



Center for Faculty Excellence

Faculty Career Support and Professional Development: Teaching Observation Options and Tools

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Faculty Career Support and Professional Development: Teaching Observation Options and Tools

Brief Description:

Teaching Observation is a systematic process that supports faculty members in creating meaningful learning experiences to enhance their role as teachers and ensure student learning and achievement. It is an iterative process that focuses on refining teachers' instructional practices (planning, teaching, and assessing) and enhancing students' learning experiences in and out of the classroom. The performance standards used to gauge this process are as follows: **Instructional Planning; Learning Environment; Instructional Delivery and Organization; Promotion of Knowledge and Skill Transfer; and Assessment of and for Student Learning**. The teaching observation forms to be used in this process are included in this packet. The observer will guide the faculty member through this process/cycle beginning with the self-assessment and ending with action steps. Below is the order of the process with its description/purpose.

Process and Components

Step One: Self-Assessment/Reflection and Pre-Observation Conference

Prior to the observation, the faculty member should engage in a self-assessment. He/she/they should complete the self-assessment form prior to the first meeting and present it during the pre-observation conference. During the pre-observation conference, the observer will ask the faculty member questions to gain insight on the upcoming lesson. The observer will contact the faculty member to request a syllabus for the course and any other materials essential to the observation. The observer will also reach out to the faculty member to arrange a meeting time for the pre-observation conference.

Step Two: Observations

Selection of Observers: * The department chair will select observers if an internal observation is arranged.

The Center for Faculty Development will also engage in observations upon request from the department chair and/or faculty member.

2A: Standard Teaching Observation

The standard classroom observation form can be used for peer observations, but it can also be used by the department chair or CFD representative to monitor a faculty member's progress. It can be used to provide feedback, get ideas, and aid in strengthening instruction.

2B: Long-Term Teaching Observation

***The long-term teaching observation is used in exceptional situations or as a chair's tool.**

The long-term teaching observation provides the faculty member with insight on teaching effectiveness. It serves a developmental and evaluative function. Best practices specify that after the long-term teaching observation is completed, the observer should do the following: (1) Schedule a post-observation conference to debrief and provide feedback - this is also a great opportunity to have the faculty member reflect; (2) Continue to conduct informal observations to monitor

progress, if necessary; (3) Meet with the faculty member after each observation, standard or long-term, and debrief/reflect.

The performance standards are as follows: Instructional Planning; Learning Environment; Instructional Delivery and Organization; Promotion of Knowledge and Skill Transfer; and Assessment of and for Student Learning

Step Three: Post-Observation Conference & Self-Reflection

The post-observation conference occurs after the observation. It provides the opportunity for debriefing and reflecting. The conference should be a conversation that consists of reflection, meaningful feedback, and action steps. The observer crafts the conversation so that it is a shared responsibility – the observer guides the faculty member to the area of concern, and the faculty member and observer share their ideas and/or solutions. The faculty member should respond to the self-reflection questions after the observation.

Ratings:

The evaluation ratings on the forms are as follows:

Exemplary (E): The faculty member has exceeded expectations/met the standard and beyond and consistently maintains the high level of performance and exemplary work that has been specified by the University's mission and goals.

Accomplished (A): The faculty member has met the standard and is consistently performing at expected level.

Needs Improvement/Developing (NI/Dev): The faculty member needs to strengthen instruction in this area.

Not Present (NP): The component was not present within the lesson, as a result of time constraints or type of instructional strategy implemented within the limited lens of the observation.

Step Four: Action Plan

Action steps, which are created by the faculty member and observer during post-observation, are to give the faculty member a visible list of actions used to target and to improve/refine targeted areas observed and discussed in the observation.

Name: _____
 Department: _____
 Today's Date: _____

Pre-Observation Date: _____
 Post-Observation Date: _____

Self-Assessment/Reflection

I. Instructional Planning	Rating				Comments
My syllabus has all required elements and is clear and easy to navigate.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
I align class objectives with unit/course goals.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

II. Learning Environment	Rating				Comments
I establish a climate of trust, respect, and collaboration.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
I ensure distractions (cell phones not used for instruction, side talking, etc.) are minimized and do not interfere with learning.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

III. Instructional Delivery and Organization	Rating				Comments
I engage students through appropriate eye contact and voice presentation.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
I ensure realistic pacing and transitions while moving from one topic or activity to another.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

IV. Promotion of Knowledge and Skill Transfer	Rating				Comments
I implement active learning & multimodal strategies that foster creativity, critical thinking, and analysis.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
I help students grasp challenging material by presenting examples and varying explanations to clarify new ideas and relate them to students' prior/background knowledge.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
I provide opportunities for students to engage in application of skills specific to their discipline.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

V. Assessment of and for Student Learning	Rating				Comments
I frequently monitor student progress through checks for understanding and adjust pacing or instructional strategies during class.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

Pre-Observation Conference Questions

The pre-observation conference is the second part of the teacher observation process. The purpose of the pre-observation conference is to have a conversation regarding the upcoming informal or formal observation. It is important that the faculty member has the pre-observation reflection form filled out prior to this conference.

Below are some pre-observation questions that have been adapted from Pam Robbins' *Peer Coaching to Enrich Professional Practice, School Culture, and Student Learning* and could help guide the discussion:

1. What will your class be about?
2. What skills and knowledge will students develop as the result of this class?
3. What teaching strategies will you use to ensure students are actively engaged?
4. What will students do that will let you know that they have mastered the material?
5. What learning experiences did students have in the lesson before this one?
6. How would you like me to focus the observation?
7. How would you like me to collect observational data (e.g., scripting, interaction analysis, questioning strategies, digital recording, other method)?
8. Is there any other background information you would like me to know?

Self-Reflection

***Do not complete this self-reflection until after the observation.**

Self-reflection can occur after informal and formal observations. It gives the faculty member time to be honest and introspective. The observer should also take this time to reflect and to peruse the notes from the observation as well as choose the post-observation questions that will focus the conversation.

1. How do you feel about the lesson? Did you successfully achieve the lesson's objective(s)? Explain. What data supports this?
2. What worked well during the class? If you were to teach this class again, what would you refine?
3. Based upon student learning of your course objective(s), what are your next steps?
4. As you reflect upon this observation process, what have you discovered about your teaching?

Faculty Member's Signature: _____

Observer's Name: _____ Observer's Signature: _____

Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) Representative: _____

CFE Representative's Signature: _____

Notes:

Standard Teaching Observation Tool

The standard classroom observation form can be used for peer observations, but it can also be used by the department chair or CFD representative to consider a faculty member's progress. It can be used to provide feedback, gather ideas, and aid in strengthening instruction.

Ratings Defined:

The evaluation ratings are as follows:

Exemplary (E): The faculty member has exceeded expectations/met the standard and beyond and consistently maintains the high level of performance and exemplary work that has been specified by the University's mission and goals.

Accomplished (A): The faculty member has met the standard and is consistently performing at expected level.

Needs Improvement/Developing (NI/Dev): The faculty member needs to strengthen instruction in this area.

Not Present (NP): The component was not present within the lesson, as a result of time constraints or type of instructional strategy implemented within the limited lens of the observation.

Standard Teaching Observation Tool

I. Instructional Planning	Rating				Comments
The syllabus has all required elements and is clear and easy to navigate.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
The faculty member aligned class objectives with unit/course goals.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

II. Learning Environment	Rating				Comments
The faculty member established a climate of trust, respect, and collaboration.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
Distractions (cell phones not used for instruction, side talking, etc.) were minimized and did not interfere with learning.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

III. Instructional Delivery and Organization	Rating				Comments
The faculty member engaged students through appropriate eye contact and voice presentation.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
The faculty member ensured realistic pacing and transitions while moving from one topic or activity to another.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

IV. Promotion of Knowledge and Skill Transfer	Rating				Comments
The faculty member implemented active learning & multimodal strategies that fostered creativity, critical thinking, and analysis.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
The faculty member helped students grasp challenging material by presenting examples and varying explanations to clarify new ideas and relate them to students' prior/background knowledge.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	
The faculty member provided opportunities for students to engage in application of skills specific to their discipline.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

V. Assessment of and for Student Learning	Rating				Comments
The faculty member frequently monitored student progress through checks for understanding and adjusted pacing or instructional strategies during class.	E	A	NI/Dev	NP	

Faculty Member's Signature: _____

Observer's Name: _____ Observer's Signature: _____

Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) Representative: _____

CFE Representative's Signature: _____

Standard Teaching Observation Evaluation Summary

* This space is reserved for observer's additional comments, if it is determined that more commentary is necessary.

Name: _____
Department: _____
Today's Date: _____

Pre-Observation Conference Date: _____
Post-Observation Conference Date: _____

Long-Term Teaching Observation Tool

***The long-term teaching observation is used in exceptional situations or as a chair's tool.**

The long-term observation provides the faculty member with insight on teaching effectiveness. It serves a developmental and evaluative function. Best practices specify that after the long-term teaching observation is completed, the observer should do the following: (1) Schedule a post-observation conference to debrief and provide feedback - this is also a great opportunity to have the faculty member reflect; (2) Continue to conduct informal observations to monitor progress, if necessary; (3) Meet with the faculty member after each observation, standard or long-term, and debrief/reflect.

The performance standards are as follows: Instructional Planning; Learning Environment; Instructional Delivery and Organization; Promotion of Knowledge and Skill Transfer; and Assessment of and for Student Learning

Ratings Defined:

The evaluation ratings are as follows:

Exemplary (E): The faculty member has exceeded expectations/met the standard and beyond and consistently maintains this high level of performance and exemplary work that has been specified by the University's mission and goals.

Accomplished (A): The faculty member has met the standard and is consistently performing at expected level.

Needs Improvement/Developing (NI/Dev): The faculty member needs to strengthen instruction in this area.

Not Present (NP): The component was not present within the lesson, as a result of time constraints or type of instructional strategy implemented within the limited lens of the observation.

Long-Term Teaching Observation Tool

I. Instructional Planning
Description/Criteria: ☐ The syllabus has all required elements and is clear and easy to navigate. ☐ The faculty member aligned class objectives with unit/course goals. ☐ The faculty member planned differentiated instruction opportunities to ensure student learning and understanding.
Comments from Observer:
Rating: ☐ Exemplary ☐ Accomplished ☐ Needs Improvement/Developing ☐ Not Present

II. Learning Environment
Description/Criteria: ☐ The faculty member established a climate of trust, respect, and collaboration. ☐ Distractions (cell phones not used for instruction, side talking, etc.) were minimized and did not interfere with learning. ☐ The faculty member ensured that the class maximized students' learning and instruction.
Comments from Observer:
Rating: ☐ Exemplary ☐ Accomplished ☐ Needs Improvement/Developing ☐ Not Present

III. Instructional Delivery and Organization
Description/Criteria: ☐ The faculty member engaged students through appropriate eye contact and voice presentation. ☐ The faculty member ensured realistic pacing and transitions while moving from one topic or activity to another. ☐ The faculty member's command of the subject matter was evident.
Comments from Observer:
Rating: ☐ Exemplary ☐ Accomplished ☐ Needs Improvement/Developing ☐ Not Present

IV. Promotion of Knowledge and Skill Transfer
Description/Criteria: ☐ The faculty member implemented active learning & multimodal strategies that fostered creativity, critical thinking, and analysis. ☐ The faculty member helped students grasp challenging material by presenting examples and varying explanations to clarify and relate new ideas to students' prior/background knowledge. ☐ The faculty member provided opportunities for students to engage in application of skills specific to their discipline.
Comments from Observer:
Rating: ☐ Exemplary ☐ Accomplished ☐ Needs Improvement/Developing ☐ Not Present

V. Assessment of and for Student Learning	
Description/Criteria: ☐ The faculty member frequently monitored student progress through checks for understanding and adjusted pacing or instructional strategies during class. ☐ The faculty member identified and assisted students who are struggling with the content. ☐ The faculty member promoted self-reflection to ensure students gained a better understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.	
Comments from Observer:	
Rating: ☐ Exemplary ☐ Accomplished ☐ Needs Improvement/Developing ☐ Not Present	

Faculty Member's Signature: _____

Observer's Name: _____ Observer's Signature: _____

Center for Faculty Excellence (CFE) Representative: _____

CFE Representative's Signature: _____

Long-Term Teaching Observation Summary

* This page is reserved for observer's additional comments, if it is determined that more commentary is necessary.

Post-Observation Questions

The post-observation conference provides the opportunity for debriefing and reflecting. The conference should be a conversation that consists of reflection, low-inference feedback, and action steps. The observer crafts the conversation so that it is a shared responsibility – the coach guides the faculty to the areas of development/improvement, and the faculty member and observer share their ideas and/or solutions.

Below are some questions the observer can use to guide the discussion.

Guided Questions

1. Did you feel you were successful in meeting your objectives? Please explain and provide evidence.
2. I observed where you [describe strategy]. How did that go? What would you do differently? Your students seemed [describe students' reactions/responses]. Do you believe your strategy supported student learning and understanding?
3. I noticed that you [describe strategy]. Did the students respond as you had expected? Were you satisfied with the students' responses?
4. After you lectured, modeled, and/or practiced/worked with students to ensure their understanding, how did they do once you let them collaborate (pairs, small groups)? How did you choose pairs or small groups? If so, what helped you determine this? Did it help them gain a better understanding of the content by working with peers?

*** If they did not use collaboration, you can help with possible strategies to incorporate collaboration within their lesson.**

5. As you went through the lesson, you provided various opportunities for students to check their understanding [provide observed examples of formative assessment/checks for understanding]. Do you think it improved student learning and understanding? Explain. How do you utilize this information – instantly tailor your lesson or use it to plan next class, target students who are struggling with the material and provide extra resources/targeted instruction?
6. How are your students performing on summative assessments (unit tests, projects)? How do you utilize this information – instantly tailor your lesson or use it to plan next class, target students who are struggling with the material and provide extra resources/targeted instruction?
7. What did you learn about student learning from teaching this class/content?
8. What made this class different from others you have taught?
9. Overall, how did you feel about your students' understanding during this class?
10. Was this a typical class? How was it the same? How was it different?

Name: _____
 Today's Date: _____
 Date of Observation: _____

Action Plan

Teaching & Learning Components	Areas of Improvement/Refinement (What do I need to refine?)	Action Steps & Timeframe (What steps will I take in this teaching and learning process to enhance my teaching quality & effectiveness?)	
Plan		Action Steps	Timeframe
		1.	
		2.	
		3.	
Teach		Action Steps	Timeframe
		1.	
		2.	
		3.	
Assess		Action Steps	Timeframe
		1.	
		2.	
		3.	

Glossary of Terms

Adapted from: 1) SILS, UNC-CH, <https://sils.unc.edu/sites/default/files/general/for-faculty-staff/Peer%20observation%20guidelines%20011024-1.pdf>; 2) TLTC, University of Maryland Classroom Observation Form; 3) City Colleges of Chicago, <https://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/Classroom-Observation-and-Evaluation-Forms.aspx>; 4) VDOE Teacher Performance Evaluation; 5) Arikan, A. (2004). Questions to ask in post-observation conferences for a reflective practice.

Active Learning – Active learning is shifting from taking a teacher-centered approach to taking a student-centered approach in the learning process. Teachers facilitate the learning process and create learning opportunities and strategies that ensure an interactive learning environment where students are heavily involved in the instructional delivery process. An active learning environment encourages inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. Below are a few active learning strategies:

Active Learning Strategies:

Questioning Techniques – Questioning techniques can be used to increase student engagement and involvement in the classroom. Teachers can use questions to chunk lectures and to challenge students on the ideas discussed. Questioning techniques can also be used for students to apply what they have just learned, analyze patterns, to follow up, or to probe. Teachers can also incorporate questioning techniques as they integrate technology within the classroom: social media platforms, audience response systems, various apps, learning management systems (Blackboard), etc.

Shoulder Partners/Turn and Talk – Students are prompted to turn and talk to the individual sitting to their left or to their right. This strategy allows for brief collaboration throughout the lesson. It provides the opportunity for students to discuss what was just taught and learn from their peers.

Whole Class Debates – The teacher can assign sides of a debate to the two halves of the classroom or lecture hall. Each side must come up with at least 5 statements to support its argument and debate the issue using rebuttals/counterarguments. The teacher can stop the debate once students have a deeper understanding of the topic. A brief recap or summary should come at the end and bring the lesson to a close.

Jigsaw – Jigsaw or group teaching is a strategy to get students involved and take ownership of their learning experience. The class receives the main topic, but the class is eventually divided into small groups that receive related topics or subtopics to explore. The teacher puts students in groups of 3 or 4 and provides the students with 2-3 concepts, articles, readings, or questions around their assigned topic. The teacher gives students time to read, discuss, and gather information on their specific topic. Once they have completed learning about the information on their specific topic, each member from the different groups is regrouped and must spend time teaching or explaining the topic to the other group members. Prior to doing this activity, the teacher should already have all groups worked out; this will save time and confusion.

Assessment – Classroom assessment refers to the various tools used to gauge student learning and understanding. It is a way of measuring, evaluating, documenting, and understanding student success and teaching effectiveness. When a teacher assesses, data is used to inform how to plan and structure lessons. There are two types of assessments: formative assessment and summative assessment.

Formative Assessment – Formative assessment consists of small checks for understanding that are strategically built within a lesson. These assessments are frequent and can help the teacher quickly gauge students' learning. Teachers can provide quick yet meaningful feedback as students continue to learn the material.

Summative Assessment – Summative assessments are weighted differently than formative assessments. They are not as frequent and usually are given at the beginning as a diagnostic, at mid-semester, and at the end of the semester. Summative assessments are also given at the end of a unit. They come in various forms: multiple-choice test, essay, research paper, presentation, portfolio, etc.

High Impact Practices – High impact practices are widely tested practices that have been deemed beneficial to college students from all backgrounds. They increase student retention, engagement, and involvement in active learning. These practices contribute to students' cumulative learning (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013). Below is a list of high-impact practices:

Adapted from: 1) SILS, UNC-CH, <https://sils.unc.edu/sites/default/files/general/for-faculty-staff/Peer%20observation%20guidelines%20011024-1.pdf>; 2) TLTC, University of Maryland Classroom Observation Form; 3) City Colleges of Chicago, <https://www.ccc.edu/menu/Pages/Classroom-Observation-and-Evaluation-Forms.aspx>; 4) VDOE Teacher Performance Evaluation; 5) Arikan, A. (2004). Questions to ask in post-observation conferences for a reflective practice.

- First-year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- ePortfolios
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Course and Projects (Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013)

Lecture – A lecture is a teaching strategy often used in higher education. It is an organized oral presentation of a concept or topic that is teacher-centered. Often lectures do not have high student engagement; however, teachers can embed active learning strategies within their lectures to provide students an opportunity to interact with the teacher, peers, and the material being discussed. This can move the lecture from teacher-centered to student-centered.

Modeling – Modeling is an essential component of the learning process. Prior to releasing students to apply what they have learned, teachers are to show them and take them through the process. When modeling becomes a practice, students can gain a better understanding of what is being taught.

Prior Knowledge – Prior knowledge is background knowledge. It can be prior/background knowledge of concepts, skills, or experiences. Students come to teachers from various backgrounds and experiences; sometimes they come to the classroom with the prior or background knowledge needed to be successful; however, sometimes they may not have the knowledge or skill(s) needed. Teachers can gain a better understanding of their students' prior/background knowledge or lack thereof through strategies that can activate their prior/background knowledge and make a connection.