The best current research in collegiate teaching and learning shows how evaluations that provide descriptive details about exactly what someone does in and outside the classroom are much more effective at enhancing teaching than cursory comparisons based on “drop in” visits. The research suggests adopting a three-step process to give graduate students feedback on how they can best help their students learn:

1. The graduate student meets with an evaluator to discuss how assignments, exams, and policies promote the achievement of the course’s objectives. Prior to that meeting, the graduate student will provide the evaluator with information about the following:
   
   a. the syllabus, course content, choice of texts, and what test/papers/exams cover; strategies for encouraging students to stay up-to-date in their work
   b. policies on attendance, participation, extra credit, deadlines, laptops, cell phones, students who come to class unprepared, grading, and academic integrity
   c. whether the instructor keeps to the syllabus, how much time elapses before graded work is returned, whether graded work includes constructive critique, percentage of students who use office hours or email and what the teacher does to encourage it
   d. specific assignments that promote creative thinking, “hands on” research, group learning, and use of multiple resources (e.g., libraries)

2. The evaluator attends a class and fills out the evaluation form. The form focuses on what actually happens in the classroom. It is intended to be descriptive and non-judgmental and includes the following questions:
   
   a. How is the class organized? Is it mainly lecture or discussion?
   b. Had the teacher prepared students for the class by providing them specific questions on an assigned reading?
   c. Did the instructor begin class with an overview and relate it to previous discussions?
   d. How was the instructor able to balance the need to cover material and helping students understand the central points under discussion?
   e. What were the important points discussed in the class?
   f. What points did most students seem to find most interesting?
   g. What were the best (most memorable) examples?
   h. Were the instructor’s questions or answers to student questions easy to understand?
   i. Did the instructor engage students by name or encourage them to engage one another?
   j. What did the instructor do to involve less talkative students in the discussion?
   k. Did the instructor interact differently with different students?
   l. Did the instructor generally stay in one place or move about the room? Why?
   m. How much did the instructor seem to have his/her back to the students, or focus on the board, computer screen, or podium?
   n. How did the instructor handle disruptions in the class (side conversations, ringing phones, sleeping students, students obviously surfing the web or texting)?
   o. In general, what did the instructor do in the class that could not have been done online?

3. The evaluator and instructor meet afterwards to discuss the evaluator’s observations and go over the evaluation form.