

**University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire
Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), Teaching Evaluation Initiative (TEI)**

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1) Working Definition of Effective Teaching

Preface

The impetus for this effective teaching working definition can be traced to several sources: UW-Eau Claire's longstanding reputation for effective teaching; the Centennial Plan's commitment to student learning; and the professional, scholarly discourse that, over the last two decades, has probed the relationship between teaching and learning. It must come as no surprise to us as scholars, that this research into effective teaching has yielded findings that have implications for our work.

One area of findings addresses the evaluation of teaching. What is effective teaching? What does it look like? Does it look the same in all contexts? What methods for evaluating teaching are most valid and reliable? And, what methods of evaluation are most formative, that is methods that help us to become more effective teachers?

As scholars and teachers, we aspire to remain current in our fields; likewise, as members of Department Personnel Committees, we should also aspire to remain current in the professional and scholarly discourse about the evaluation of effective teaching.

During the 2009 – 2010 academic year a group of faculty, academic staff, and students, and with the support of CETL, met weekly to read and discuss scholarly literature about evaluating and fostering effective teaching. With this literature in mind, the group also reviewed statements about effective teaching and criteria for evaluating teaching in UW-Eau Claire's Faculty and Staff Handbook (the FASH) and in the Department Evaluation Plan for each academic unit. The purpose of the review was to identify common criteria for evaluating teaching, combining these with findings and commentary from the literature about evaluation and effective teaching.

The Teacher Evaluation Initiative committee (TEI) offers this document as a tool that DPC's can use to inform, refine, and even revise methods for evaluating teaching. This document does not propose to standardize criteria for effective teaching or standardize a method for evaluating teaching. This document presents criteria for evaluating teaching to be contextualized in terms of a department's goals for student learning, curriculum, and instructional methods. Indeed, any method for evaluating teaching must be context-sensitive.

Effective Teaching Elicits Student Learning

This definition has been constructed from our discussions about the FASH, DEP's, and the literature they reviewed.

The FASH defines effective teaching as "the success of the instructor in securing interest, effort, and progress on the part of students. The primary consideration is that students are stimulated to better standards of scholarship, to keener interest in learning, to greater professional understanding, and to more effective effort toward self-improvement." (Faculty and Academic Staff Handbook, Chapter 5) Condensing the FASH, we offer the following: **Effective teaching elicits students learning.** From the literature we reviewed, effective teaching, beyond being informed by a field's content and methods, is also informed by the instructor asking, "What instructional methods best elicit student learning?" and by

asking “What evidence do I have that the students are achieving the course learning outcomes and what does this evidence tell me about the efficacy of my instructional methods?” (i.e., reflective practice).

To elucidate these high level statements, we present below four categories for evaluating teaching, with each category populated with more fine-grained statements about what an effective teacher does. Where possible, links are provided to examples and other sources of further illustration. The four categories (Figure 1), derived from the FASH and the DEP’s, include 1) disciplinary expertise, 2) design and development skills, 3) instructional practices and performance, 4) learning/teaching environment.

Figure 1: Teaching Categories

I. DISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE	II. DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT SKILLS
III. INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE	IV. LEARNING/TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

Exploring the Criteria

The four categories for evaluating teaching are global categories which have many features that delineate them. In the table below, each overarching category in the taupe box has descriptive statements to illuminate the features of it. The overarching categories are followed by a breakdown of the various aspects of the category into subcategories, which are accompanied by descriptive statements. The subcategories are intended only to explain in more detail the whole category. The TEI Committee does not recommend conducting peer reviews based on the plethora of subcategory descriptive statements as it would be an overwhelming task for both the reviewer and reviewee.

I.	DISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor is knowledgeable and up to date in his/her field of expertise. • The instructor provides high quality content information that represents the depth and breadth of knowledge in the discipline. • The instructor bases his/her content information on research and exercises informed decision making when facts or concepts are disputable within the field (i.e., stances are based on justifiable positions).
1.	<p>Content Knowledge (Declarative Knowledge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor knows the discipline’s facts, concepts, theories, etc. • The instructor is familiar with current research and new directions for future study.

2.	<p>Skills Knowledge (Procedural Knowledge)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instructor knows how to create, inquire, research, practice, perform, etc. in the field
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II.	<p>DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT SKILLS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instructor designs course curricula, course materials, lessons, assignments, and assessments that elicits student learning. The course design is sensitive to the teaching context, e.g., seminar, lecture hall, studio, field placement, internship, clinical, etc. The instructor reflects on his/her courses, course design and course objectives to better elicit student learning.
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1.	<p>Course Design Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learner outcomes inform course design. (Note: link to Backward Design) Syllabus, schedules, grading policy, rubrics, formative assessments, etc. make the course design comprehensible and transparent to the students. Course addresses skills, knowledge, values, articulate with goals, outcomes, standards, or competencies set by the department or accreditation agency.
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2.	<p>Lesson Design Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons and activities are learning focused (i.e., classroom, lab, studio, internship, and clinical pedagogies engage students in active learning). Instructional materials are developmentally appropriate. (Link: Scaffolds material –builds learners’ knowledge base step-wise throughout the term; provides supports in learning, sequences learning well in lessons and the term) Connections among course topics are explicit and transparent. Modernizes the course intermittently and responds to the changing student population and its needs
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3.	<p>Assessment Design Features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessments are based on learning outcomes. Assessments are fair and useful. Assessments are valid and reliable and based on identified criteria/objectives Assessments provide useful, high quality feedback to students. Assessments are returned to students in a timely manner. The grading system is fair and clear to the learners
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III.	<p>INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND PERFORMANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instructor has a working knowledge of research-based and field-recognized instructional and assessment practices, which he/she employs in a manner appropriate for the context in order to elicit student learning. The instructor reflects on his/her instructional effectiveness and practices in order to continue his/her professional development.
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1.	<p>Teaching Methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instructor fosters in students the values recognized as important in the discipline Instructor employs a variety of teaching methods to engage students and elicit
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	<p>learning suitable for the student and the environment (i.e., as appropriate for learning needs of diverse students and the learning context (e.g., lab, clinic, studio, internships, classroom, etc.))</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructor sets challenging and realistic expectations that are attentive to student’s cognitive development. Lessons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ support and elicit higher-order thinking ○ activate and build on students’ prior knowledge ○ provide supports (scaffolds) for students to learn something they could not achieve independently. ○ introduce new skills and concepts when students are cognitively ready ○ are paced appropriately • Instructor uses current information and resources Instructor emphasizes, when appropriate, the relevance of the course material to real world issues.
<p>2.</p>	<p>Assessment of Instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor maintains accurate records, files timely reports and records. • The instructor uses appropriate assessment in instruction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Checks learners’ comprehension of the material intermittently ○ Monitors learners’ progress informally as well as formally ○ Provides constructive feedback (writes comments on returned work, answers students’ questions, and gives advice on test-taking) ○ Strives to be fair in testing and grading ○ Employs the backward design approach to align instructional objectives with the assessment(s); assessment guides instruction. ○ Makes assessments congruent with his/her instructional methodology ○ Covers material to be tested during class • Writes relevant test questions
<p>3.</p>	<p>Instructor Reflection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The instructor strives to be a more effective teacher • The instructor utilizes reflection and feedback to improve instruction. The instructor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ reflects on lessons in order to plan future lessons ○ gathers feedback from a variety of sources (e.g., student evaluations, learner assessments, peer observations, etc) to improve his/her instruction ○ integrates new instructional practices into courses ○ continues learning (attends workshops, etc. on teaching and disciplinary content)

<p>IV.</p>	<p>LEARNING/TEACHING ENVIRONMENT The instructor creates a dialogic, welcoming and interactive environment focused on learning.</p>
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1.	<p>Instructor Leadership Style</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishes a culture for learning in the classroom, task-focused instruction• Establishes clear expectations• Encourages and presents an approachable (respectful and helpful) posture to students; strives toward fairness and understanding• Establishes good rapport (i.e., a welcoming learning environment that encourages student interactions with instructor)• Makes him/herself accessible to students• Is enthusiastic about teaching• Is organized• Acts responsibly (arrives to class on time/early; dismisses class on time; leaves time for questions; keeps appointments; returns work in a timely way)• Organizes physical space effectively (as appropriate)
2.	<p>Instructor Interpersonal Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective communicator (speaks clearly/loudly/audibly; uses appropriate language for the context; provides clear, compelling explanations, examples, etc)• Encourages and fosters student contributions<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Open to other points of view○ Good listener (does not interrupt students while they are talking, maintains eye contact, responds to questions in a positive, welcoming manner and guides students thinking and learning)

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