

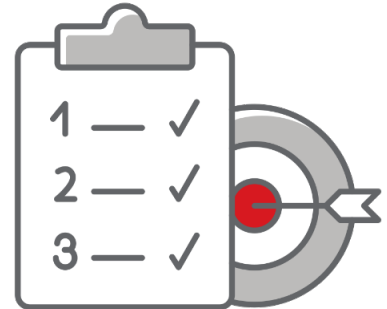
# Faculty Observation of Teaching

## Before the Observation

### Determine Your Purpose(s)

Identify one or two purpose(s) of the observation. This will help you to select your observer and increase the likelihood that the observation will yield information that meets your needs. Use this list of questions to help you determine your purpose.

- What components of your teaching are going well?
- Is there a specific challenge in a course or with specific course content?
- Are you looking for feedback on a specific pedagogy or strategy?
- Are you satisfied with the current level of student engagement?
- Do you want feedback on a specific teaching skill (pacing, presenting, using technology, giving directions, asking questions, etc.)?
- Would you like to enhance your class climate?
- Do you want to focus on instructor behavior/student behavior/both?
- Can past student course evaluations direct the focus of the observation?



### Select and Meet with Your Observer

Select a colleague who has expertise and insights related to the purpose of your observations. Schedule a meeting with them to discuss 1) the purpose of the observation, 2) the context of your course, and 3) the optimal date and time for the observation. These suggestions can guide your meeting.

### Pre-observation meeting with the instructor and observer



- Discuss the purpose of the observation.
  - Take a minute to review the course syllabus.
  - Discuss the context of the course (have you taught it before, are there multiple sections, number of students, have you taught these students in prior classes, are you likely to teach these students in a future class, are you using new materials, is the content your area of expertise or is it more adjacent to your expertise, how does the physical environment support/limit your teaching style, etc.).
  - Determine if you want your colleagues to only observe or if they can participate in class.
  - Discuss the pros/cons of using a rubric. If you use one, agree to it in advance.
- Agree on the optimal date for the observation and a date and time for a debriefing meeting.

### Instructor

- One week in advance, provide the observer:
  - Confirmation of the date, time, and location (room or link for an online class)
  - Updates on anything that has changed since your pre-observation meeting
  - Learning objectives for the day of the observation
  - A lesson plan or outline of instruction (if you use one)
  - Copy of the course syllabi to the observer (if you haven't already done so)
- At least one class prior or via an email or Canvas announcement, inform students of the observation and assure them the visitor is observing you.

# Faculty Observation of Teaching

## Observer

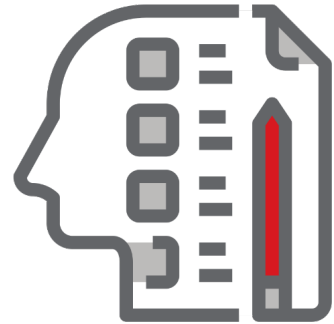
- Review the materials provided by the instructor.
- If using a rubric, review it.
- Verify the date, time, and location/link.

## During the Observation

### Teach and Observe

Introduce the observer to your students and then conduct class as you normally would. The observer should remind themselves of the purpose of the observation and take notes that will facilitate a debriefing session with the instructor. These hints will guide observers and keep them focused on the purpose of the observation.

- Review the learning objectives that the instructor provided.
- Bring paper and a pen/pencil or electronic device to take notes.
- Sit in the back of the room or in a location that allows you to observe the instructor and the students.
- Remind yourself to focus on what you can visibly observe.
- Use a pre-determined notetaking strategy. Several examples are provided below.
  - Use a running record to make note of all that you observe. Your goal is to record as much as possible. Some people find it helpful to periodically note the time in the margin. Later, you can return to your notes and star/highlight anything that seems relevant to the purpose of the observation.
  - Use a three-column chart. Based on the purpose of the observation, note actions/interactions that were effective in column A. Record those that seemed less effective in column B. List questions you have for the instructor in column C.
  - Note your observations in pre-determined categories. Based on the purpose of the observation, you may want to choose from categories such as instructor-student rapport, instructional methods, clarity of instructions/information, subject matter knowledge, student engagement, formative assessment, response to student questions/diverse perspectives, evidence of learning, use of technology, or presentation.
- Sketch a diagram or take a photo of the classroom to help you note and remember how the instructor moves about the classroom and/or where they direct their eye contact/questions/attention.
- Remember to attend to quantity as well as quality. For example, you may note:
  - The number of questions the instructor asked and if these were questions that reflect lower levels of cognitive engagement (remembering, comprehension) or upper levels of cognitive engagement (analysis, synthesis, creation).
  - The number of students who asked/answered questions and whether these were clarifying comments or contributions that advanced a discussion or if they provided evidence of critical thinking.
  - The number of opportunities students were given to interact with their classmates and if the students appeared to fully engage during this time.



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## After the Observation

### Debrief

Within a week to 10 days following the observation, meet to debrief the experience. Review what was observed, how it relates to your purpose of the observation, and how this information can help you enhance your teaching. These prompts can guide your debriefing session.



- The students appeared most engaged/confused when... How that could be replicated/done differently?
- What do instructors do when they encounter...?
- If you could change one thing about the class that was observed, what would it be? Why?
- If there were no resource limitations, what would be the ideal way to teach this content?
- As an observer/instructor, the most important thing I have learned through this process is...

### Document the Experience

Ask your observer to document the experience. If they agree, you can include this in your future RP&T and annual review documents. This outline can help your observer write their letter.

- Include the date, time, and location of the observation.
- Identify the course. Include the department and course title, the number of students, the type of class (undergraduate, graduate, general education, introductory, capstone, laboratory, studio, etc.) and the approximate time in the semester (beginning, after the first exam, near mid-terms, in the final weeks, etc.).
- Clarify the context of the observations (voluntary, collegial, non-evaluative, etc.).
- List the learning objectives.
- Refer to the purpose of the observation.
- Summarize what was observed.

A copy of the documentation should be provided to the instructor. The observer should not disclose information from the observation or share documentation with others without the consent of the instructor.