

University Senate of Michigan Technological University

Proposal 2-22

(Voting Units: Academic)

Revisions to Procedure 504.1.1 Teaching Effectiveness Evaluations

Introduced by: The Office of the Provost

I. Introduction

Since at least the 2019-2020 academic year there has been interest among students, instructional personnel, academic leaders, and others to update the University's procedures for communicating the results of teaching evaluations. In all cases, the ultimate goal is to maximize the quality of instruction at Michigan Tech.

II. Rationale

Maximizing the quality of instruction requires providing instructional supervisors with direct access to student feedback regarding instructors' strengths and areas in need of improvement. Instructors' supervisors are expected to provide timely and appropriate assistance and support, when needed, to achieve excellence in instruction at Michigan Tech. The most significant change from the current version of this procedure to the proposed version is that students' comments will be shared with the academic administrators that lead academic units responsible for offering an academic course. This change will bring Michigan Tech's policy in line with policies at many other universities.

This proposal also includes editorial changes intended to update the language used in the procedures to match what is currently being used at Michigan Tech.

III. Proposal

The proposed changes to Procedure 504.1.1 are shown below.

Current Clean Copy

Amended text is indicated by strikethrough (text to be deleted) or yellow highlighting (text to be added).

All other areas of text, unless otherwise indicated, are current policy or policy previously passed as Proposal 2-22 on 11/10/2021.

Procedure 504.1.1

TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATIONS

(PROPOSAL 12-03)

(PROPOSAL 22-13)

(PROPOSAL 22-18)

(PROPOSAL 41-19)

The following definitions are used in this proposal [from 2-87]:

1. "Instructional personnel" or "instructor" refers to all persons responsible for teaching courses, both those who are "instructor of record" and others who will be reviewed by students as active participants in delivery of a class to students.
2. "Academic administrator" refers to department chairs, deans or directors of academic units, the chief academic officer and others who supervise faculty members.
3. "Center for Teaching and Learning" or "CTL" is the professionally staffed facility that sponsors workshops and training programs and provides private consultations for instructional personnel. Individual consultations with the CTL are kept confidential and are not made available to administrators.

TEACHING EVALUATION SYSTEM

Each unit establishes an internal mechanism by which it evaluates the appropriateness of level, content, and currency of courses taught by instructional personnel and the quality of an instructor's contribution to the teaching mission of the University. The purpose of the evaluation system is to provide meaningful feedback to inform continuous improvement of instructional quality.

Instructors at Michigan Technological University use a three-tiered approach to evaluation of teaching. In addition to student evaluations of teaching effectiveness, each instructor has the right to include peer and/or self-evaluation(s) as a component of the evaluation of their teaching.

Each academic unit will provide the Senate a summary of their teaching evaluation instruments and processes. The Senate will compile these practices and publish them on the website, providing sufficient detail for instructors to understand how their teaching is evaluated and for students to understand how their feedback informs the processes.

No single measure should constitute more than 50% of the evaluation and all teaching evaluation instruments (student, peer/colleague, and self) should be used by academic administrators in partial support and as justification for personnel decisions (e.g., reappointment, tenure, promotion, and yearly salary adjustments). The evaluation of teaching will be weighted in a manner that is commensurate with the assigned teaching responsibilities of each instructor. The CTL is responsible for establishing and maintaining a webpage that provides materials and best-practice procedures for the evaluation of teaching.

A. Student Ratings of Instruction

1. Evaluation instrument:

The CTL will be responsible for developing and distributing appropriate instruments to allow Michigan Tech students to provide meaningful and comprehensive feedback to instructors to inform continuous improvement efforts. The instrument should include language to inform students of potential bias during evaluation and remind them of the university's Student Code of Community Conduct. Instruments will consist of a series of items pertaining to generally recognized features of quality instructional practices and will also give students the opportunity to provide their written opinions and suggestions for improvement.

All such instruments, or any changes to existing instruments, will be presented to the University Senate Academic and Instructional Policy Committee for consideration. Any changes to the university-wide default evaluation instruments or university-wide implementations of new instruments are subject to the prior approval of the University Senate, administration, and Board of Trustees.

2. Frequency of required student evaluation:

Instructors will evaluate at least one section of each different course each semester, unless required to do more by the academic unit(s) associated with that course. Student rating of instruction surveys will be sent, and summaries delivered for sections with an enrollment of six or more students unless otherwise specified by an individual academic unit.

3. Procedures for student evaluations:

The CTL will direct end-of-term-survey requests to students only during the last three weeks of any term. Instructors will be notified when surveys are sent and will have opportunities to monitor the response rates during the evaluation period.

The CTL will release the summarized numerical responses and the written comments of students to the instructor, their direct supervisor (for GTAs/GTIs), and the academic administrator of the unit(s) offering the course. In the case of colleges with no departments or other units offering courses, the CTL will release the information to the appropriate academic administrator. The instructor will then provide the comments to appropriate others for use in the improvement processes as defined by each unit's charter. Deans of colleges with departments and the Provost (or their designee) will be provided with the summarized numerical responses and will be provided with access to written comments upon request.

Summaries of numerical responses and written student comments from General Education core course sections constitute a special case and will also be sent to the relevant core course coordinator and to the person charged by the Provost with General Education instructional oversight.

The evaluation instrument will contain language indicating that comments determined to be of a threatening, harassing, or discriminatory nature may result in the loss of anonymity and appropriate action will be taken through the academic misconduct process. The specific procedures for this are as follows:

- A. An instructor identifies specific comments they consider a potential violation of the Student Code of Community Conduct and reports it. This can be done through “Report a Concern” or by directly contacting OACC, Institutional Equity, or the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). For the rest of this document the “reporting unit” will be the unit first contacted by the instructor.
- B. The reporting unit, with permission from the instructor, contacts CTL who then creates and submits a written complaint containing the exact language to the Office of Academic and Community Conduct (OACC) without identifying the instructor.
- C. OACC convenes a review committee consisting of a representative from OACC, Institutional Equity, and Public Safety and Police Services. The committee will review the comments to determine if the comments meet standards for harassment, discrimination, or threatening language according to campus wide definitions (as outlined in the Student Code of Community Conduct) and report to the reporting unit a suggested path forward to be approved by the instructor. The reporting unit may release the identity of the instructor to the OACC only with the express permission of the instructor.
- D. If comments are NOT found to violate the Student Code of Community Conduct, The reporting unit notifies the instructor who reported the comment that no further action will be taken. The student’s identity is never requested nor released (that is, the student’s identity remains anonymous, even to CTL).
- E. If comments ARE found to violate the Student Code of Community Conduct, and the suggested path forward is approved by the instructor, the CTL identifies the student, the complaint is updated to include their name, and the student and comment are transferred to the Academic and Community Conduct system. The instructor or supervisor may request to be notified of the student's name if the comment language represents a specific safety threat. Otherwise, the student remains anonymous to the instructor and review committee (in step 3 above)

As part of its annual reporting procedures, the OACC will report the number of comments that were forwarded to the OACC for review, and of those, the number that were referred to the Academic and Community Conduct system.

The CTL will not release any information related to the student rating of instruction scores of any instructor prior to the end of the grade submission period for that term. No release will occur at

any time to any other parties without the prior written permission of that instructor, except as required by law.

The CTL will present an annual report on teaching at Michigan Tech to the Senate. This report must include but is not limited to statistical analysis of the university-required questions.

4. Uses of the results of student evaluations:

The goal of conducting student evaluations is to help instructional personnel and those with direct responsibility for oversight of the instructional program to develop and to implement improvement of instruction across campus. Each unit's charter will define the overall process pertaining to how student evaluations will be addressed and utilized in promoting teaching improvement. The unit will develop procedures that follow minimal best practice standards as defined by the Senate, in consultation with CTL, including some combination of numerical and written student feedback, peer-review, administrative observations, and/or self-evaluations.

The evaluated instructor will be able to use the information derived from numerical and written student evaluations and other processes to identify strengths and weaknesses. Each instructor will act on evaluation information to improve instruction and pedagogy.

The appropriate academic administrator will follow the general constraints as expressed in the unit charter for evaluation of instruction. ~~Student written comments will not be used in evaluations affecting personnel decisions by the unit administrator.~~ Administrators will use summative and aggregated student numerical evaluations and written comments as part of their evaluation of an instructor's teaching. Analyses of student numerical rating of instruction feedback will compose no more than 50% of the overall evaluation by the unit administrator.

The appropriate academic administrator will list on the Senate website their evaluation instruments and processes (peer evaluation form, self-evaluation forms, etc.) in sufficient detail for new faculty to understand the basis on which their teaching is being evaluated, and the percentage weight given to each instrument.

5. Trial usage of alternative student evaluation instruments:

Any alternative instrument will be furnished by the director of the CTL. These are understood to be trial instruments being considered for adoption by the University.

The instrument will be used only by those instructors who freely elect to use the instrument in their classes. These instructors will cooperate with the director in the administration of the evaluation.

The results of the evaluations will be furnished to the instructors and others as appropriate, following current policy. The results of the evaluation will also be furnished to the director.

Before administration of the evaluation, instructors may elect to have the results of some or all items of the trial instrument released for publication.

The results of the evaluation will be retained by the director, who will maintain the results in strict confidence. The results will be used only for assessing the usefulness of the trial instruments, unless other use is granted in written permission from the individual instructor to the director.

B. Peer or Colleague Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

1. Procedures for peer or colleague evaluation:

Peer or colleague evaluations of teaching will be conducted according to each unit's established procedures and reported initially to the evaluated instructor. After the instructor has the opportunity to provide a written response to the evaluation (within 14 days), the evaluators will report a final summary evaluation that includes the instructor's written response to the academic administrator that leads the instructor's unit. All instructors have the opportunity to provide a peer or colleague evaluation as part of their evaluation of teaching.

2. Uses of peer or colleague evaluation:

The evaluated instructor will be able to use the evaluation's guidance in course development and teaching improvement. Peer or colleague evaluations are intended to ensure that instructors receive constructive advice concerning their professional development, but the responsibility for using that advice to improve instruction rests with the evaluated instructor.

The appropriate academic administrator will follow the general constraints as expressed in the unit charter for evaluation of instruction. The evaluation of teaching will be weighted in a manner that is commensurate with the assigned teaching responsibilities of each instructor. Peer or colleague evaluation will compose no more than 50% of the overall evaluation by the unit administrator.

C. Self-Evaluation of Teaching Effectiveness

1. Procedures for self-evaluation:

Self-evaluations of teaching will be conducted according to each unit's established procedures. All instructors have the opportunity to provide a self-evaluation as part of their evaluation of teaching to the appropriate academic administrator head/chair/dean.

2. Uses of self-evaluation:

The instructor will be able to use the evaluation's guidance in course development and teaching improvement. Self-evaluations are intended to serve as documentation of and reflection on the instructional experience.

The appropriate academic administrator will follow the general constraints as expressed in the unit charter for evaluation of instruction. Self-evaluation will compose no more than 50% of the overall evaluation by the unit administrator.

Proposal 12-03:

Adopted by Senate: 23 April 2003

Approved by President: 19 May 2003

Proposal 22-13:

Introduced to Senate: 27 March 2013

Approved by Senate: 10 April 2013

Approved by Administration: 27 April 2013

Proposal 22-18:

Introduced to Senate: 11 April 2018

Approved by Senate: 25 April 2018

Approved by Administration: 21 May 2018

Proposal 41-19:

Introduced to Senate 27 March 2019

Approved by Senate: 10 April 2019

Approved by Administration with editorial changes: 29 April 2019

Proposal 2-22 (this proposal):