, the department chair can provide qualitative comments towards the person's teaching. These could come from evaluations or from student or peer comments. However, these are strictly anecdotal and do not count towards the overall 'score' provided at the end of the year and from which a 'grade' of excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor are provided.

The strength of our department's current practice is that it is measurable. The numeric score can be tracked over time. It also allows for a universally agreed upon and simple metric.

The limitations of our department's current practice are (1) SPOTs are empirically shown to be problematic and contain implicit bias (see research summary [here](#)), (2) SPOTs do not provide students' holistic perceptions of the class, and research shows they do not adequately measure 'deep' learning, (3) many students do not do SPOTs; now that they are fully online, the average response rate is quite low. This renders SPOTs ineffective and incomplete. And finally, (4), The timing of SPOTs (done online) is not timed positively with the class (e.g., students can see their last grade inputs and then fill out a SPOT). Students and faculty alike have reported the unfairness of this metric.

Across the board, we want to improve how we think about and measure effective teaching as defined by our unit.

Section III: Proposed Practices

Below, we detail out three options each for peer-, student- and self-perspective data. These metrics will be used to holistically demonstrate how the Department of Modern Languages is implementing and continuing to reflect on excellence in teaching. All examples below are examples that are applicable to the content that our department teaches.

Proposed Practices: Peer Perspective

*Three options for obtaining data from the peer perspective are a **Syllabus Exchange, Jointly Implement Something New, and a Classroom Visit**. For these, faculty can reflect on the following:*

Syllabus exchange:

- *How effectively does my course syllabus communicate the course learning goals and expectations?*

Jointly implement Something New:

- *How can I gather additional evidence to support the effectiveness of a new instructional strategy?*

Classroom visit:

What is it like to sit through one of my classes?

Some concrete examples of how these could be done in practice are:

<i>Method</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>What do we want to know about and why?</i>	<i>Type of data you can collect and how to report it</i>	<i>Some concrete examples</i>
<i>Syllabus Exchange</i>	Read your colleague's syllabus carefully and note what you would conclude	How effectively does my course syllabus communicate the course learning	Evidence/records you can collect: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Completed and/or annotated checklist● A table that delineates the alignment between goals,	Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Learning-Centered Syllabus Checklist to identify strengths and areas for refinement● List of "Identified Best Practices for Evidence-Based Teaching"

	<p>about the course and the instructor if this was the first introduction to both:</p> <p>“If I was taking this course, here’s the questions I’d have.”</p> <p>“After looking at this, here’s what I’d think about the instructor and how he/she will be conducting the course.”</p>	<p>goals and expectations?</p> <p>What students will learn and why?</p> <p>Personal relevance of course topics to my students’ lives?</p> <p>The overall “tone” of my class?</p> <p>Why you would want to know: An effective syllabus can enhance students’ learning experience in your course by communicating personal relevance to students’ lives, which has been shown to be particularly beneficial for enhancing self-efficacy in students from marginalized groups.</p>	<p>assessments, and activities with comments suggestions places with strong alignment and others where the alignment is not clear.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peer provided list matching best practices to parts of the syllabus with suggestions for refinement ● Peer friendly critique of course description in syllabus focusing on one or two elements such as student-friendly language or relevance to future coursework ● Notes from the review process <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● List of areas on the syllabus that were modified, how they were modified, and rationale for modification. ● A brief description of rationale for getting peer feedback on syllabus (students do not read it, desire for it to be a learning tool, etc.), general statement of recommendation from peer, and changes made. ● Summary and analysis* 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peer syllabus review form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Miami University example ○ Berkeley University example
<p><i>Jointly Implementing Something New</i></p>	<p>Strategy does not have to be a highly innovative approach or something that requires lots of extra preparation (e.g., the two of you may decide you would like to try a different approach to quizzing)</p> <p>Pay attention to what happened and then get together to talk about the results and their implications.</p>	<p>How can I gather additional evidence to support the effectiveness of a new instructional strategy?</p> <p>Why you would want to know: Trying a new instructional strategy with a peer can provide additional evidence of its effectiveness or some clarity if you yield different outcomes and can be helpful for discussing obstacles.</p>	<p>Evidence/records you can collect:</p> <p>Work together with a peer to produce any/all of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A rationale for testing a practice along with annotated citations ● Reviewer notes from education research or content area expert ● Observations of each other’s classrooms while implementing new practice. ● Assessment of learning instrument validity ● Evidence of learning gains: data, analysis and conclusions <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A report of the innovation project with outcomes and implications for future iterations ● Presentation of the innovation, outcomes, and implications. Can be at FISS, DBER, department meeting, or local conference 	<p>Resources:</p> <p>Select a new approach from the Overview of Culturally Responsive Teaching</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Two language instructors want to implement wordles into their language classroom as a way to visually show how students’ composition lexical score is growing over time, which has been tied to L2 teaching of writing efficacy. ● The instructors implement the strategy together so they can jointly troubleshoot through obstacles and gather more evidence regarding effectiveness. ● Throughout the semester, they exchange several email updates and meet at the end to discuss the process and their findings. ● Students report liking the wordles as visuals to show how the class’s overall writing lexical score is increase over the semester. <p>Ultimately, both instructors agree that troubleshooting through challenges together very helpful.</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A paired reflection on the innovation process with focus on the collaboration Summary and analysis*. 	
<i>Classroom visit</i>	Observe and experience what it is like to be in one another's classroom and then have follow-up conversations after each visit.	<p>What are my students are doing in class while I am focused on teaching?</p> <p>Which students seem engaged, and which ones do not?</p> <p>What it is like to sit through one of my classes?</p> <p>How is my presentation of course material with regards to level of rigor, accuracy, flow, accessibility, speed, and representation?</p> <p>Why you would want to know: Focused classroom visits can help you gather targeted feedback on your instruction. Further, if you ask a peer to come in more than once during the semester, you can also gather feedback on how you're improving in areas you targeted based on the original observation.</p>	<p>Evidence/records you can collect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Field observation protocols for student engagement (i.e. seating charts with codes for what students are doing, nationally published protocols with rubrics, etc.). Note: If you want to recommend observations with rubrics, this would require careful selection of an instrument and training for the observer. ● Observation notes on a specific element of the class such as how much wait time is allotted for a question or at what point in the class do students appear most engaged. ● Class notes annotated for content delivery. <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If you engage peer observations more than once you can report improvements in areas you targeted based on the original observation ● General description of findings/ observations from peer with explanation of new practices you want to try ● Summary and analysis* 	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Three approaches to classroom visits ● Some useful guidelines from Northeastern University <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guide and sample feedback forms from Western Michigan University ● Best practices and sample feedback forms from Iowa State University

Proposed Practices: Student Perspective

Three potential options for obtaining data from the student perspective are doing Classroom Assessment Techniques, an End-of-Semester Capstone Assignment, and Quantitative SPOTs Questions. Guiding reflective questions could be:

- *How comfortable do you feel asking questions in class?*
- *Was this assignment useful/relevant to the topic?*
- *Are there discrepancies between students' perceptions of the class and my own?*

Some concrete examples of how these could be done in practice are:

<i>Method</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>What do we want to know about and why?</i>	<i>Type of data you can collect and how to report it</i>	<i>Some concrete examples</i>

<p><i>Classroom Assessment Techniques</i></p>	<p>Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief, non-graded or graded, in-class/online activities give faculty and students real time feedback on the teaching-learning process. Anonymous CATs put focus on learning content 	<p>Are my students understanding the material being presented during class?</p> <p>Is this new instructional practice or activity effective?</p> <p>Did my students understand a particularly nuanced or commonly misunderstood concept?</p> <p>Why you would want to know: Formative assessments like Classroom Assessment Techniques are more like a check-in to help faculty and students find out if/how much progress is being made toward learning goals.</p>	<p>Evidence/records you can collect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Background Knowledge Probe: short, simple questionnaires prepared by instructors for use at the beginning of a course or at the start of new units or topics. Minute Paper: students answer 2 questions (What was the most important thing you learned during this class? And What important question remains unanswered?) <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synthesis of the results and your response. Think about: Notes on what the CAT results tell you about your students' learning, and what changes you decided to make, if any. Summary and analysis* 	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Vanderbilt Center for Teaching's 5 types of CATs and how to use them (Links to an external site.)</i> <i>Iowa State University information, examples, and uses of CATs (Links to an external site.)</i> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Yale's Poorvu Center offers more CATs (Links to an external site.)</i> <i>List of 50 Classroom Assessment Techniques</i>
<p><i>End of Semester Capstone Assignment</i></p>	<p>End-of-semester or capstone assignments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Culminating assessments such as comprehensive exams, final papers, research projects, and performances <p>In order to make decisions based on culminating assessments, faculty can confirm the efficacy of the assignment design by reconciling results of the assessment with student focus groups and/ or peer feedback. <u>(Note - this serves as a PEER or another STUDENT data source as well.)</u></p>	<p>Have my students met the learning outcomes that I have determined are most important for this course?</p> <p>Do the instructional design and/or course materials do what I want them to?</p> <p>How has an instructional / curricular change impacted student success in the course?</p> <p>Why you would want to know: Students' performance on assessments can be used as an evidence-based guide for modification to instructional / materials design, clarification of expectations, or even scope and sequencing of course content for subsequent courses.</p>	<p>Evidence/records you can collect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribution of scores on a specific question or part of a rubric along with notes on student work. Class average by semester on question(s) measuring a course learning goal. Annotated samples of exemplary student work. Rubrics used to assess student work <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary of student attainment/progress toward the identified key learning goal(s) Graphical representation of student scores for a given skill/topic over several assessments. Excerpts from student work and associated rubric. <p>Summary and analysis*</p>	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yale's Center for Teaching and Learning provides tips and resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designing assessments Checking whether the assignment measures what you want it to (validity) Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT) transparency assignment guidelines and template -- can help communicate expectations for and value of the assignment to students <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Exam Capstone Paper End of semester performance Project Presentation
<p><i>Quantitative SPOTS</i></p>	<p>Reporting on SPOTs outcomes (Student Perceptions of Teaching survey)</p>	<p>The most commonly-used source of student data for teaching evaluation are student course evaluations—or as they were recently renamed at FIU—SPOTs. SPOTs report consists of 5 parts: Course Information and Response Rate, Survey Summary, Individual Question Results, Student Comments, and Student Information.</p> <p>The FIU CAT suggests that you NOT navigate directly to your SPOTs results</p>	<p>Evidence/records you can collect:</p> <p>Reporting SPOT outcomes (quantitative data) over time.</p>	<p>CATs SPOTs guide, "Interpreting and Working with Your SPOTs Results: A Guide for Faculty"</p>

		<p>first! Your own perceptions of and reflections on your teaching are at least as important as students' responses, so they encourage you to take a few moments to ask yourself: How'd it go? Did my students learn what I hoped they would? Which elements of my course design, pedagogy, and/or interactions with students were most effective in helping them learn and thrive at FIU? By the same token, what didn't work—and why? Here, student grades, performance on exams or major assignments, as well as any feedback they shared during the term would prove invaluable. With this information in hand, you'll be in a far better position to review your SPOTs results, as you can then compare your self-assessment to your students' perceptions.</p> <p>FIU CAT acknowledges some of the limitations of course ratings systems. That said, SPOTs results are, for many of us, the main source of information about students' experiences in our courses.</p> <p>Recognizing the crucial role that teaching plays in student success, and the limitations of our current mechanisms for evaluating teaching, Provost Furton charged a committee with varied university representation to propose recommendations for a comprehensive teaching evaluation process, one that relies on more than students' perceptions of teaching. This is why using SPOTs in combination with other metrics can be so helpful for us to reflect critically on our practice with the goal of achieving our unit's definition of excellence in teaching.</p>		
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Proposed Practices: Self-reflection & Reporting

Finally, three potential options for obtaining data from the self-reflection and reporting perspective are: Mid- or post-class (or module) self-check, SPOT's Completion & Comparison, and Teaching Inventories (e.g., using validated instruments from the teaching field). Examples of guiding reflection questions are:

- *In general, how am I feeling after implementing a new instructional technique?*
- *Are there any discrepancies between students' perceptions of my teaching practices and my own?*
- *Do I promote an active learning environment for my students?*

Some concrete examples of how these could be done in practice are:

<i>Method</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>What do we want to know about and why?</i>	<i>Type of data you can collect and how to report it</i>	<i>Some concrete examples</i>
<i>Mid- or post-class (or</i>	Post-class (or module) self-check	In general, how am I feeling after implementing a new instructional technique? How is my confidence?	Evidence/records you can collect:	Resources: Useful information from ASCD on different types of reflective

<i>module) self-check</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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>Why you would want to know: Consistently conducting post-class self-checks can be used to yield very insightful longitudinal data on practically any aspect of teaching that is of interest to the instructor.</p>	<p>Keep a log (text, video, or audio) to track your progress and improvement over time.</p> <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quotes or excerpts from your log <p>Summary and analysis*</p>	<p>thinking (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>Examples:</p> <p>PowerPoint presentation from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University with various self-reflective tools and examples</p>
<i>SPOTs completion and comparison</i>	<p>SPOTs completion & comparison</p> <p>Completing the same course evaluation form completed by students can highlight discrepancies and prompt further reflective thinking</p>	<p>Are there any discrepancies between my students' perceptions of my teaching practices and my own?</p> <p>Why you would want to know: Identifying specific discrepancies can help you develop potential explanations for the misalignment and identify possible strategies to address issues moving forward.</p>	<p>Evidence/records you can collect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record discrepancies between your students' ratings and your own Summarize your interpretations of these differences Describe potential strategies to align your students' perceptions of your teaching with your own <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report any discrepancies between students' ratings and your own that you find particularly meaningful, including what these discrepancies may imply, and potential next steps Report your progress in aligning your students' perceptions with your own <p>Summary and analysis*</p>	<p>Resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FIU SPOTs guide for more ideas about using SPOTs effectively in the evaluation of your teaching (Links to an external site.) Email Center for the Advancement of Teaching <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An instructor wants to identify potential discrepancies in their students' perceptions of their teaching and their own beliefs about their instruction, so they complete the SPOTs survey prior to students and compare then conduct a comparative review of the results. The instructor makes a list of the items, ranked in order from those with the greatest disparity between results to least and discovers that their students are reporting feeling like the textbook and resources are not as useful/helpful as they could be <p>The instructor then reaches out students and ask if they would be willing to participate in a focus group to discuss the course resources and uses this feedback to revise the materials and sources for the next semester</p>
<i>Teaching Inventories</i>	Teaching Inventories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are my instructional practices 	Evidence/records you can collect:	Resources:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A brief survey that helps instructors assess their teaching approaches. • Often consist of multiple-choice questions on a Likert-scale and often take less than 10 - 15 minutes to complete. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterized as learning-centered? • Encourage student engagement and inclusivity? • Promote an active learning environment for my students? <p>Why you would want to know: Teaching Inventories are useful for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlighting strengths in faculty's instructional approach • identifying specific areas/aspects of instruction that need refining but may be otherwise difficult to identify • providing formative feedback or further developing specific aspects of instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory results • Completed inclusion worksheet <p>How you might share it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brief description of the inventory, your results, and steps taken (or to be taken) based on results <p>Summary and analysis in annual review</p>	<p>Yale Center for Teaching & Learning examples and useful information (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP) (Links to an external site.) • Teaching Practices Inventory (TPI) (Links to an external site.) <p>"Inclusion by Design: Survey Your Syllabus and Course Design"</p>
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Section IV: Rationale for the New Practices

Research and theory in the field of education can help faculty to make more informed decisions about their practice and classroom implementation decisions. In critically reflecting on our practices and in obtaining perspectives from multiple views (peer, student, self), we can better 'do' teaching excellence. The evidence base generated from the above-described options, and resultant informed practice, can also assist us in ensuring we are teaching in a culturally-responsive way. The three practices proposed under each perspective pillar (peer, student, and self) fit into the Department of Modern Languages because they can be used in courses that teach languages as well as literature, culture and film. In our department, the measuring of teaching involves assessing how effective the instructor is teaching new content but also, doing so in a foreign or heritage language! This is what makes our department unique. These inputs will allow the faculty in the Department of Modern Languages to measure their teaching and to reflect consciously (and critically) on their teaching where teaching is quite diverse in our context. Additionally, these inputs are flexible in that they will allow for longitudinal growth and reflection. This will significantly add to the quantitative SPOTS, currently our department's sole form of teaching effectiveness data.

For example, when it comes to data inputs from the peer perspective, research shows that "peer review brings content-based contextuality to the evaluation of teaching" (Paulsen, 2002, p. 10). Teachers whose teaching was observed and received peer feedback have been shown to be 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 (Donnelly, 2007). As learned in the ET project, a peer can be:

- *someone from CAT!*

- a departmental colleague
- a colleague from another department at the same institution
- a good teacher
- a teacher from somewhere who shares a pedagogical interest
- someone to practice teaching on (i.e., anyone willing to play the role of learner).

For the syllabus exchange practice as well as the practice of jointly implementing something new, see research by Weimer and Smith (citations below). For the classroom visit practice, see research by Donnelley and Fletcher (citations below).

When it comes to student data, students can be the “best source for understanding the immediate effects of our teaching” (Fink, 1999, p. 5). Classroom Assessment Techniques are supported by Angelo and Cross’s 1993 classic reference: “Classroom Assessment Techniques: A Handbook for College Teachers.” For research supporting the End-of-Semester Capstone Assignment, you can refer to Trumbull and Lash’s (2013) “Understanding formative assessment: Insights from learning theory and measurement theory.” Finally, for research on the SPOTS questions, see research by Tucker and Stronge (2005), Linking Teacher Evaluation and Student Learning. (Other reference we found helpful was on student focus groups as a student perception data source, which is supported by Williams and Kats (2001), The Use of Focus Group Methodology in Education: Some Theoretical and Practical Considerations in International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning).

Reflecting on data inputs from the self-perspective, Blumberg (2014) discusses that the self-reflective process can yield information that facilitates improvement in teaching. While ‘self’ data should always be complemented by other data sources (Berk, 2005), they can be a powerful stimulus for critical reflection. The three practices suggested in our template are Mid-or post-class self-check, SPOT’s Completion & Comparison, and Teaching Inventories. These practices are discussed in Brookfield (2017) and in Berk (2005; see citations below). For teaching inventories, there are several validated instruments that faculty can use. Three examples with a strong evidence base are the “[Self Survey of your Syllabus](#),” the “[Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol](#),” (p. 29 and onward) and the “[Teaching Practices Inventory](#)” (p. 563 and onward).

Additional references that inform these sources of evidence:

Berk, Ronald (2005). Survey of 12 Strategies to Measure Teaching Effectiveness. International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education.17 (1), 48-62.

Brookfield, S. D. (2017). Becoming a critically reflective teacher. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Donnelly, R. (2007). Perceived Impact of Peer Observation of Teaching in Higher Education. International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education 19(2), 117-129.

Fink, L.D. (1995). Evaluating your own teaching. In Improving College Teaching (1st ed., pp. 191-204). Bolton, MA: Anker Publishing Company.

Fletcher, J.A. (2018). Peer observation of teaching: a practical tool in higher education. Journal of Faculty Development 32(1), 1-14.

Nilson, L. B. (2013). Measuring Student Learning to Document Faculty Teaching Effectiveness. To improve the academy, 32, 287-300.

Smith (2014). Peer collaboration: improving teaching through comprehensive peer review. To Improve the Academy 33 (1), 94-112.

Supiano, B. (2017, Nov. 30). Everyone hates course evaluations. Chronicle of Higher Education.

Weimer, M. (2010). Inspired College Teaching: A Career-Long Resource for Professional Growth. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.

Weimer, M. (2017, May 24). Peer Review Strategies that Keep the Focus on Better Teaching. Faculty Focus.

Who can you turn to for help, or with questions?

Please feel free to contact your departmental facilitators Magda Pearson, Maria Antonieta and Melissa Baralt, or, email the Center for the Advancement of Teaching Director Leanne (lwells@fiu.edu) and/or CAT research associate Shenira Perez (sheperez@fiu.edu).

Thank you for your leadership!