One of the three Faculty Senate COVID motions involves course and teacher evaluations (CTEs). This year, CTEs are not required for faculty annual reviews as documented in Activity Insight. Instead, you have the option to include some, all, or none of them at your discretion. If you choose not to include your CTEs for a given course, you're asked to submit a Reflection on Teaching for that course. From the motion, and included in Activity Insight:

> Professors may include some CTEs for a given quarter or semester and exclude others. Professors may include CTEs in some portfolios and review files and not in others. In all cases, professors will receive the results of CTEs from the Office of Institutional Research and Analysis and make decisions about including or excluding the results of a CTE for review only after receiving the results. Any professor who does not include the results of a CTE for review must include, in their place, a Reflection on Teaching for the given course.

Because CTEs (or Student Ratings of Instruction (SRIs, or Student Evaluations of Teaching-SETs, as they are often referred to in the literature) are typically heavily-relied upon for demonstrating teaching excellence, you may be wondering how to do this without them. This is a timely challenge to face as the Teaching Excellence Task Force is working on charting a new future for DU on the evaluation of teaching, in which CTEs are but one way to demonstrate teaching effectiveness.

How to use this resource:

There are many models for defining teaching excellence. This resource shares a few guides and recommendations about what *COULD BE included* in your Reflection on Teaching. Ideally, aim for 1-3 meaningful paragraphs in a reflection, in which you:

- Describe the learning outcomes for the course and the teaching practices and assignments you used to achieve these outcomes,
- Assess the extent to which you think you and your students realized these outcomes in the course, offering some description of the evidence you use in making this assessment,
- Reflect on changes you're likely to make to the course in the future or things that you've learned about teaching, given your assessment,
- Describe some of the learning experiences you provided your students in your course(s) and how those experiences may have facilitated educational growth,
- Finally, consider explaining the additional work that you did, inside or outside the classroom, to adapt your course to account for its new modality and/or COVID-19 related protocols.

Want to dig deeper? Read on for more information and potential guiding questions.

The resources shared here are meant to highlight the *many ways teaching excellence is defined and demonstrated but please don't feel as though your teaching reflection has to address every prompt shared below.*

Excellent teaching is much more than what happens in the classroom

Earlier this spring, a Provost's luncheon panel, *Advancing teaching excellence: A conversation about recognizing, evaluating, and rewarding teaching across rank and series* featured guests from the leadership team at TEval, Gabriela Weaver, Andrea Greenhoot Folmer, and Noah Finklestein. Their respective universities embarked on transformative innovations to their teaching evaluation practices. Dr. Greenhoot Folmer's home institution, University of Kansas (KU), uses a benchmark framework to articulate **the many ways we engage in teaching that are often less visible** to students and colleagues. For example, one dimension involves mentoring and advising while another involves self-reflection and iterative growth.

Our friends in Morgridge have also done some incredible work in articulating the ways that teaching is not limited to the classroom. See Dr. Norma Hafenstein's description of the Morgridge Teaching Evaluation Model which includes the learning environment, assessment, professionalism, and the planning and delivery of instruction.

How to tell the story

In your reflection, consider using the University of Kansas' benchmark dimensions or Morgride's Teaching Competencies to reflect on your work.

University of Kansas Dimensions	Questions to consider
- Goals, content, and alignment - Teaching practices - Class climate - Achievement of learning outcomes - Reflection and iterative growth - Mentoring and advising - Involvement in teaching, service, scholarship or community	- Does the content of the course in question represent diverse perspectives? - Do you provide opportunities for practice and feedback (e.g. frequent assessments and opportunities for checking understanding)? - What about class climate? Is it inclusive and does it promote student motivation? - Did you make changes along the way in response to how things were going?
Morgridge Teaching Evaluation Model	Questions to Consider
- Learning environment - Assessment of learning - Professionalism - Instruction: Planning and delivery	- How do you facilitate a respectful, positive, safe, student-centered environment? - How does assessment guide your practice? - What professional growth opportunities have influenced classroom practice? - What are the instructional strategies you implement that meet individual student needs?

Excellent teachers continue learning and adapting

Another potential point of reflection involves your own growth as an educator over the last 18 months. Maintaining teaching excellence takes time in a typical year. As we all know, 2020-2021 has been anything but typical. At the OTL we know you invested a significant amount of time learning new methodologies and technology. In addition to **delineating the changes you made and the professional development you engaged in**, consider documenting the TIME you invested to make the changes needed during the pandemic. Joya Misra and colleagues from the UMass-Amherst Advance grant team created a document, *Documenting pandemic impacts: Best practice* in which they shared a list of recommendations informed by their work and Malisch, et al.'s (2020) PNAS article and supplement.

How to tell the story: For your teaching reflection, consider the time you spent shifting the course online. To document **the time you spent learning new modalities and technologies**, consider some of these prompts:

Misra (2020) recommends considering the following	Additional questions for consideration
- Document changes to courses, including moving courses online and new technologies. Faculty may identify how many additional hours each week focused on teaching to concretize these effects (e.g., 15-hour/week workload for X course shifted to 30- hour/week workload for 7 weeks). - Point out specific challenges, such as lack of resources (high-speed broadband, software) for faculty and students, and trainings attended or led. - Identify additional teaching responsibilities, including course overloads due to personnel changes, retirements, issues with teaching assistants, assisting others with	- What challenges did you face in the shift to online? Was it a particularly challenging course to translate to an online or hybrid environment (i.e. performance; lab)? - Did you attend OTL programming to support your online transition? What was it? How much time did it take for the course/institute and what was the time you invested after? - How did you continue learning and adapting as the pandemic continued (especially for a course you may have taught multiple times)? - Did you engage with your disciplinary community as you planned or executed your courses?

technology, other workload changes (Misra, 2020, p. 1).	

Excellent teachers are student-centered

At DU, we strive to create a community of care, "taking precautions for our own and one another's health and well-being while we support the advancement of the public good through education, research, scholarship, creative work and service" (https://www.du.edu/coronavirus/care). During the pandemic that may have translated into classroom practices that center the student and/or policies that recognized the sadness, isolation, and overwhelm experienced by students and faculty alike.

Student- (or Learner-) centered educational practices have long been part of discussions of teaching excellence. Active learning strategies engage students in ways recommended by a number of scholars including Maryellen Weimer whose book, *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice,* is a favorite read in the OTL. DU faculty, Dr. Jared Del Rosso (Sociology and Criminology), wrote an excellent piece citing Maryellen's work. Here he provides concrete examples for changes to classroom policies and practices that demonstrate compassion, arguing that choosing between empathy and academic standards is a false dichotomy. He writes, "the illusion of a normal time, pre-COVID-19, when we could teach without reckoning with the profundity of loss and grief. Today, as we did yesterday, we teach and learn with people who know no such time. Teaching from this recognition involves not lowered, but different expectations for educators and learners alike, expectations that are as pedagogically sound and ambitious as those used during the 'normal times'" (2021, p. 425).

How to tell the story:

Articulating the changes that you made to courses that created opportunities for active engagement, living into our commitment to creating a community of care, and meeting student needs through compassion, are important narratives to include in documenting teaching excellence.

Compassionate Changes to Practice (Del Rosso, 2021)	Questions to guide your self-reflection
• Forgive absences • Abolish late penalties • Center (guided) choice and autonomy • Ask students to identify their priorities as learners	• What changes to classroom policy did you make in response to online or hybrid learning? • How did you provide choices in activities, sliding deadlines, or assignments? • Did you make any changes to your grading structure? • Do you build in formative assessments in addition to summative ones?

	How are students empowered to learn in your class?

As we advance toward the second full academic year with an as-yet unresolved global pandemic, it is likely that many of the changes to practice during the last year and a half will continue to serve you and your students. Charting a path for alternative ways to recognize, evaluate, and reward teaching excellence will be the work of the Teaching Excellence Task Force in the years that come. At the OTL, we are here to support you as you continue on your path as a lifelong learner.

References

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