Peer Review Process for Adjunct Faculty

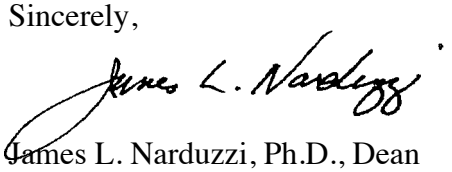
RICHMOND
School of Continuing Studies™

The School of Continuing Studies is committed to the highest standards of teaching. As scholar-practitioners, you are expected to be expert in both the theoretical and the practical dimensions of your field and to be able to excel in communicating that material in the classroom.

All of our faculty development efforts are focused on constantly improving the quality of instruction taking place in the School. The process described in this "Handbook" is designed to help improve the quality of instruction by creating a formal dialogue among peers about effective teaching strategies and practices.

What follows is the background to our peer review process along with an outline of the specific steps involved in that process. Whether an assessor or the person being assessed, it is important that you familiarize yourself with the materials contained in this "Handbook."

Sincerely,



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Introduction

Why Conduct Peer Visits?

Peer visits can achieve a number of objectives:

1. They provide a framework for teaching assessment, prompting reflection on teaching materials, philosophy, and classroom practices.
2. They show teaching as a "situated act" within a discipline-specific context.
3. They balance other sources of teaching assessment, such as student evaluations.
4. Conducted over time, they offer opportunities for reflection on growth and development.
5. They encourage consultation with peers and reciprocal explorations of the nature of effective teaching.
6. They offer opportunities for adjunct faculty to feel more a part of the academic community.

All of the above take on added significance for adjunct faculty whose primary responsibilities lie outside the classroom

Steps in the Peer Visit Process

There are essentially eight steps in the process.

Step 1 **Self-Assessment**, in which the instructor reflects upon his or her own strengths and weaknesses as an instructor.

Step 2 **Selection of Peers**, where on instructor or the other determines who would be the best teacher to observe and to have observe and then contacts that individual and obtains agreement to conduct mutual peer-peer visits.

Step 3 **Pre-Visit Conference**, in which the assessor meets with the person being reviewed to go over the process and identify areas of concern.

Step 4 **The Classroom Observation**, in which the assessor attends class and records observations about the experience.

Step 5 **Written Rough Draft**, in which observations are noted.

Step 6 **The Post-Visit Conference**, in which oral feedback is provided to the instructor.

Step 7 **Written Reports** are shared with the instructor and sent to the Program Director.

Step 8 **Program Director** reviews the reports and forwards them to the instructor's permanent file. Remember to attach a completed *Instructional Support Services Contract* form (found on page 20).

Step 9 **Forward** form for honorarium to Associate Dean.

Self-Assessment Instruments

What follows are two optional instruments that can be used for self-assessment prior to the peer visits.

Self-Assessment Instrument for General Teaching

1. How or why did you decide to become a teacher?

2. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

3. What do you enjoy least about teaching?

4. Within your discipline, what area or areas do you regard as your strongest?

5. Which do you regard as your weakest?

6. What is your greatest asset as a classroom teacher?

7. What is your greatest shortcoming as a classroom teacher?

8. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment as a teacher in the last three years?

9. What do you consider your greatest failure as a teacher?

10. What is the one criticism that you are most fearful of receiving from a student? From a colleague?

11. What three things would you most like to change about your teaching?

12. What is the most important thing a student can learn from you?

13. Do you feel that your discipline is best taught by a particular approach (method) or teaching strategy and, if so, which approach, and why do you feel it is the best?

14. What have you found most gratifying in your work with the School of Continuing Studies? What have you found most disappointing or frustrating?

Self-Assessment Instrument for Specific Course

(To be completed by the faculty member to be visited prior to the peer visit—optional)

Course Number and Title: _____

Section I

1. In assessing your own strengths as the teacher of this course, what do you identify as being the five activities that you most effectively perform?

   a. Which of these activities do you think are valued by the students taking this course?

   b. Which are not?

   c. Which of these activities are likely to be valued by your colleagues?

   d. Which are not?

2. What other activities would you like to be able to perform in an effective manner, that either you do not now perform, or perform in a mediocre manner?

3. What steps would have to be taken for you to acquire the necessary skills or resources to perform these activities?

4. In assessing your limitations as the teacher of this course, what do you identify as being the five activities that you least effectively perform?

   a. Which of these activities do you think are valued by the students taking this course?

SOURCE: Adapted from William H. Berquist and Steven R. Phillips' *A Handbook for Faculty Development* Vol. I (Dansville, NY: The Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges, 1975).

b. Which are not?

c. Which of these activities are likely to be valued by your colleagues?

d. Which are not?

e. What steps would have to be taken to acquire the necessary skills or resources to perform these activities more effectively?

Section II

Please indicate by using the following scale the extent to which you think each of the following types of learning should occur in this course.

1.....This should be a major learning goal in this course.
2.....This should be a minor learning goal in this course
3.....This should be a peripheral learning goal in this course.
4.....This should not be a learning goal in this course.
5.....Uncertain

Select	Factual Knowledge	new terms, methods, or information are acquired
Select	Skills Training	students learn how to perform specific tasks or how to fill particular professional roles.
Select	Principles	new theories, generalization, and ways of organizing information are learned
Select	Application	students learn how to use new information, concepts, and methods to solve current problems.
Select	Creativity	students learn how to be more expressive in the use of a specific medium (words, paint, music, etc.) or how to approach and solve problems in a new way.
Select	Appreciation	greater sensitivity to specific intellectual, scientific, or artistic endeavors is learned.
Select	Self-Understanding	students acquire a better sense of themselves and their relationships with other people.
Select	Self-Management	students learn how to plan more effectively for and/or control their own personal and professional lives.

SOURCE: Adapted from William H. Berquist and Steven R. Phillips' *A Handbook for Faculty Development* Vol. I (Dansville, NY: The Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges, 1975).

Pre-Observation Conference Form

The purpose of the pre-observation conference is to review the instructor's teaching strategies and discuss the role of the observer during and after the observation. This form can be used as a guide in preparing for the pre-observation conference.

Teacher _____

Peer Observer _____

Relationship of Observer to Teacher _____

Course Observed _____

1. Type of course and role in curriculum
   a. ☐ lecture ☐ activity ☐ seminar ☐ laboratory ☐ other _____
   b. ☐ required ☐ general education ☐ elective ☐ personal interest
   c. ☐ developmental ☐ lower division ☐ upper division ☐ graduate
   d. role in degree program (e.g., core, focus, general education, etc.)

   e. technology: ☐ computers ☐ distance ☐ other
   f. student population (e.g., number of students, mix, other)

   g. purpose of observed class in course or program

   h. length of lecture / times per week

   i. recent changes in program / course / student outcomes

   j. other

2. Role of instructor in course
    a. number of times course previously taught

    b. primary method / strategies of teaching

    c. special problems / constraints

3. Observation format
    a. date, time, length, place _____
    b. ☐ planned ☐ unplanned
    c. ☐ one course ☐ several courses
    d. ☐ one session ☐ several sessions
4. Teaching behaviors to be observed (be specific, be focused)

5. Post-observation conference scheduled for: _____

The Observation

Several sets of materials follow:

1. “Guidelines for the Peer Visit Process” (p. 11), which outlines the basic expectations of both instructor and assessor regarding the mutual visit;
2. “Areas for Possible Feedback” (p. 12), which suggests a number of dimensions for the reviewer to focus on;
3. “Suggested Format for Classroom Visit” (p. 13)
4. “About Feedback” (p. 15)
5. “Examples of Feedback” (p. 17)

Guidelines for the Peer Visit Process

1. The class observed should be typical (e.g., the lecturer and students should be engaged in normal classroom activities such as small group work, lecture, or discussion).
2. The observer and lecturer should agree upon the goals and behaviors to observe so that the subsequent feedback will be meaningful to the lecturer.
3. The students should be aware of the upcoming observation and its purpose and the teacher should introduce the observer at the beginning of class.
4. The critique setting should be psychologically comfortable (e.g., private).
5. The person visiting the class should:
    a. be an experienced effective teacher
    b. communicate skillfully
    c. have a warm, responsive personality that inspires trust and confidence
    d. conduct himself or herself in a thoroughly professional manner
    e. be largely nonjudgmental
    f. confront the lecturer with problem areas needing improvement
    g. take the initiative in planning and conducting the pre- and post-visit conference
6. The lecturer should:
    a. take an active role in the visitation process by performing self-evaluation activities on teaching in general the specific class in particular
    b. maintain an active, interested attitude
    c. be open to change and have the capacity for it
    d. avoid defensive behaviors
    e. be able to identify and describe problem areas in his or her teaching prior to the peer visit
7. The feedback on the visit should be:
    a. descriptive, rather than evaluative
    b. focused on the agreed-upon goals and behaviors
    c. unambiguous and informative
    d. concrete with numerous specific examples
    e. balanced in terms of positive and negative teaching behaviors and results
    f. presented in the context of potential for change
    g. accepted by the lecturer as both accurate and helpful
    h. given promptly, both orally and in writing

SOURCE: Adapted from William H. Berquist and Steven R. Phillips' *A Handbook for Faculty Development* Vol. I (Dansville, NY: The Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges, 1975), pp. 83-84. Used with permission.

8. The Classroom Visit Form (located on the following pages) should be:
    a. submitted to the instructor within three weeks of the visit
    b. neatly prepared and typed
    c. conversational in tone
    d. in the form of constructive feedback
    e. well-written

Areas for Possible Feedback

- Establishing a Learning Set
- Pacing
- Expression
- Responding to the Questions
- Level of Challenge
- Class Management
- Learning Environment

All of the above relate to the instructor's ability to create in students a cognitive and affective predisposition to engage in a given learning activity.

- Teacher Preparation
- Logical Organization
- Elaboration
- Asking Questions
- Student Participation
- Evaluation
- Timing (start and end on time, etc.)
- Methods and Materials
- Creativity
- Flexibility/Individualization
- Interpersonal Relations
- Enthusiasm/Inspiration

All of the above deal with the instructor's skill in arranging and presenting course content and learning activities so that students understand the relationship among the various topics, ideas, issues, activities, etc. covered in the course.

SOURCE: Adapted from William H. Berquist and Steven R. Phillips' *A Handbook for Faculty Development* Vol. I (Dansville, NY: The Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges, 1975), pp. 83-84. Used with permission.

Write-Up of Classroom Visit

Use this format as a template for your own write-up, or enter data and use these form fields to complete the write-up.

Faculty Member: _____ Course & Section: _____

Date: _____ Length of Visit: _____

Place: _____ Visitor: _____

Number of Students Present: _____

CLASSROOM: Note any inadequate aspects of the classroom (size, temperature, acoustics, lighting, etc.).

INSTRUCTION: Comment on the presentation of the material: points to be covered and their relevance to class session, knowledge of subject matter, organization of lecture, explanation of terms and concepts.

INSTRUCTOR/STUDENT RAPPORT: Comment on student involvement and interaction with the instructor: opportunities for students to ask questions, answers to questions, guidance of class discussion, openness to suggestions and ideas.

STYLE OF PRESENTATION: Comment on gestures, physical movement, pitch and tone of voice, eye contact with students, use of resources such as blackboard, audio-visual media, handouts and other materials, demonstrations, student presentations and group activities and the integration of various elements of the class session.

SYLLABUS: Comment on the syllabus and other written materials provided by the instructor. (Please refer to the *School of Continuing Studies Syllabus Preparation Handbook*.)

GENERAL COMMENTS: What part of the class seemed particularly relative in enhancing the learning process? What specific suggestions can you give for improving this particular class?

Post-Observation Conference

About Feedback

Peer visitors should suggest changes that are:

1. Context-specific. When providing feedback, describe changes related to the class that was observed.
2. Action-oriented. Ideas and suggestions should be in behavior terms that offer concrete, specific actions that could be taken.
3. Relatively simple to implement. Provide realistic suggestions that can actually be put into practice and are not too complicated.
4. Quantifiable, measurable. There is a great deal of difference between the suggestion, "You really need to get your students more involved in your discussions by talking less and listening more," and the more quantifiable statement, "I noticed there were three of your fifteen students who did not ask any questions or participate in any of the discussions. One suggestion you might try is to start off the class in subgroups so the quiet students feel more comfortable in the discussion that follows."
5. Educationally valid. Sometimes we are asked to teach and also observe others because we are experts on the subject being taught but are not, however, knowledgeable about the teaching process. Therefore, if you are not sure if a specific suggestion you may have is educationally valid, feel free to talk with your Program Director about the specific comment prior to providing your peer with feedback.

Feedback Should Be

1. Honest and direct. Sometimes it is difficult to be honest, to tell the person that we observed out straightforward opinion about things we think need improvement. We may choose not to be honest because we are afraid of hurting their feelings, or in some cases, that they will be mad at us. But how can we learn from each other if we don't tell the truth as we see it? We do our peers no favors by withholding what we fear is a "negative opinion" simply because we are trying to protect ourselves—or them—from feeling bad!
2. Descriptive rather than judgmental. Describe what you saw or heard. Paint a word picture that simply describes the situation you observed. If you can describe the teachers actions or inactions and the observed results, it will be easier for the teacher you observed to assimilate your feedback. A statements like, "You really spend entirely too much time lecturing," is not helpful. Rather, make your comments more descriptive, such as, "I noticed that you talked for about 40 minutes and there were no questions or comments by the students during that time. As a result, I observed several students were having a hard time staying awake."
3. Unambiguous and informative. When providing feedback to the teacher you observed, describe his or her behaviors in specific and behavioral terms. Avoid general statements like "You need to show more empathy for your students," or "You need to do a better job in preparing for you classes." Statements like these do not describe behaviors nor are they specific. In addition, avoid "absolute" statements that are probably untrue, like: "You *never* ask the students questions," or "You *always* turn you back to the students when using the blackboard."
4. Concrete (with examples if possible). A non-concrete statement (like some of those above) would be, "You do a really great job in teaching." Far better is to say something like, "I felt that your use of Socratic questions during the second half of the class generated a lively discussion and involved the students in the learning."
5. Balanced. Don't only provide feedback on what needs improving. Spend significant time in also describing (in specific detail) the teacher's strengths.

Examples of Feedback

Examples of helpful, specific comments found in recent Classroom Visit Reports

Mr. X calls on particular students to respond to specific questions. That may seem to pressure them, but in fact it does not, because Mr. X does it in a professional way. For example, "I would like to cover #18 with you. Let's do it together as a class." When the students respond well, he provides positive stroking, and when students have difficulty, he says, "Let me help you."

Ms. Y explained the purpose for each activity undertaken in class, effecting a smooth transition between topics ("Next, I'll discuss," etc.). She demonstrated an excellent knowledge of the subject matter, summarizing after she worked through concepts, relating concepts to each other, clarifying concepts with metaphors to which students could relate (e.g., a flower pot as an example of fixed capital). Where necessary, Ms. Y would repeat or summarize to aid student retention; current material was related to principles learned earlier in the course (i.e., "Several weeks ago we learned," etc.).

Ms. Z has an excellent rapport with her students. She would pose questions while lecturing, aiding students in reaching the conclusion themselves. In short, she would lead the students in discussion so that they would reach conclusions. She would ask them to define a term (e.g., define the IMF); then she would say, "set up by _____," leaving students to fill in "Bretton Woods." Ms. Z was quick to pick up if a student had a question.

The teacher had a 3 x 5 set of cards with the students' names. He indicated the problem to be covered and used the cards to select a student to reply. If the student called upon could not respond, other hands were raised to supply the answer.

His students are very attentive, even if they are not vocal. But even the reserved students opened up and enthusiastically contributed when controversial topics were broached. The subject of the course is ideal for discussions on measuring illiteracy, on science phobia, and even on the recent Supreme Court ruling on Creationism. Mr. A allowed students to discuss these topics, guiding them with questions and offering corrections or clarification when necessary. When a less sure student stumbled for lack of words, Mr. A. remained patient, helping the student find the proper phrase or expression.

The syllabus does not appear to meet all SCS requirements. Changes that I would recommend include: (1) Adding a discussion of grades and the grade scale that will be used; (2) Adding a listing of the required and optional textbooks that support the course; (3) Adding some discussion of the database project you will be assigning and how it will fit into the overall course objectives; and (4) Adding the hours when you prefer students to contact you if necessary. The students need the information the first night of class and throughout the semester. The syllabus is the most appropriate method of distributing such details. This also will ease the chore of "indoctrinating" any late registrants.

He used the blackboard primarily as a way of making specific, limited information visible to the class. The information on the blackboard was written prior to the beginning of class. This allowed him to focus on his students and not have to laboriously write on the board during class. Unfortunately, the information was on the board that was behind of three of the students. While

these students copied the writing on the board to their notes, he continued to talk, and it appeared that these students were not able to both read the board behind them, write their notes, and listen to him all at the same time. It may have been better to have the information that was boarded on a handout or overhead.

Examples of Constructive, Discipline-Specific Feedback

Your use of humor, as when you told the "see me after class" joke to illustrate the importance of context, created a relaxed atmosphere.

Students participated eagerly. In fact, fifteen hands shot up when you asked for a definition of "marginal costing."

Your contrast between a schizophrenic and a manic-depressive, using the two case histories, helped students appreciate the complexity of mental health disorders.

Your quotation by Roscoe Pound emphasized the importance of law professors involving themselves in public life.

Your discussion of field work methods versus survey research seemed unfocused until you provided the three concrete illustrations.

Students took copious notes during your lecture on the different types of computer systems for database management. They also frequently consulted your handout on using a database management package.

Your summary of the inventions of Ramson E. Olds and Henry Ford provided a strong conclusion to the lecture on the automobile industry.

When the student asked you to explain the controversy over categorization of emergency departments by level of service, you responded promptly and concretely.

You became particularly animated when you shifted the discussion to an overview of single cell reproduction.

Students shook their heads, indicating confusion, when you mentioned the Oklahoma Supreme Court's decision to uphold the utility rate increase enacted by the city in 1971, but your clarification of the case during the questioning seemed to resolve any difficulties.

Your use of Roosevelt to illustrate the strong-presidency concept helped students grasp the abstraction. Several of them nodded appreciably after this example.

Students seemed to benefit from the peer review session you scheduled during class to help students with their comparison-contrast rough draft. They frequently consulted your guidelines as they reviewed each other's papers. I overheard comments such as, "Hey, thanks. I never thought of that," and "Thanks for those two concrete examples."

I noticed from several nearby notebooks that your outline on the board of Grover Cleveland's goals (to cleanse politics, to reduce tariffs, to aid consumers and attack privilege, and to introduce the civil service) enabled students to organize their notes.

Examples of Concrete Suggestions for Improvement

Your illustration of a Hasse diagram could not be seen clearly from the back of the room.

Perhaps you could consider a larger drawing, an overhead projector, or a handout.

Students seemed unusually tense during the drill over the past tense (imperfect). Have you thought about having the entire class rather than the individual student repeat a mispronounced word?

You might focus more on the process of arriving at a solution rather than on the final outcome itself. A response such as "The orbit must be one deBroglie wavelength in circumference" does not encourage higher order thinking.

You seemed a bit uncertain about the material when you shifted into aggression modeling and reverse modeling. Some examples from current TV programs might have added interest and clarity.

You are an excellent Socratic teacher. The only thing you might consider here is to avoid running several questions together and wait a bit longer for the students to respond to the first question. When a students first hear a question, they need to listen for understanding, connect it to what they have learned, figure out if they know the answer, think about how best to formulate their response, and then speak. All this takes time—more time than you often allows. This is, of course, the flip side of your passion and enthusiasm for teaching. You know the answer you want. You care about the answer. You care about the students' ability to answer. Therefore, you tend to not use silence as much as you might to give the students more time to formulate their responses before asking another question. What works for me is ask the question and then count five seconds before asking another question.

RICHMOND
School of Continuing Studies

Contract for Instructional Support Services

This contract is made between the University of Richmond School of Continuing Studies (hereafter known as "SCS") and the individual named below for instructional support services for the course(s) identified.

Date submitted: _____

Applicable course: _____ _____ Instructor: _____
prefix number

Term: ☐ Fall ☐ Spring ☐ Summer

Year: ☐ 2010-11 ☐ 2011-12

Name of individual providing service: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

UR employee?

☐ Yes—provide **UR identification number:** _____

☐ No—provide **Social Security number:** _____

This contract is made between the individual named above and SCS for the following services.

Cooperating teacher—TLP program..... [Honorarium of $_____]

Child Abuse presentation on _____ ..... [Honorarium of $_____]
date

Other services provided: _____..... [Amount: $_____]

It is understood that honoraria and/or fees paid for services rendered may be reported to the IRS as taxable income.

_____ _____
Signature of person providing service Date

Approved for payment:

_____ _____
Dr. Ned K. Swartz, Associate Dean *Date*