

*The following draft document provides information/explanations for proposed changes to the faculty evaluation “class visit” process for online classes:*

### **Recommended “Class Visit” Process for Online Classes**

Faculty evaluation of online instruction should address elements of the course in the online environment comparable to those in a conventional face-to-face environment. The following points are intended to assist evaluatees and evaluators in the process.

#### **Important Rationale:**

The Collective Bargaining Agreement does not currently say much regarding the evaluation of online classes beyond that evaluators should have ongoing student role access and recently, an additional role of observer role was created for evaluations. Unfortunately, this creates inequity between the evaluation of online and in-person courses. Neither the student nor observer role sufficiently provides the kind of information that could be seen in a visit of an in-person class (meaning faculty being evaluated for online courses are at a disadvantage in comparison to faculty being evaluated for in-person courses). When evaluators have ongoing access to online courses via these roles, they are effectively sitting (invisibly) in the evaluatee’s course at all times (24 hours a day, seven days a week).

Because an online course site includes more than what would be contained in a college classroom, this is akin to sitting, non-stop, in both the physical classroom and office of a faculty member, even when the faculty member is not present. There is research spanning decades documenting the negative effects of constant monitoring/surveillance, such as: increases in stress, anxiety, physical ailments and decreases in employee morale, motivation, creativity, and job satisfaction. For a recent review of the research, see Kalischko and Riedl’s (2021) recent analysis “Electronic Performance Monitoring in the Digital Workplace: Conceptualization, Review of Effects and Moderators, and Future Research Opportunities.” As such, we have outlined better alternatives for conducting evaluations of online classes.

#### **Recommendations in short:**

- Spend at least 50 minutes evaluating online courses
  - The Collective Bargaining Agreement states that a class visit for an in-person class should be no less than 50 minutes, it is recommended that online classes receive no less than 50 minutes of observation as well.
- Create an agreement regarding course visit between the evaluators and evaluatee
  - In understanding that online courses can be structured very differently instructor-to-instructor and course-to-course, we do not recommend a one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation. Instead, we recommend choosing something from the following:
    - A course walkthrough via virtual meeting with screen share or pre-recording
    - Links to specific lectures/modules per request of evaluators (not continuous access)
    - If, and only if, an evaluatee agrees that broad access (via student/observer roles) to their online course is the best evaluation method for their course, then such access should be given in lieu of arranging a walkthrough and sending links/documents. However, an agreement should be made for a set amount of access time (no indefinite access throughout the semester).

- Spontaneous online class visits are still possible via these recommendations, see detailed section below

## **Recommendations with extended detail and explanation**

### **Spend at least 50 minutes evaluating online courses**

- The Collective Bargaining Agreement states that a class visit for an in-person class should be no less than 50 minutes, it is recommended that online classes receive no less than 50 minutes of observation as well.
- Spending any less than the minimum 50 minutes in an online course would put the evaluatee at a disadvantage in comparison in-person course evaluations in terms of the thoroughness of evaluation

### **Create an agreement regarding course visit between the evaluators and evaluatee**

- In understanding that online courses can be structured very differently instructor-to-instructor and course-to-course, we do not recommend a one-size-fits-all approach to evaluation. Instead, there should be an agreement made between the evaluators and the evaluatee in terms of which of the following options would be allow for a thorough “class visit” of their course:
  - The evaluatee can lead evaluators through a detailed walkthrough of their course (this can be done via a virtual meeting or via a screencast pre-recording).
    - Such a walkthrough allows evaluators to see how the instructor has structured their online course (in terms of access to student resources and services, course documents, and out of class announcements). It is important to know that such structure is not something that is observed in an in-person class visit and, therefore, should not be a requirement of online class visits. However, for online courses, faculty put a lot of their time and effort toward the creation of their online course structure and the walkthrough could serve as a time emphasize these components.
    - In addition, the evaluatee would be able to walk evaluators through certain components of their course that could be in-class when in person but not online (via the student nor observer role). For example, class visits allow observation of how faculty respond to student questions in class, such interactions are often not viewable for online (especially, fully asynchronous) courses. However, per a walkthrough, the instructor can enter discussion assignments than an observer cannot and/or show assignment feedback comments (using the anonymous grading option to maintain student privacy), to which neither the student nor observer role would have access.
- If a course includes recorded lectured lectures, live lectures, or specific readings, then the evaluatee should provide evaluators the necessary links/documents as appropriate per request.
  - In the same way that in-person class visits can, in theory, be for any class meeting (and multiple class meetings), evaluators can request to be sent “class” documents for specific lectures/modules.
  - To provide a kind of continuous blanket access to the online course leads to the deleterious effects of constant monitoring outlined above and places faculty of online courses at a disadvantage as an evaluator may pop in and out of various lectures/modules, which removed from the course’s overall structure and context can

lead to confusion and misunderstandings that could negatively affect the evaluatee's evaluation. Such random class visits happen for in-person courses, but they are visibly present as the evaluatee would see the evaluator in the classroom. This allows the evaluatee to provide necessary context to the visited lectures, if needed, in their self-evaluation letter. It would place an unrealistic and undue burden upon faculty teaching online courses to have to provide such blanket context for every single potential lecture/module that someone with blanket, continuous access could visit. It would also place evaluatees of online courses at a disadvantage if they did not know which lectures/modules evaluators visited in that they would not even know what context to provide.

- If, and only if, an evaluatee agrees that blanket, continuous access to their online course is the best evaluation method for their course, then such access should be given in lieu of arranging a walkthrough and sending links/documents.
- Such agreement could be a variety of reasons (e.g., places an undue burden on the evaluatee in that they would not have a way of sharing their screen to provide such access, the course is structured in a way that such access would provide adequate observation of all necessary evaluation components even via the limited student/observer roles, etc.)

### **How to still have spontaneity in online class visits**

- In-person class visits have the opportunity to be spontaneous, this spirit of this spontaneity can still be had in the context of the recommendations above.
- Evaluatees will still not know which specific lectures/modules are going to be requested by evaluators until the requests are made.
- If, for some reason, there is a concern regarding whether or not course materials sent to evaluators are what was actually provided to students, this can be easily resolved by asking the evaluator to click on "Page History" for any page within their Canvas course. Viewing this during a meeting/walkthrough would provide specific, and uneditable, timestamps as to exactly the page was created and every time it was subsequently changed.

***The following include the current CBA language and a draft of proposed CBA changes to the faculty evaluation “class visit” process for online classes:***

***Below is the current “Class Visits” language in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA):***

#### Class Visits

15.1.9.2 The appropriate manager and Department Chair each will make at least one (1) class or work station visit; peer(s) each will make at least two (2) class or work station visits. Class visits shall be of a minimum of fifty (50) minutes duration.

*For online classes, the faculty member who is being evaluated will establish access within the appropriate course Management System for all members of the evaluation committee. Access to the online class sessions will be established at the student level. At the request of the faculty member being evaluated, access may be established at a higher level. Access to the online class will persist for the duration of the term. In some circumstances, at the request of the faculty member being evaluated, and in addition to the minimum access to the online class discussed above, the faculty member may request to demonstrate certain features of the online class to the evaluation committee. This type of demonstration, if desired by the faculty member being evaluated, will be arranged during the first evaluation committee meeting.*

***Below is proposed replacement CBA language for red italicized portion above:***

For asynchronous online classes, class visits will consist of at least 50 minutes of course observation. Parameters for the course observation must be specified during the first committee meeting via mutual agreement between the evaluation committee and the faculty member being evaluated. The course observation will include a course walkthrough via a synchronous meeting or pre-recording, and/or links to specific lectures and/or modules as requested by the evaluation committee within the evaluation time frame determined at the first committee meeting. This evaluation time frame will not exceed the time period between the first and second evaluation committee meetings. At the request of the faculty member being evaluated, broader access to their online course may be established at the student/observer role in lieu of providing a synchronous walk-through or lecture/module links. Access at a higher level may be established at the request of the faculty member being evaluated. Access will be for a set amount of time agreed upon at the first committee meeting by the faculty member being evaluated and the evaluation committee.