

Peer Review of Instruction Report of the Task Force

Introduction

In accordance with the Provost's memorandum of December 1, 2004, the faculty and staff of the KU Libraries have been charged with " [ensuring that] multiple sources of data are included in the documentation provided for the evaluation of teaching." In conjunction with other mechanisms for the collection of data enumerated in Scott Walter's e-mail message to KULIB-L of November 4, 2004, peer review of teaching may serve as one option for documenting effective instruction by KU Library instructors and technology trainers. Among the other options outlined by Walter are: self-assessment of teaching, student evaluations of teaching, cooperating faculty evaluations of teaching, peer observation of teaching, peer assessment of instructional materials, contributions to instructional design, contributions to KU Libraries teaching environment, contributions to the Information Services /Campus teaching environment, and awards, commendations, or fellowships received for teaching or instructional service (see attachment: Assessment of Professional Performance).

Last fall the Expanded Instruction Council formed a task force to consider how peer review of instruction might be used as one tool to assess the effectiveness of an individual's teaching. Members of the task force reviewed the literature and Web content concerning peer review of instruction, identified issues needing our consideration, identified and considered options available to us, chose the best options in our opinion to include in our report, and then wrote this report.

We examined processes used to evaluate instruction at the Ohio State University Libraries, Oregon State University Libraries, University of Massachusetts at Amherst Libraries, Syracuse University Library, Southern Oregon University Library, Mankato State (MN) University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago Library, University of Texas Libraries, University of Michigan Library, and the Dartmouth College Library. Though a wide range of policies and practices existed at these institutions, there appeared to be no consensus concerning best practice.

Our next step was to outline what peer review of instruction might include. Next, we considered the options available to us and the various strategies we might use to implement the process (see attachment: Planning Working Document). After extensive discussion among task force members and comments from staff members, we believe that we can recommend a process for implementing peer review of instruction at the University of Kansas Libraries.

In general, we believe that the process should be **flexible** to allow for variations in teaching methods and desired outcomes. Though the Provost's imperative suggests prompt action on implementing various methods to evaluate instruction, task force members strongly suggest that the process be **voluntary** and not be included in the annual evaluation during the first year. This will permit us the time and opportunity to

test and modify the process and its implementation without adverse impact on anyone's annual review.

I. Peer Review of Instruction

Peer review of instruction is just one of several options that can be used to document effective instruction by library staff members for a list of the other options (see attachment: Assessment of Professional Performance).

For the purpose of this document, peer review is an assessment of an instructor's effectiveness by another library staff member who is also involved in providing library instruction. When assessing instruction taught in a foreign language or using very specialized resources, reviewers outside of the library may be considered.

- Peer review should include peer observation, peer coaching, team teaching, and peer evaluation. These were common elements among academic institutions that utilize peer review of instruction..
- All library staff members with a responsibility for instruction will be eligible to participate in peer review of instruction. Peer review can provide significant assistance to new staff members who do not have prior teaching experience. Consequently, orientation to teaching will be part of the orientation and mentoring provided to new librarians.
- Peer review of instruction will be used as one of the components to document instruction annually for pre-tenure librarians; thereafter it may be used voluntarily by all library staff members with a direct or indirect reporting responsibility for instruction as a method to demonstrate effective teaching.
- The use of peer review of instruction as a method of gathering data on instructional effectiveness and included as part of assessment goals in a given year should be agreed upon at the beginning of a new evaluation period as part of goal setting by the librarian and supervisor, in consultation with the Head of Instructional Services.
- Completed observation/assessment forms and reports will be returned to the instructor. If multiple assessments are completed during any year, the decision of which particular reports or completed forms to include will be decided by the instructor. This is similar to the case of student evaluation forms completed in and gathered from many different classes.
- Thus, a peer review process might consist of
 - Initiation (the decision to engage in peer review)
 - Selection of reviewer (who has received orientation to the process)
 - Pre-review meeting
 - Review/observation of instruction

- Post-review meeting (to be held within 1-2 weeks of the review/observation)
- Completion of the observation form or an assessment report

II. Role of the Head of Instructional Services

The Head of Instructional Services will play a significant role in assessing the work of library staff members who provide instruction.

- The Head of Instructional Services will participate in the goal setting for instructional staff each year.
- Following the precedent set by the Collection Development Subject Councils, the Head of Instructional Services will collaborate with a team of Instruction Coordinators, identified by primary teaching area, to provide information and support on instructional performance as part of the annual evaluation.
- Each instructor will send the instruction part of the FASAR to the appropriate subject council leader, who would then meet with the Head of Instructional Services to review the evaluation. Then, the subject council leader would meet with each instructor.
- The Head of Instructional Services will lead periodic discussions about issues related to instruction that are open to all staff members.

III. Staff Support for Peer Review

Both the instructor being reviewed and the reviewer need orientation to the process and training in the effective use of peer review.

- A classified staff member, unclassified professional or library faculty member may serve as a reviewer. Under unusual circumstances (e.g., when subject or language expertise is necessary to evaluate teaching), reviewers from outside the library may be asked to participate in our process. A reviewer may act as a mentor or coach to the instructor.
- The instructor should choose whomever they want to review them from a pool of trained individuals, possibly using their mentor, or someone who teaches similar subjects or similar disciplines. The reviewer should be someone the instructor is comfortable with and whose input the instructor values.
- Orientation to peer review of instruction will include a discussion of expectations of both the reviewer and the reviewed instructor
- The group that advises the Head of Instructional Services will be responsible for conducting staff training in the effective use of peer review of instruction.

- Training will include, but not be limited to the use of documentation, deadlines, and consultation options.
- Documentation will include, but not be limited to:
 - a. Brief definition of the element being used (peer review, peer observation, peer coaching, etc.)
 - b. Description of the process to be used, including:
 1. The need for great flexibility in the use of peer review to accommodate a variety of circumstances
 2. The use of meetings between instructor and reviewer to stimulate discussion before instruction occurs so that the instructor can explain the goals of the upcoming session and after instruction occurs for the reviewer to provide feedback on the session. These meetings are intended to stimulate discussion.
 3. The option for the instructor to sit in on a mentor's class to observe how the mentor teaches.
 4. The option for reviewers to observe several classes before completing their comments.
 5. How a reviewer can provide positive comments or criticism in the review
 6. Suggestions for how peer review may be used, especially how an instructor can provide evidence of steps taken to address suggestions made by the reviewer, and how peer review can be used effectively to increase instructional effectiveness.
 7. How to include content selected for instruction, an individual's ability to convey the content, and the benefits of any handouts provided to the students.
 8. Suggested guidelines/standards on what a reviewer should look for in a review using
 1. A checklist or worksheet of elements that may be included in a review (see attachments that describe peer observation and the process that might be used)
 2. Guidelines on how a "review loop" might look to increase the effective use of the process
 - c. As part of an instructor's annual evaluation, the instructor will write a reflective narrative describing what changes they made to their instruction as a result of the review and how the reviewer's criticism helped to improve teaching.
- Initial training will include everyone using peer review of instruction, in order to develop an understanding of common expectations. Thereafter, it will be offered continuously as needed, especially as new staff members are hired.
- The team of Instruction Coordinators will lead "teaching circles" (consisting of all who teach in a broad subject area) to discuss issues of mutual concern.

This concept is loosely based on the Subject Councils used for collection development purposes.

IV. Implementation & Assessment

Once peer review is implemented, its effectiveness needs to be assessed and modified as needed.

- Plans to implement peer review of instruction should begin as soon as the modifications to this document that are suggested in administrative review have been completed and LFA members have voted to endorse the process.
- The first year of peer review of instruction will be used to assess the process and make necessary changes to it. The results of reviews conducted during this first year will not be used in the annual evaluation process.
- Peer review of instruction should be reviewed at the end of the first year and periodically thereafter (e.g. every 3-5 years), or as requested by staff members or the Libraries' administration.
- The group charged with implementing peer review of instruction should consult with the Assessment Committee for advice on the design of an appropriate tool to assess the effectiveness of the process.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Task Force on Peer Review of Instruction (Nancy Burich [chair], Lea Currie, Kathy Graves, Jana Krentz, Kathleen Neeley, and frequent visitor Scott Walter)