

Criteria for Achieving High Competence/Genuine Excellence in Teaching

All instructional faculty are expected to fulfill their contractual teaching load and to teach at a high level of effectiveness. Provided below are relevant sections of the *Faculty Handbook* as well as a document provided by the Office of the Provost. These are followed by information specific to achieving Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Teaching in CEHD, including possible artifacts for inclusion in a portfolio. For additional information and resources, please refer to the Stearns Center for Teaching and Learning website (<http://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/>).

Faculty Handbook: 2.4 Criteria for Evaluation of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

2.4.1 Teaching

Effective teaching is demonstrated by the clarity, appropriateness, and efficacy of course materials, methods and presentations, and by successful learning outcomes. Contributions to teaching include the development and implementation of new courses and programs; the development of instructional materials, including applications of new technologies; the training and supervision of teaching assistants; mentoring graduate students; clinical and field supervision of students; and student advising.

Faculty Handbook: 2.5 Procedures for Evaluation of Tenured and Tenure-Track Faculty

2.5.1 Teaching

Local academic units regularly evaluate the teaching effectiveness of their faculty. In doing so, they are expected to incorporate data from both peers and students. Whatever additional methods may be used to gather information from students, the process should provide for their anonymous participation in course evaluations and should allow for comparisons among faculty teaching similar courses. Peer evaluation is expected to include, at a minimum, data on the development and implementation of new courses and programs, the appropriateness of course materials currently used, the level and quality of student advising, and learning outcomes. Additional forms of peer evaluation are expected. These may include, but are not limited to, peer observation of classroom teaching, evaluations by mentors, assessments of teaching performance by colleagues, and teaching portfolios.

Recommended Criteria for Evaluating Genuine Excellence in Teaching

(<https://provost.gmu.edu/administration/department-chairs/recruitment/evaluating-excellence-teaching>)

1. **Outstanding classroom teaching and learning outcomes, as evidenced by the usual measures, including but not limited to student evaluations.** Other evidence of teaching effectiveness includes peer observations; letters of support from students, alumni, and colleagues (solicited and unsolicited); student comments based on the whole population, not selected samples; and/or student focus groups. Thoughtful reflection on teaching will be sought in the teaching statement.

2. **Effective teaching is demonstrated by the clarity, appropriateness, and efficacy of course materials, methods and presentations, and by successful learning outcomes.** Example syllabi, other course materials created by the candidate, and student work used with permission can be used as sources of evidence.
3. **When applicable, evidence of educational work with students outside the classroom.** For example, supervising undergraduate research, master's theses, and dissertations; advising and mentoring activities; and/or clinical and field supervision of students.
4. **Faculty leadership in promoting student learning and teaching excellence.** For example, developing successful and innovative curricula and programs; developing instructional materials; teaching-related training, supervising, and mentoring of other faculty and graduate students; developing teaching innovations (e.g., the use of technology); leading team-teaching initiatives; and/or building support for educational partnerships within and across institutions.
5. **Teaching excellence across a variety of classes,** e.g., large and small, face-to-face and hybrid or online, undergraduate and graduate, while maintaining a consistent and appropriate teaching load.
6. **Maintenance of at least highly competent research,** evidenced by the usual measures, including outside letters.
7. **Evidence of teaching and learning impact beyond the classroom.** This involves some combination of conference presentations, workshops, performances, or exhibitions; invitations to other places; texts or teaching materials, including electronic; or articles on teaching and/or learning outcomes (see also #3 above). External funding for curricular development, piloting teaching methods, or advising could serve in this category also.

Note that building a case for Genuine Excellence in Teaching and steps toward appropriate evidence usually emerges over the career of the professor and is not a last-minute event. Outside evaluative letters should be based on a holistic evaluation of all of the above criteria. Very occasionally, exceptions to these criteria can be made, based on truly unusual and evidenced classroom impact and impact on other faculty members on campus.

Judgments of Genuine Excellence and High Competence in Teaching

Consistent with the documents provided above, teaching in CEHD is seen as multifaceted, to include teaching of classes and mentoring as well as participation or leadership in other teaching-related activities such as curriculum development, accreditation tasks, and scholarship related to teaching. In CEHD, a rating of "High Competence" is achieved by receiving average or above average student evaluations of teaching and positive peer evaluations; participating appropriately in curriculum development, assessment, and accreditation tasks; and showing evidence of versatility (in teaching assignments, mentoring and supervision, the use of innovative methods, and so forth). A rating of "Genuine Excellence" is achieved when accomplishments in the above areas are at a higher standard and provide evidence of impact beyond the classroom—specifically, course ratings must be superior, consistency and versatility must be greater, and there must be additional evidence of teaching excellence and impact. This could take a variety of forms, including increased mentoring and supervision activity, leadership in curriculum and program improvements/innovations, evidence of alumni success, scholarship of teaching, providing workshops on field of specialization to the community, presentations at national conferences related to teaching innovations, and so forth. The reflective statement from the faculty applicant should be consistent with theory and research on student learning and address how the faculty member has learned from student and colleague feedback.

Considerations for Achieving Genuine Excellence

There are several important considerations with respect to meeting the standard of *genuine excellence*.

1. One critical issue is the quality of the evidence provided to document claims of excellence. A single data point does not provide a convincing case. An example of how to provide a more compelling case would be to couple student evaluations with strong peer observation information or performance data to show that the students are meeting the course goals.
2. The focus should be on student outcomes, not just professor activities. Evidence should show, for example, how students expanded their disciplinary knowledge and/or skills, or became more willing to engage in difficult concepts, or learned new ways to approach questions. If teaching does not produce significant learning, it will not be considered excellent.
3. There also should be evidence of continued faculty learning and evolution. If there is attention to fostering learning, then teaching will necessarily evolve over time, because students themselves evolve over time. Also, genuinely excellent teachers actively seek to incorporate new knowledge and skills into their teaching.
4. Evidence for excellence in teaching ought to come from independent multiple sources which provide a pattern of data consistent with the concept of “genuine excellence” over time. Such evidence may reasonably accommodate periods of challenge and growth in the face of new and different teaching opportunities (i.e., variability in performance should be clearly linked to contextual influences).

Possible Artifacts for Inclusion

The following represent possible artifacts for inclusion in a portfolio of teaching accomplishments for CEHD faculty members:

Teaching of courses

- Teaching evaluations (numerical analysis per instructions)
- Peer observations
- Letters of support from students, alumni, and colleagues (solicited and unsolicited)
- Student comments (from teaching evaluations or another source) based on the whole population, not selected samples; and/or student focus groups
- Thoughtful reflection on teaching (will be sought in the teaching statement)
- Example syllabi, other course materials created by the candidate, and student work used with permission

Educational work with students outside the classroom (where applicable)

- Evidence of effective supervision of students conducting research
- Evidence of effective supervision of theses and/or dissertations as well as effective guidance provided as a member of PhD advising and dissertation committees

- Evidence of effective supervision of internships, independent studies, and field experiences (not already included in course evaluation data)
- Other effective advising and mentoring activities

Faculty leadership in promoting student learning and teaching excellence

- Examples of the development of new and successful and innovative curricula and programs, instructional materials, and/or teaching-related training programs
- Evidence of supervising and mentoring of other faculty and graduate students in relation to teaching; leading team-teaching initiatives; serving as a course leader for a program
- Revising/developing syllabi and course related materials and assessments for program improvement based on student achievement data and accreditation requirements
- Developing teaching innovations (e.g., the use of technology)
- Leading team-teaching initiatives; and/or building support for teaching-related partnerships within and across institutions

Evidence of teaching excellence across a variety of classes, e.g., large and small, face-to-face and hybrid or online, undergraduate and graduate, while maintaining a consistent and appropriate teaching load

Evidence of teaching and learning impact beyond the classroom

- conference presentations (related to teaching innovations or research on teaching)
- workshops, performances, or exhibitions
- invitations to teach at other places
- texts or teaching materials, including electronic
- articles on teaching and/or learning outcomes
- external funding for curricular development, piloting teaching methods, or advising

Aggregating Evidence to Form a Conclusion about High Competence/Genuine Excellence

Because the operational meaning of (i.e., evidence required to document) genuine excellence and high competence is dynamic and multifaceted, faculty and administrators should resist the temptation to try to quantify the teaching, research and scholarship, and service accomplishments that equate to “genuine excellence” or “high competence” in artificially precise terms. Teaching excellence can be manifested in many different ways depending on the person, context, and discipline. Extraordinary accomplishments in research and scholarship can take many forms, both within and across disciplines and academic units. Exceptional service may similarly stand out on dimensions that are more qualitative than quantitative (e.g., breadth or magnitude of impact, timeliness or uniqueness of a particular contribution, reputational consequences for the individual and Mason). This *equifinality* principle (i.e., the same end state can be reached through many different means) is at the core of what it means to celebrate (rather than punish) diversity and innovation in faculty accomplishments.