USA Assessment of Teaching Effectiveness

1. **Purpose**

   This policy establishes the University of South Alabama's (USA) guidelines for assessing teaching effectiveness through a structured, multi-faceted evaluation process. The policy aims to ensure that faculty receive meaningful feedback to enhance their teaching, promote student learning, and support professional development.

   At USA, the goal of the assessment of teaching is to promote student learning by supporting faculty, not only in their courses but also in their mentoring, advising, and co-curricular work. The USA Faculty Handbook states, "*The area of teaching effectiveness includes classroom and laboratory performance, academic advising and counseling, availability to students, supervision of students' independent research or study, course and curriculum development, and guest lectures to classes.*" Assessment measures gauge faculty success in the moment but also provide a means to create benchmarks and a method to pursue ongoing improvement due to meaningful feedback, reflection, change, and ongoing engagement with, and implementation of, evidence-based techniques. Attention to evidence-based instructional practices increases the likelihood of successful teaching by faculty and learning by students and is a critical area of focus in the assessment of teaching effectiveness. The following principles serve as a guide for the development and implementation of this policy:

   Principle I: Effective teaching is essential to the mission of the University of South Alabama.
   - The University of South Alabama values student success and high-quality learning, academic persistence, and degree completion.

   Principle II: The entire University benefits from measuring teaching effectiveness.
   - Students benefit from more effective teaching that allows them to learn more productively and progress toward degree completion.
   - Faculty benefit from guidance and a structured process that supports continuous improvement in instruction, as well as data collected over time.
   - Chairs, deans, and the provost benefit from a clear process to evaluate faculty with regard to teaching effectiveness.

   Principle III: Faculty demonstrate teaching effectiveness through a teaching portfolio.
   - Becoming an effective teacher and maintaining teaching effectiveness is a process of continuous improvement and professional development.
   - Demonstrating teaching effectiveness requires maintaining a teaching portfolio to document the process of assessment, reflection, and change over time.
   - Peer review of teaching provides a robust avenue for faculty to demonstrate teaching effectiveness and demonstrate improvement (akin to peer-reviewed publications demonstrating scholarly productivity).

   Principle IV: Effective teaching requires the implementation of evidence-based instructional practices.
   - Teaching practices should demonstrate the use of strategies that reflect the evidence base on how people learn.
   - Appropriate technology should be utilized in the instructional process. This can make instructional delivery, instructional materials, and assessments align with federal accessibility guidelines and also incorporate practices that reflect Universal Design for Learning.

2. **Applicability**

This policy applies to all instructional faculty at the University of South Alabama. The assessment of teaching effectiveness is a required component of faculty evaluation, including annual reviews, tenure and promotion processes, and rehiring decisions, with detailed processes provided in the USA Faculty Handbook. This policy outlines responsibilities for academic units, faculty, and administrators in maintaining a transparent and meaningful process for assessing teaching effectiveness.

3. Policy Guidelines

3.1   Faculty will include peer review of teaching and multiple measures of teaching effectiveness rather than only relying on Student Perceptions of Instruction (SPI) in order to improve the assessment of teaching effectiveness and strengthen opportunities for professional growth and development.

3.2   Full-time faculty will develop and maintain an electronic teaching portfolio that includes results from the Student Perceptions of Instruction instrument. Faculty will work toward continuous improvement in teaching, including responding to evaluations and feedback on the quality and effectiveness of their teaching.

3.3   Peer review of teaching will be conducted as appropriate to rank, title, and/or tenure/promotion status of a faculty. Observations of instruction should follow an established protocol consistent throughout the unit, including developing an evidence-based evaluation instrument and appropriate standards of evidence for all modalities of instruction.

3.4   As measurement of teaching effectiveness may vary across units depending on faculty assignments and/or effort assigned, each unit (college, school, library) must develop a written statement of criteria and expectations that elaborates on the criteria of teaching effectiveness for all instructional faculty. The unit should publish its procedures and guidelines for evaluating teaching effectiveness that align with university policies and procedures as set forth in the Faculty Handbook.

4. Specific Considerations

4.1   For probationary faculty (i.e., tenure track faculty who do not yet have tenure), faculty will maintain a teaching portfolio annually through the initial tenure and/or promotion review. The teaching portfolio includes Student Perceptions of Instruction data, a report of peer review of teaching, and other forms of teaching assessment appropriate to the promotion criteria, procedures, and guidelines for their unit. Peer reviews of teaching will be conducted for the second- and fourth-year reviews (or near the mid-point of the probationary term for those faculty members whose probationary term includes credit for prior service) and upon the faculty member's request during other years. A peer review letter will be included in a candidate's tenure and promotion materials and should also be considered at a faculty member's annual review. Each unit may maintain its own teaching effectiveness criteria, procedures and guidelines, developed by the faculty and dean, for managing this requirement and guided by accepted evidence-based practices.

4.2   For tenured faculty undergoing review for promotion, faculty will submit a teaching portfolio that includes Student Perceptions of Instruction data, a report of peer review of teaching, and other forms of teaching assessment appropriate to the promotion criteria, procedures, and guidelines for their unit. Faculty should plan to obtain a peer review of teaching at least once in the academic year or semester prior to submitting their application materials. Each unit may maintain its own teaching effectiveness criteria, procedures and guidelines, developed by the

faculty and dean, for managing this requirement and guided by accepted evidence-based practices.

4.3 For <u>tenured</u> faculty, the Annual Faculty Evaluation process requires an evaluation of teaching effectiveness. Each academic unit should consider including appropriate indicators of teaching effectiveness relevant to a teaching evaluation, such as a record of professional development, results from a peer review of teaching, and reflections on the design, implementation, and assessment of teaching innovations in response to certain identified learner needs.

4.4 For full-time, <u>non-tenure-track faculty (Instructor, Senior Instructor, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor)</u>, faculty will maintain a teaching portfolio that is submitted as a part of the faculty member's annual review. Peer reviews of teaching will be conducted for the second-year and fourth-year reviews and for the first promotion review. For future promotion considerations, faculty under review should plan to obtain a peer evaluation of teaching once in the academic year or semester prior to submitting their application materials for promotion. A peer review letter will be included in a candidate's promotion materials.

5. Responsibilities

5.1 Academic Unit

5.1.1 All instructional faculty must be assessed for teaching effectiveness on a schedule appropriate for their rank, title, and tenure/promotion status.

5.1.2 Evidence of teaching effectiveness must be an essential consideration in the annual review, all tenure and promotion, and rehiring decisions of instructional faculty. The Annual Faculty Evaluation (AFE) is mandated by the University's Affirmative Action Plan and must be completed for all faculty members each year; it is not optional.

5.1.3 Colleges will identify and utilize multiple sources and types of data to measure teaching effectiveness. The sources and types of data should appropriately reflect the various types of teaching contexts (e.g., lab, directed studies, clinical, advising).

5.2 Faculty

5.2.1 Create and maintain an electronic teaching portfolio that includes:

- A teaching narrative that demonstrates working toward continuous improvement should include a statement of teaching philosophy, a summary of assessment data, changes made in response, reflection/self-evaluation, and planning for the future by the faculty member.
- Student Perceptions of Instruction (SPI) survey results for all courses taught when these are available.
- A report of peer review of teaching appropriate to rank, title, and/or tenure/promotion status as defined in Section 4 of this document.
- Other appropriate indicators and innovative teaching methods applicable to the instructor's field.

5.2.2 Existing tools such as Watermark Faculty Success (previously Digital Measures) or other

emergent tools (e.g., Canvas Folio) should be used to manage the complex logistics of constructing, maintaining, and evaluating e-portfolios.

6   Related Documents

USA Faculty Handbook

Teaching Effectiveness Policy Implementation Plan

Summer 2025	Policy approved.
	Colleges begin developing specific guidelines and plans to implement the policy, engaging faculty in the discussion and ensuring communication with faculty. Colleges are encouraged to leverage existing resources and consider workload expectations throughout the planning process.
	ILC begins planning for peer review training.
Fall 2025 - Spring 2026	Colleges continue collaborative development of guidelines and plans for implementation.
	ILC develops plans for training faculty in demonstrating teaching effectiveness through portfolio development. ILC initiates peer review training.
Summer 2026	Policy *may* be used by those up for tenure and/or promotion, if the faculty member chooses to do so.
	Colleges submit specific guidelines and plans to implement the policy and share discipline-specific templates for effective teaching portfolios by June 15, 2026.
	ILC initiates training to support faculty in demonstrating teaching effectiveness through portfolio development. ILC continues peer review training.
Fall 2026 - Summer 2028	Policy fully applies to new hires and to those with tenure and/or promotion timelines beginning in Fall 2026. Policy *may* be used by those up for tenure and/or promotion, if the faculty member chooses to do so.
	College-specific guidelines and implementation plans are broadly distributed and implemented.
	ILC continues peer review training and training to support faculty in demonstrating teaching effectiveness through portfolio development.
Fall 2028 - Summer 2033	Policy applies to all faculty to the extent possible, though the teaching portfolio will be partially complete (e.g., no 2nd year review).
	College-specific guidelines and implementation plans are applied.
	ILC continues peer review training and training to support faculty in demonstrating teaching effectiveness through portfolio development.
Fall 2033 and beyond	**Policy fully adopted and implemented for all faculty. College-specific guidelines and practices are utilized. Faculty training continues.**

Timeline for faculty hires and promotion eligibility

Instructor Track		Professorial Track	
Year of hire	Promotion eligibility	Year of hire	Promotion eligibility
2020	2027	2020	2026
2021	2028	2021	2027
2022	2029	2022	2028
2023	2030	2023	2029
2024	2031	2024	2030
2025	2032	2025	2031
2026	2033	2026	2032