

Peer Observation of Teaching Guide

Pre-Observation Questionnaire (for observers to ask instructors)

1. What is the content and structure of the specific class session you will be teaching?
2. Describe your students in this class. Is there anything the observer should know about them?
3. What have students been asked to do in preparation for this class session?
4. What is your goal(s) for the lesson? What do you hope that students will learn or be able to do as a result of this class session?
5. What are your plans for achieving these goals?
6. What teaching methods will you use?
7. What has been taught in previous lessons in this course? How does this class session fit in with the course as a whole?
8. Will this class be a typical example of your teaching? If not, what will be different?
9. What would you like the observer to specifically focus on during the observation?
10. Is there anything else the observer should be aware of prior to the observation?
11. Logistics: Confirm time and place, and where the observer should sit.

This guide adapted from:

- Berenson, C. "Teaching Squares: Observe and Reflect On Teaching and Learning." Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning Guide Series, Calgary, AB: Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning at the University of Calgary, June 2017. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/taylorinstitute/guides>
- Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation. (2017). Peer observation of teaching: Effective practices. Toronto, ON: Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation, University of Toronto. <https://teaching.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Peer-Observation-of-Teaching-Guide.pdf>

Classroom Observation: Further Considerations

Content

- Is it obvious what the students are meant to learn today? How do the students know what's important in today's class?
- Is the content related to current issues and developments in the field? How does the instructor make the content interesting/exciting?
- How does the instructor make the content relatable/accessible to the students?

Instructional Strategies

- What are the different instructional strategies used in this class? (presentation, lecture, discussion, active learning techniques, etc.) Do some strategies seem to work better for the students than others? How can you tell? Why might this be the case?
- How does the instructor use classroom media (digital technologies, slides, video, music, etc.) and/or space? How does the instructor move through the space? How do the students make use of the space?
- Are there any seemingly unexpected moments in the class? How are they handled?
- How does the instructor use questions? How are the students involved in asking and answering questions?
- Does the instructor lead the students through partner work or small group work? If so, what impact do these techniques appear to have on student learning?

Classroom Climate

- What is the mood before class begins? During class? After class?
- How is the physical space of the classroom arranged and how does this appear to influence teaching and learning?
- What kind of rapport exists between teacher and students or among the students?
- What kinds of things does the instructor do to address the environment in this class? What are the students doing to contribute to the classroom environment?

Student Learning/Engagement

- When do the students seem most engaged in the material? Least engaged? How can you tell?
- During times of high student engagement, what is the instructor doing? What are the students doing?
- How is the class organized and paced? What are the various approaches used to convey the content?
- What activities does the class meeting comprise and do these activities build on each other? Is it clear how the class activities relate to the broader curricular goals and learning outcomes for the course?
- Did the students "get" it? How do you know? How do the students know? How does the instructor know?

Diversity and Inclusion

- How are differences among learners addressed and accommodated? What are the activities or approaches applied that might support different learners?
- Is there anything about the content of today's class that reflects a diversity of perspectives?
- What are the different approaches that are used to make the classroom an inclusive place? How are different students encouraged to participate?
- What else is noteworthy in terms of diversity and inclusion in this setting?

Post-Observation Discussion Questions
(for observers to ask instructors)

1. What is your overall impression of the class?
2. What is your sense of how the class was for the students?
3. What do you think worked particularly well?
4. Is there anything you feel didn't work well?
5. Is there anything that didn't go as planned? Did this turn out to be positive or challenging for you? What about for the students?
6. Would you do anything differently next time? If so, what is it and why would you do it differently?
7. Do you think the students learned what you hoped they'd learn? How do you know?
8. As an observer, here are some strategies that I observed you using to enhance student learning: ... (the observer can also share the general "observation log" with the instructor)
9. Here's what I learned as a result of watching you teach: ...
10. What's next for you in your teaching? Is there anything in particular for which you would like additional resources?