

## KU Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness Protocol for Course Focused Peer Review (Revised Fall 2021)

### Overview

Peer review of teaching should include a detailed analysis of the instructor's plan for learning, including material selection, targeted goals for students, methods of measuring learning, indicators of success in learning, and use of time with students during scheduled classes, studios and labs. Thus, a high quality course-focused peer review requires conversation between the reviewer and course instructor, organized around a portfolio of course materials. The peer review may also include observation of one or more class periods, with a conversation before and after the observation. The reviewer should produce a document that summarizes the findings of the peer review.

### I. A Single Peer Review Conversation

**Getting Started:** Instructor provides a set of course materials (could be provided in advance) for the conversation. Essential items include (1) Syllabus; (2) Examples of assignments and criteria for assessing student performance; and (3) Examples of student work on the assignments. Instructor could also provide (in writing or through the conversation): a description of reasons for decisions about content and goals; elaboration of instructional design, reflection on students' achievements and plans for future course offerings.

**Conversation:** The conversation could follow the first five dimensions of the Benchmarks Rubric.

1. **Goals, content, and alignment:** What are students expected to learn? Are course goals appropriate? Is content aligned with the curriculum? Does content represent diverse perspectives?  
Materials: Syllabus  
Possible Conversation Prompts:
  - *What are your goals for students in the course? How do these interface with department, university, or discipline goals?*
  - *What are three critical things you want students to take away by the end of the semester?*
  - *What developmental level do students need to be at to engage with course material?*
  - *Do the stated goals for the course match the needs of students with whom you are working? How is that apparent?*
  - *What perspectives are represented in your course materials? How do you promote critical reflection on diverse perspectives?*
 [Materials: Syllabus]
  
2. **Teaching Practices:** How is in-class and out-of-class time used? What assignments, assessments and learning activities are implemented to help students reach the major learning goals? How are students engaged in the learning process?  
Materials: Sample Assignments and Learning Activities  
Possible Conversation Prompts:
  - *How do you spend your contact time with students? Lecturing, discussing, small groups,*

*one-on-one? Share some examples. How do students respond to the contact time?*

- *What assignments and activities do students do to prepare for and/or follow-up on class time? Share some examples.*
- *Are there other major activities they spend time on outside of class? Why are those activities important?*

3. **Class Climate.** What sort of climate for learning does the instructor create? What are students' views of their learning experience and how has this informed teaching?

Materials: Syllabus, Student Reflection Assignments or Surveys (if used)

Possible Conversation Prompts:

- *How do you encourage motivation, inclusion and a sense of belonging among your students?*
- *What strategies do you use to communicate with students?*
- *How do students interact with each other? Are there things you are doing to build a sense of community?*
- *How has student feedback informed the way you teach this course?*

4. **Achievement of Learning Outcomes.** What impact does the course have on learners? What is the evidence of student learning? Are there efforts to make achievement equitable?

Materials: Example Assignments/Assessments, Grading Criteria/Rubrics, Sample Student Work

Possible Conversation Prompts:

- *Which assignments do you think are most central to the course and best illustrate student learning?*
- *How do you evaluate student work? How do students respond to this evaluation?*
- *Does the student work on them meet your expectations? How do you know?*
- *Do you know if there are any inequities in student performance? If so, have you taken any steps to address them?*

5. **Reflection and Iterative Growth.** How has the instructor's teaching changed over time? How has this been informed by student learning evidence and other feedback?

Materials: Summaries or examples of student performance/work from different semesters (if available)

Possible Conversation Prompts:

- *How do you use previous student work to measure progress in student outcomes?*
- *What is your greatest challenge teaching this course?*
- *What changes have you made in this course from previous semesters? Why? How has this been informed by evidence of your students' learning? Did the changes yield the outcome you wanted?*

**Peer Review Document.** Prepare a document that summarizes the peer review by being reflective about your conversation with the course instructor (and observation). The guiding questions and quality tier descriptions in the Benchmarks Rubric can be used to guide this process. Refer to the evidence and examples reviewed and discussed in your conversation to support your comments about each dimension.

## II. Conversation and Classroom Visit

**Conversation Prior to Class Observation:** If this is your first review of this course, follow the general protocol suggested above under part I, with some additional questions about the day you will visit.

- Ask the instructor to share course materials that will be needed for you to understand the context of the classroom activities the day you will visit, such as pre-class preparatory work such as readings, discussion prompts or problem sets.
- Find out what the instructor hopes to achieve in the class period you are observing, how the day's activities are designed toward those goals, and what assessments or assignments will enable the instructor to determine whether students have achieved what was desired.

**Class Observation:** During the class period observation, look for evidence to support the first five course-focused dimensions of the Benchmarks Rubric:

1. Goals, content, and alignment
  - *Are the day's learning goals communicated and clear?*
  - *Are the day's learning goals appropriately challenging?*
  - *Are the day's learning goals aligned with the curriculum?*
2. Teaching practices
  - *Were the in-class activities aligned with the learning goals?*
  - *What practices were used? Lecture, discussion, group problem solving, etc..?*
  - *Were students engaged with the material?*
3. Achievement of learning outcomes
  - *Were class objectives achieved? What informal indicators and formative assessments provide evidence about this?*
  - *Was the instructor aware of students' level of understanding? If so how? What opportunities did the instructor create to gauge student understanding?*
  - *How do the classroom activities connect to more formal and summative assessments?*
4. Classroom climate and student perceptions
  - *Were students engaged with the classroom activities?*
  - *What practices were used to encourage motivation and engagement? Was the classroom climate welcoming to all students?*

- *Did the students have a chance to provide feedback on their learning?*
5. Reflection and iterative growth (see also follow-up conversation)
- *Did the instructor adjust teaching practices or class plans to meet students where they are?*

**Follow-up Conversation.** If possible, find a time to debrief with the instructor. This conversation could focus on:

- The instructors' reflections on whether the outcomes of the class period matched what the instructor intended,
- The instructor's assessments of student learning based on that class period, either from within the observed class period or on follow-up assignments
- Whether they might want to make any adjustments related to the class period in future offerings
- Feedback to the instructor: specific suggestions of things that worked well, areas that could be strengthened, and ideas that you would try in their course or ideas you would like to take from their course to try in your own courses.

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