**A Peer Review Guide for Face-to-Face and Hybrid Teaching at Penn State**

**Background**

In 2022, the University’s the Joint Implementation Task Force on Teaching Assessment identified four elements of effective teaching, as evident through research and related literature:

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| Blueprint with solid fill | **Effective Course Design** |
| Classroom with solid fill | **Effective Instruction** |
| Cheers with solid fill | **Inclusive and Ethical Pedagogy** |
| Comment Like with solid fill | **Reflective and Evolving Practice** |

Importantly, these four elements of effective teaching are not exhaustive. Rather, they are distilled from a substantial literature on effective teaching as those that provide a meaningful throughline in self, peer, and student perspectives on effective teaching. Likewise, these four elements are not mutually exclusive.

This peer review guide addresses all four elements of effective teaching and is based on an extensive review of more than 50 years of research focused on effective higher education teaching and learning practices. In 1987, the resulting “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education” was published by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson, distilling the research findings into seven core principles. Their findings, and faculty and institutional evaluation instruments based on the findings, have stood the test of time and have been widely used to guide and improve college teaching ever since.

**The Seven Principles**

Good practice:

1. Encourages contact between students and faculty;
2. Develops reciprocity and cooperation among students;
3. Encourages active learning;
4. Gives prompt feedback;
5. Emphasizes time on task;
6. Communicates high expectations; and
7. Respects diverse talents and ways of learning.

Chickering, A. & Gamson, Z. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin (39 )*7.

This *Peer Review Guide* adapts the Seven Principles to facilitate the peer review of face-to-face and hybrid teaching in both undergraduate and graduate level courses at Penn State. Each principle is described in detail and include examples of evidence of how a principle may be met. Suggested resources are also provided to facilitate professional development.

Using icons, each of the seven principles is associated with at least one of the University’s four elements of effective teaching:

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| --- | --- |
| Blueprint with solid fill | **Effective Course Design** |
| Classroom with solid fill | **Effective Instruction** |
| Cheers with solid fill | **Inclusive and Ethical Pedagogy** |

While, ideally, good practice would suggest that all seven principles would be supported in some way in one’s teaching, variations in course format, size, and faculty teaching experience can make reaching that ideal difficult. It is assumed that a peer reviewer will discover room for improvement when examining a course through the lens of the Seven Principles. This Peer Review Guide provides space for the peer reviewer to note teaching and learning strengths, as well as areas for improvement. Thus, in total, the examination of each principle is designed to contribute to the final element of effective teaching:

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| Comment Like with solid fill | **Reflective and Evolving Practice** |

**A Recommended Peer Review Process**

Peer reviews of teaching are required for promotion and tenure at Penn State. We also need to conduct peer reviews for our part-time faculty members who teach. University Policy HR23 states, “Each academic unit (e.g., department, college, and University Libraries) of the University should take responsibility for developing detailed review procedures, supplemental to and consonant with general University procedures, as guidelines for promotion and tenure.” To help facilitate the peer review of teaching, the following peer review process is suggested:

1. The department/division head or school director or, where appropriate, campus chancellor and campus director of academic affair, identifies a faculty peer (“peer reviewer”) to conduct the peer review of teaching.
2. The course instructor completes the “Instructor Input Form” and shares that document with the peer reviewer to convey contextual information about the course.
3. After reviewing the completed “Instructor Input Form,” the peer reviewer uses the “Peer Review Guide for Face-to-face and Hybrid Courses” to observe how the instructor addresses each of the Seven Principles. The reviewer notes the instructor’s strengths and areas for improvement for each Principle in the space provided.  
     
   NOTE: Reviewers should feel free to ask questions of the instructor any time clarification or information is needed during the review process.
4. The peer reviewer summarizes the feedback in the form of a letter to that instructor that can be included in the instructor’s dossier. The letter, as well as a copy of the completed Peer Review Guide, is then shared with the instructor, the Program Manager (if the course is part of an online program), and the department/division head or school director or, where appropriate, campus chancellor and campus director of academic affairs.

For **provisional faculty** (not yet tenured), it is recommended that peer reviews should occur at least once per year and in a variety of courses.Faculty being **reviewed for promotion**, it is better to have a series of peer reviews over time rather than several in the fall immediately preceding the review.

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| **Principle 1: Good practice encourages contact between students and faculty**  Classroom with solid fillCheers with solid fill  Frequent and timely student-faculty contact is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement, particularly in a hybrid environment. Evidence of faculty concern helps students get through challenging situations and inspires them to persevere. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans.  **Examples of evidence to look for:** The instructor...   * Encourages and fosters a healthy exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences among course participants. * Holds regular office hours, and by appointment, either face-to-face or that are mediated by technology (e.g., the telephone, chat areas, Adobe Connect Pro) to accommodate distance students * Encourages students to share their questions, examples, and experiences * Accepts students’ responses * Treats students as individuals, e.g., addresses students by name * Incorporates student ideas into the class * Checks individual and/or groups of students’ understanding of the material/approach   **Additional examples to look for in the *face-to-face classroom*:** The instructor...   * Uses gestures, movements, facial expressions, and other physical responses that him/her more friendly and accessible * Pauses after asking questions * Attends respectfully to student comprehension or puzzlement * Explores topics in detail with students (rather than skimming by many ideas)   **Additional examples to look for *in the online environment*:** The instructor...   * Provides a "welcome message" at the beginning of the course that encourages student-to-instructor contact * Initiates contact with, or respond to, students on a regular basis to establish a consistent online presence in the course (and gives students prior notice if the instructor will be unavailable for more than a few days) * Uses a prominent announcement area to communicate important up-to-date course information to students, such as reminders of impending assignment due dates, curriculum changes, scheduled absences, etc. * Responds to student inquiries in a timely manner * Provides students with interaction space for study groups, "hallway conversations,” etc.   Where to look online:   * Communication tools (discussion areas, e-mail, chat rooms, social media spaces, etc.) * Posted announcements * Course syllabus   **Resources:**   * [Creating Community](https://rise.articulate.com/share/bsZjpl8E4Df2C-iAydutCwtgkHcV4arY#/lessons/3iBpQO84vVP4KLnBnb6UJLmN0ucQpE6-) * [Managing Your Online Class](http://facdev.e-education.psu.edu/teach/manage) - * [Icebreaker Ideas for Students Learning Remotely](https://www.uwb.edu/it/teaching/remote-instruction/icebreaker-ideas) * [50 Distance Learning Icebreakers and Games](https://www.vivifystem.com/blog/2020/6/1/icebreakers-for-distance-learning) * [ELI Discovery Tool: Blended Learning Workshop Guide: Building Community and Collaboration](https://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI80073.pdf) | **Feedback for the Instructor**  **Evidence Found:**  **Strengths:**  **Areas for Improvement:** |
| **Principle 2: Good practice develops reciprocity and cooperation among students**  Blueprint with solid fillCheers with solid fill  Learning is enhanced when it is more like a team effort than a solo race. Good learning, like good work, is collaborative and social, not competitive and isolated. Working with others often increases involvement in learning. Sharing one's own ideas and responding to others' reactions sharpens thinking and deepens understanding.  **Examples of evidence to look for:** The instructor...   * Provides discussion prompts that help to guide and elicit student participation in class discussion activities. * Facilitates class discussions by encouraging, probing, questioning, summarizing, etc. * Has students work on problems in teams, being sure to design group assignments so that they follow the basic tenants of cooperative learning (see Resources, below) to avoid the common pitfalls of "group work" * Conducts a "meet one another" activity at the beginning of the course so students can begin to make personal connections * Draws non-participating students into activities and discussions * Prevents specific students from dominating activities/discussions * Guides the direction of discussions, mediating conflict or differences of opinion * Provides regular opportunities for students to engage in one or more of the following activities: formal and/or informal discussions of course topics, collaborative course assignments, and study groups   **Additional examples to look for *in an online environment:*** The instructor...   * Encourages students to strengthen their online presence in the course by sharing links to their e-portfolio, personal Web site, and/or posting a photo of themselves to the class Web space (e.g., their LMS profile) * Explains the criteria for “good” online discussion participation * Provides Netiquette guidelines are provided to ensure respectful interaction * Models good online discussion participation practices * Provides students with interaction space(s) for study groups, "hallway conversations,” etc.   Where to look online:   * Instructional materials / Assignment directions * Communication tools (discussion areas, e-mail, chat rooms, social media spaces, etc.) * Posted announcements * Course syllabus * Collaborative spaces (wikis, blogs, etc.)   **Resources:**   * [An Overview of Cooperative Learning](http://www.co-operation.org/what-is-cooperative-learning/) * [Creating Community](https://rise.articulate.com/share/bsZjpl8E4Df2C-iAydutCwtgkHcV4arY#/lessons/3iBpQO84vVP4KLnBnb6UJLmN0ucQpE6-) * [How-to Facilitate Robust Online Discussions](https://onlinelearninginsights.wordpress.com/2012/06/25/how-to-create-robust-discussions-online/) | **Feedback for the Instructor**  **Evidence Found:**  **Strengths:**  **Areas for Improvement:** |
| **Principle 3: Good practice encourages active learning**  Blueprint with solid fillClassroom with solid fill  Active learning methods engage students in the learning process by encouraging them to discover, process, and apply information. Empirical support for the positive impact of active learning on student achievement is extensive.[[1]](#footnote-1)  **Examples of evidence to look for:** The instructor...   * Challenges or engages student assumptions * Demonstrates active listening * Models thinking and problem-solving; works through problems, scenarios, arguments with students * Assigns student activities that involve one or more of the following[[2]](#footnote-2):   + active use of writing, speaking, and other forms of self-expression   + opportunity for information gathering, synthesis, and analysis in solving problems (including the use of library, electronic/computer and other resources, and quantitative reasoning and interpretation, as applicable)   + engagement in collaborative learning activities   + application of intercultural and international competence   + dialogue pertaining to social behavior, community, and scholarly conduct   + integrates three or more of the above activities into General Education courses offered in the knowledge domains (<https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/general-education/>)   + thinking, talking, or writing about their learning   + reflecting, relating, organizing, applying, synthesizing, or evaluating information   + performing research, lab or studio work, or physical activities   + participating in, designing, or developing educational games and simulations   Provides opportunities for students to “customize” assignments to their personal and professional interests and needs  **Where to look:**   * Course syllabus * Instructional materials * Assignment dropboxes * e-Portfolios * Communication tools (discussion areas, e-mail, chat rooms, social media spaces, etc.)   **Resources:**   * [Strategies for Creating Engaging Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning Environments](https://weblearning.psu.edu/strategies-for-creating-engaging-synchronous-and-asynchronous-learning-environments/) - * [Engagement Activities](https://rise.articulate.com/share/bsZjpl8E4Df2C-iAydutCwtgkHcV4arY#/lessons/2qW4vDsRVpBlK3IoJ_EZxrfOUa86QRs8) * [Active Learning](https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/active-learning) * [Active Learning Techniques](https://crlt.umich.edu/sites/default/files/resource_files/Active%20Learning%20Continuum%20Techniques.pdf) * [Engaging Activities](https://teachingcommons.stanford.edu/explore-teaching-guides/class-activities/engaging-activities) * [Inquiry-based Learning](http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/pdf/IBL.pdf) | **Feedback for the Instructor**  **Evidence Found:**  **Strengths:**  **Areas for Improvement:** |
| **Principle 4: Good practice gives prompt feedback**  Blueprint with solid fillClassroom with solid fill  Instructors help students frequently assess their knowledge and competence and provide them with opportunities to perform, receive meaningful suggestions, and reflect on their learning.  **Examples of evidence to look for:** The instructor...   * Includes information about course feedback methods and standards on the course syllabus. * Provides an option (or requirement) for students to submit drafts of assignments for instructor feedback. * Provides meaningful feedback on student assignments that is provided within a publicized, and reasonable, time frame. * Provides assignment feedback that is clear, positive, specific, and focused on observable behavior that can be changed. * Clearly communicates course and individual assignment grading criteria. * Surveys students to elicit feedback for course improvement. * Praises/acknowledges responses from the class. * Helps students to extend their responses. * Asks student teams to read each other’s homework and critique. * Structures discussions of material based on feedback on students’ understanding.   **Additional examples to look for *in an online environment*:** *The instructor...*   * Gives students access to an up-to-date course gradebook. * Provides an open discussion forum where students can ask questions, and receive instructor feedback, about course content and activities. * Shares examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals. * Provides opportunities for practice with feedback such as interactive self-assessments or narrated demonstrations of how to solve mathematical problems.   **Where to look:**   * Course syllabus * Instructional materials / Assignment directions * Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios * Course gradebook * Discussion forums * Survey instruments   **Additional examples to look for *in the face-to-face classroom:*** *The instructor...*   * Has students work problems on the board. * Actively monitors group activities (e.g., asking questions, offering help).   **Resources:**   * [Seven Keys to Effective Feedback](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept12/vol70/num01/Seven-Keys-to-Effective-Feedback.aspx) * [5 Research-based Tips for Providing Students with Meaningful Feedback](http://www.edutopia.org/blog/tips-providing-students-meaningful-feedback-marianne-stenger) * Howard E. Aldrich. 2002. “Your Paper’s on the Floor, Outside My Door.” *National Teaching & Learning Forum*, 12, 1: 10. | **Feedback for the Instructor**  **Evidence Found:**  **Strengths:**  **Areas for Improvement:** |
| **Principle 5: Good education emphasizes time on task**  Blueprint with solid fillClassroom with solid fill  The frequency and duration of study, as well as effective time management skills, are critical for students and professionals alike. Students need help in learning to manage and prioritize their study time.  **Examples of evidence to look for:** The instructor...   * Provides a course schedule that outlines topics to be covered and assignment due dates so students can plan their workload accordingly. * Provides course-specific study tips that provide students with strategies for utilizing their time well. * Provides assignment feedback that gives students with information on where to focus their studies. * Considers the nature of the student audience when considering assignment due dates and timeframes, e.g., a course targeted to working adult professionals might incorporate a weekend into an assignment timeframe. * Makes announcements to the class addressing upcoming assignments and exams. * Provides explicit directions for active learning tasks, e.g., rationale, duration, product. * Allows sufficient time to complete tasks, such as group work.   **Additonal examples to look for *in the online environment:*** The instructor...   * Includes information on the course syllabus that provides an estimate of the amount of time students should spend on the course, e.g., “On average, most students spend eight hours per week working on course assignments. Your workload may be more or less depending on your prior experience with computing and the Web in general, and with this subject in particular.” * Gives time-to-completion information on course assignments, e.g., “This assignment should take you approximately 2 hours to complete.” * Shares course statistics that demonstrate that time-to-completion and weekly time-on-task estimates are on target.   **Where to look:**   * Course syllabus * Instructional materials / Assignment directions * Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios * Log in and other access data in the LMS   **Additional examples to look for *in the face-to-face classroom:*** The instructor models time on task and organization skills by:   * Arriving to class on time * Providing an outline or organization for the class session * Following the stated structure * Completing the scheduled topics   **Resources:**   * [Time Management: Five Essentials for Online Learners](https://www.worldcampus.psu.edu/about-us/news-and-features/time-management-five-essentials-for-online-learners) * [Adjusting Your Study Habits](https://keeplearning.psu.edu/topics/study-habits/) * [Online Course Design: Time on Task](https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/sites/rit.edu.academicaffairs.tls/files/docs/Course%20Design_Online_Time%20%20on%20Task_v1.5.pdf) * [iStudy Module (for students) on Time Management](http://tutorials.istudy.psu.edu/timemanagement/) * [How Students Develop Online Learning Skills](https://er.educause.edu/articles/2007/1/how-students-develop-online-learning-skills) | **Feedback for the Instructor**  **Evidence Found:**  **Strengths:**  **Areas for Improvement:** |
| **Principle 6: Good practice communicates high expectations**  Blueprint with solid fillClassroom with solid fill  As the saying goes, “if you don’t know where you are going, how will you know when you get there?” Effective instructors have high, but reasonable, expectations for their students. They clearly communicate those expectations and provide support to their students in their efforts to meet those expectations.  **Examples of evidence to look for:** The instructor...   * Explicitly communicates the skills and knowledge every student needs to have to be successful in the course. * Explains course learning goals and how assignments are designed to help students achieve those goals. * Provides frequent feedback to students through written explanations and detailed feedback on assignments. * Motivates and encourages students to inspire them to move past the easy answers to more complex solutions. * Routinely uses critical and probing questions when communicating with students about course assignments and activities. * Provides examples and non-examples of high-quality work, along with a discussion of the differences between these. * Provides examples of student work that demonstrate advancement toward learning goals. * Corrects misguided responses or redirects obvious or easy questions. * Relates this and previous class(es) or provides students with an opportunity to do so. * Conveys the purpose of each class activity or assignment. * Elaborates or repeats complex information. * Notes new terms or concepts. * Communicates the reasoning process behind operations and/or concepts.   **Where to look:**   * Course syllabus * Instructional materials / Assignment directions * Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios   **Additional examples to look for *in the face-to-face classroom:*** The instructor...   * Provides class goals or objectives for the class session. * Pauses during explanations to ask and answer questions.   **Resources:**   * [Maximizing the Student Learning Experience](https://rise.articulate.com/share/bsZjpl8E4Df2C-iAydutCwtgkHcV4arY#/lessons/cD18_bj_pB5LiSM3ZA33RB7ycUyxHpcb) (see section on “Working with Learning Objectives”) * [Resources related to writing clear learning objectives](http://www.schreyerinstitute.psu.edu/Tools/?q=Learning%20Objective) * [Authentic Assessment in Online Education](https://sites.google.com/site/designingcoursesonline/home/authentic-assessment-in-online-education) * [Using Rubrics](https://rise.articulate.com/share/bsZjpl8E4Df2C-iAydutCwtgkHcV4arY#/lessons/lzf4100KXGa7XPYFNOsehM6MKjXRY4Qr) * [Writing Great Assignment Instructions: Tips for Success](https://online.une.edu/blog/writing-great-assignment-instructions-tips-success/?cn-reloaded=1) * [Syllabus Requirements for EMS Blended and Online Courses](https://facdev.e-education.psu.edu/teach/onlinesyllabus) | **Feedback for the Instructor**  **Evidence Found:**  **Strengths:**  **Areas for Improvement:** |
| **Principle 7: Good practice respects diverse talents and ways of learning**  Blueprint with solid fillClassroom with solid fillCheers with solid fill  People bring different talents and styles of learning to the learning environment. Some bring a wealth of relevant experience to a course, while others may be new to the topic at hand. Likewise, students who are strong in a discussion situation may be less adept at lab or studio work. Students need the opportunity to demonstrate their talents and to “personalize” their learning so that it is relevant to them. It is also important to give students opportunities to learn in ways that may be less comfortable to improve their learning skills.  **Examples of evidence to look for:** The instructor...   * Uses of a variety of assessment tools that gauge student progress. * Provides alternative assignment options that allow students to demonstrate their progress in a manner that is best conducive to their talents, e.g., a podcast might be allowed as learning evidence instead of a written paper. * Provides timely, corrective feedback for learning activities. * Includes a policy for accommodations on the course syllabus. * Proactively offers accommodations for students with disabilities. * Uses more than one form of instruction. * Provides opportunities and time for students to practice. * Provides a variety of examples and contexts to evoke interest in students with a diversity of identity characteristics. * Encourages comments and questions from students with a diversity of identity characteristics**.** * Identifies diverse sources, perspectives, and authorities of the field   **Additional examples to look for *in the online environment:*** The instructor...   * Provides supplemental online materials for students who lack prerequisite knowledge or who would benefit from having content presented in an alternative manner. * Creates a positive online climate where students are encouraged to seek assistance with course content and learning activities if needed.   **Where to look:**   * Course syllabus * Instructional materials / Assignment directions * Assignment dropboxes and e-portfolios * Discussion forums   **Additional examples to look for *in the face-to-face classroom:*** The instructor....   * Uses various instructional technologies to bring multiple sensory dimensions to the classroom.   **Resources:**   * [Learning effectively by understanding your learning preferences](http://www.mindtools.com/mnemlsty.html) * [Classroom Assessment Techniques](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/cats/) * [Accessibility and Usability at Penn State](http://accessibility.psu.edu/) * [Student Disability Resources at Penn State](http://equity.psu.edu/ods/faculty-handbook) * [Student Disability Resources - Information for Faculty at Penn State](http://equity.psu.edu/ods/faculty-handbook) | **Feedback for the Instructor**  **Evidence Found:**  **Strengths:**  **Areas for Improvement:** |

1. Prince, M. (July 2004). Does active learning work? A review of the research. *Journal of Engineering Education, 93*, 3, 223-232. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Senate Committee on Curricular Affairs (2001). A clarification of ‘active learning’ as it applies to general education (Legislative). Located at http://senate.psu.edu/scca/curricular%20affairs%20reports/2-01%20CA%20RPT%202.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)