

**Suggested Guidelines for  
Peer Observations  
August 2009**

Purpose of the Visit: To provide faculty with helpful feedback, from a variety of perspectives, for the purpose of improving teaching and student learning.

General Comments:

- Please keep in mind--at all times--that the observation process may be stressful for your colleague. Whenever possible, reassure your colleague that you want to work with her/him and that you share the same goal of quality teaching. Be sure to share positive comments as well as any concerns. In fact, in most cases you should have far more positive than negative comments to share.
- Share the overall process with your colleague; be sure that s/he has a copy of this packet. If you decide to use one of the observation forms provided in this packet, let your colleague know in advance.
- All conversations, observations, and documentation are confidential and not shared beyond the evaluation process.
- You are in the classroom as an observer. Avoid drawing attention to yourself. Do not participate in discussions or activities; avoid nonverbal messages that may detract from the class or your colleague's teaching.
- While the pre- and post- meetings with the faculty member are categorized as "interviews" in the *Faculty Personnel Handbook*, the atmosphere should be much more of a collegial conversation rather than an "interview."
- Keep in mind that your observations reflect one class session on one day of one semester. Your observations *may* or *may not* be representative of your colleague's usual teaching.
- Obviously peer observations are primarily subjective and inter-rater reliability will be weak. Focusing on specific behaviors, rather than judgmental statements, will improve the quality of the evaluation process. The Evaluation Committee will look for an overall pattern of performance; no single observation will serve as the basis for the final summative evaluation.
- Observers are strongly encouraged, but not required, to use one or more of the optional observation record materials. Following the observation, observers should meet with the faculty member to discuss the class session. Specific ideas for this conversation appear later in this document.
- Keep in mind that disciplines may approach teaching and learning in different ways. Try to keep in mind the discipline while observing. There are many effective teaching strategies; no one strategy is required for all instructors.

### Suggestions for a Meeting Prior to the Observation:

- Please contact the faculty member, at the earliest possible date, to schedule a *mutually agreeable time* to observe the colleague's teaching. Ideally, the observation should be scheduled at least ten days in advance.
- Schedule a time other than the first and last two weeks of the semester; try to avoid observing on days when there is a test, guest speaker, etc.
- Whenever possible, meet with your colleague prior to the observation. Ask if there are specific areas or aspects of teaching that s/he would like you to observe and/or share your ideas for the areas that you will observe.
- Discuss your colleague's objectives and teaching plan (if available) prior to the observation.
- Let your colleague know that you will be recording most of what you see and hear. Reassure your colleague that every written comment will not be a criticism! In fact, in most cases, the majority of your written observations will be positive or neutral (e.g. "Sam passed out an article." or "Susan asked students to get a laptop from the cart."). As an observer, you are trying to simply capture what happened in the classroom; your *analysis* of your observations will be completed after the observation.
- Review your colleague's syllabus prior to the class. Is there a clear connection between the syllabus and the day's activities?
- Schedule the follow-up debriefing meeting at this time. Ideally the follow-up meeting should occur shortly after the observation (one to two days later is suggested). While it is tempting to schedule a meeting right after the observation, this isn't always the best as it takes some time to review notes and to identify patterns of strengths and areas for improvement. You may want to provide a written summary for your colleague although this isn't required. In most cases, you won't want to give your colleague your written notes as there may be some items that are not worth sharing or may cause undue concern on the part of the person being observed.

### The Day of the Observation – Suggestions for the Observer:

- Arrive in the classroom about 5 - 10 minutes early.
- Sit in the back of the classroom if at all possible.
- Observe the faculty member interacting with students before the official class session begins.
- It is up to the person being observed to determine if and how you will be introduced.
- The faculty member should give you a copy of any student materials (handouts, assignments, in class project directions, etc.) that will help you follow along with the activities.
- Record what you see and hear. The goal is paint a picture of what transpired in the classroom.
- This packet includes some forms that may be helpful during your observation:
  - a) All observers are encouraged to complete the Cover Sheet which provides a list of teaching strategies and audio/visual aids that are observed. On the back of the form is a list of some of the characteristics of effective teaching.
  - b) Observers may want to record the observed behaviors using one or more of the observation materials included in this packet. Observers are not required to use these forms. At a bare minimum, you are encouraged to record the date, time, class number and title, number of students in the classroom, and the person observed.

1. T Chart which includes a description of everything the teacher says and does on the left side and everything the students say and do on the right side. The goal is to record as many specific observations as possible. Do not try to summarize or analyze data; simply record what you see and hear.
  2. T Chart which includes (in the left hand column) what you hear and (in the right hand column) what you see.
  3. Goal/Category Based Observation Record (Option A) which includes space for comments on: Planning and Organization; Content, Rigor, Relevance, and Higher Level/Critical Thinking; Pedagogy, Teaching Strategies, and Use of Audio Visual Aids; Interactions and Rapport with Students; Communication Skills; Professional and Ethical Behaviors.
  4. Goal/Category Based Observation Record (Option B): In conjunction with the faculty member, establish specific areas of focus for your observation. Limit observations primarily to those areas.
  5. You may use the Peer Observation Checklist by itself or in conjunction with another form. During the observation you may want to simply check the items observed or write brief comments. Following the observation, after you have a chance to review and reflect on your notes, you may opt to complete the Peer Observation Checklist Summary and assign a ranking to each item (area for improvement, average/satisfactory, area of strength, not observed). Do not try to assign rankings while you are observing.
  6. Anecdotal Running Record: Record each event chronologically. Periodically record the time.
  7. Observers may create their own observation tools.
- Students in the class should not be able to read your notes; this is confidential information.
  - Do not participate in conversations or in class activities; avoid drawing attention to yourself. You are there as an observer; try to minimize the impact of your presence in the room in order to gain a sense of how the class normally functions. Try to become the proverbial “fly on the wall.”
  - When you leave the classroom, try to compliment your colleague on at least a couple of your positive and specific observations.

Suggestions for Debriefing Conversation Following the Observation:

- Meet with your colleague to discuss the observation. Conversation topics may include:
  - a) Ask your colleague to reflect on how s/he thought the class went, the strengths and areas for improvement, and in hindsight, what changes s/he would have made.
  - b) Clarify the class objectives if necessary.
  - c) Share your observations. Strive to paint a picture of what happened in the classroom rather than just saying “You did a good job.” Focus on *specific behaviors* rather than making *judgmental* comments. Specific feedback is superior to vague and judgmental feedback and will be more helpful to your colleague. Remember that the goal is to assist your colleague in becoming a better teacher.

- d) Process your observations with your colleague. Allow her/him to analyze and reflect on your observations and/or to offer rationales for specific events. Remember that disciplines and individuals differ on how they approach the complex process of teaching. In some cases, the instructor may have some background information that might change your perception of something that happened.
- Related items that you *may* want to discuss with your colleague:
    - a) For new faculty members – acclimation to the college and community, ability to get help and advice, relationship with mentor, etc.
    - b) Progress on doctorate (if applicable)
    - c) Professional development activities
    - d) Areas where help is needed
    - e) Goals for the coming semester or year
    - f) Advising
    - g) Colleague's Self-Evaluation
  - You may prepare a summary of your observations and the follow-up conversation, or you may share your perceptions verbally with the review committee. In either case, the recorded observation notes/reports will be helpful resources.
  - Following the evaluation process, observers should destroy all related materials.

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### Peer Observation

#### Cover Sheet

Faculty Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Class Observed (Course and Section): \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Observed: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Observed Teaching Strategies\*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Small Group Activity<br><input type="checkbox"/> Discussion<br><input type="checkbox"/> Simulation Activity<br><input type="checkbox"/> Instructional Games<br><input type="checkbox"/> Independent Work Time for Students<br><input type="checkbox"/> Student Presentation/Peer Instruction<br><input type="checkbox"/> Peer Reviews<br><input type="checkbox"/> Think-Pair-Share or Other Partner Processing Strategies<br><input type="checkbox"/> Just in Time Teaching<br>(use of out-of-class online assignments as a basis for in class activities) | <input type="checkbox"/> Question and Answer<br><input type="checkbox"/> In-class Writing Assignment<br><input type="checkbox"/> Role Playing<br><input type="checkbox"/> Student Experimentation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrations<br><input type="checkbox"/> Panel Discussion<br><input type="checkbox"/> Critique Sessions<br><input type="checkbox"/> Lecture<br><input type="checkbox"/> Case Studies<br><input type="checkbox"/> |
|---|--|

\*Examples of some of the characteristics of effective teaching appear on the back.

#### Observed Use of Audio, Visual, and Instructional Aids

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hands on Materials<br><input type="checkbox"/> Overhead Projector<br><input type="checkbox"/> Computer PowerPoint<br><input type="checkbox"/> Computer – Scholar<br><input type="checkbox"/> Computer -- Internet<br><input type="checkbox"/> Computer Lab Classroom<br><input type="checkbox"/> Slides<br><input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Portable Smart/ White/ Mimeo Boards<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Portable Computer Lab<br><input type="checkbox"/> Chalk/White Board<br><input type="checkbox"/> Docucamera Projector<br><input type="checkbox"/> Clickers for Audience Feedback<br><input type="checkbox"/> Audio Recordings<br><input type="checkbox"/> Video Recordings<br><input type="checkbox"/> Smart/White Board |
|--|--|

## Characteristics of Effective Teaching

- **Begins class on time and in an organized and orderly manner.**
- **Knowledgeable about content.**
- **Demonstrates enthusiasm for content.**
- **Presents information in context; reviews previous course work and readings, relates information to students' lives, and makes connections between this content and the overall discipline and area of study.**
- **Clearly presents the lesson objectives and focus.**
- **Engages students in the learning process (e.g. thought-provoking questions or activities, use of varied strategies, use of hands-on activities/materials); maintains students' interest.**
- **Provides concrete and meaningful examples that help students understand content.**
- **Presentations/discussions are stimulating, clear, and effective.**
- **Encourages critical thinking and asks thought-provoking questions.**
- **Communicates clearly.**
- **Creates an atmosphere of respect; instructor demonstrates respect for students and students demonstrate respect for the instructor.**
- **Creates a positive and safe learning environment where students speak freely and take risks.**
- **Communicates at a level that the students can understand.**
- **Stays focused and does not allow the class to get side-tracked.**
- **Encourages students to volunteer and participate. Calls on a variety of students.**
- **Asks guiding and probing questions to help students clarify or expand on their understanding and responses.**
- **Encourages problem-solving and learning through inquiry.**
- **Supports and encourages students. Listens to and reinforces student responses; assists students in correcting inaccurate information/reasoning; offers feedback in a respectful, constructive, and helpful manner.**
- **Demonstrates professional and ethical behavior.**
- **Uses humor and/or anecdotes appropriately.**
- **Moves at an appropriate pace and uses class time effectively.**
- **Speaks clearly, makes eye contact, moves away from the lectern, and avoids excessive use of "fillers" such as "um, ok, ah."**
- **Uses audiovisuals (e.g. Chalk/White Board, PowerPoint, docucamera, white board) effectively.**
- **Assesses student understanding and learning throughout the class and makes modifications as necessary. If students do not understand a concept, the instructor is prepared to facilitate instruction in an alternative manner (e.g. demonstration, peer explanation, etc.).**

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**T Chart Observations of Faculty and Students**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Course # , Title, and Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Times: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students in Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty and Student Observations	
Faculty Comments, Questions, Movements, Use of Visual Aids, etc.	Student Responses, Questions, Level of Understanding, Engagement, Interest, etc.

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**T Chart Observations of What Faculty and Students Say and Do**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Course # , Title, and Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Times: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students in Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty and Student Observations	
Observations of What Faculty and Students Say	Observations of What Faculty and Students Do

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**Anecdotal Running Records**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Course # , Title, and Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Times: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students in Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Time	Observation



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**Observations Based on Categories or Goals: Option A**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Course # , Title, and Section: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Times: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students in Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Planning and Organization:

Content (Accuracy, Depth, Appropriateness, Clarity), Rigor, Relevance, Higher Level/Critical Thinking:

Pedagogy, Teaching Strategies, and Audio Visual Aids:

Interactions and Rapport with Students:

Communication Skills:

Professional and Ethical Behavior:

Other:

**Complete this section following the observation:**

Summary of Strengths:

Possible Areas for Improvement:

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**Observations Based on Categories or Goals: Option B**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

Course # , Section, and Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Times: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students in Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Category: \_\_\_\_\_

Other:

**Complete this section following the observation:**

Summary of Strengths:

Possible Areas for Improvement:



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### Peer Observation Checklist for Note-taking

Faculty Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Course # and Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ -- \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

	Comments
<b>Planning and Organization</b>	
Follows a well thought out plan for the class	
Demonstrates a clear focus throughout the class based on learner objectives	
Selects specific class topics that are consistent with the course syllabus	
Sequences the class in a logical manner	
Begins class on time	
Ends class on time	
Moves at a good pace	
Uses time effectively and efficiently	
Moves smoothly from one segment to the next	
Other comments:	
<b>Content, Rigor, Critical/Higher Order Thinking</b>	
Presents accurate and current content	
Provides context for the content; makes connections to prior learning, reading, assignments, etc.	
Makes information meaningful to students; presents rationales for topics addressed	
Presents key concepts	
Provides relevant examples	
Elaborates on content without reading or referring to notes	
Presents information at a level that is appropriate for the particular class and group of students	
Challenges students to think in new, different and/or deeper ways	
Makes modifications based on student responses; presents information in alternative ways when necessary	
Requires students to reflect and think critically	
Meets objectives for the day	
Other Comments:	

<b>Pedagogy, Teaching Strategies, Audio Visual Aids</b> (refer to the cover sheet for a list of specific strategies observed)	
Uses a variety of teaching strategies	
Uses strategies that engage students	
Teaches in a well organized and thoughtfully sequenced manner	
Assesses students' understanding throughout the lesson; makes modification as necessary	
Uses a variety of audio and visuals aids to enhance learning	
Other:	
<b>Questioning Skills</b>	
Restates questions for all to hear when necessary	
Uses questions to assess students' understanding	
Asks clarifying follow-up questions when necessary	
Uses questions to guide students to a higher level of thinking	
Uses questions, prompts, and clues to help students correct misinformation or to gain a different understanding	
Asks questions in a respectful manner	
Listens carefully to students' comments/responses	
Answers students' questions accurately or by guiding students to find the answer	
Other:	
<b>Interactions/Rapport with Students</b>	
Greets students as they enter the classroom	
Treats students and their ideas with respect; does not demean, belittle, or demoralize students	
Treats students equitably	
Students demonstrate respect for instructor	
Supports and encourages students	
Engages students	
Provides feedback in a helpful and constructive manner	
Converses with a variety of students	
Uses humor appropriately	
Provides feedback in a supportive and constructive manner	
Demonstrates care and concern for students' learning and well being	
Keeps students focused and on track	
Other comments:	

<b>Learning Environment</b>	
Creates a positive learning environment	
Creates a safe learning environment where students speak freely and are willing to take risks	
Creates an organized learning environment that is conducive to learning	
Clearly communicates/establishes expectations for student and instructor behavior (e.g. raising/not raising hands before speaking, noise level, talking to others, texting, wearing/not wearing hats, being respectful to others, etc.)	
Does not allow students to sidetrack the class	
Other Comments:	
<b>Communication Skills</b>	
Speaks clearly	
Varies voice tone, rate, inflection, etc.	
Speaks loudly enough to be heard by all	
Demonstrates correct English grammar and usage	
Writes legibly on the board, overhead, etc.	
Maintains eye contact	
Uses positive and helpful nonverbal communication	
Moves around the classroom and gets away from the front table or lectern	
Uses humor effectively and appropriately	
Uses nonverbal communication (e.g. proximity, facial expressions) effectively	
Other Comments:	
<b>Professional and Ethical Behaviors</b>	
Demonstrates scholarly and professional ethics	
Provides students with a complete syllabus (e.g. Instructor Information, Textual Information, Course Topics, Assignments, Student Expectations, Grading Policies, Policy on Plagiarism and Attendance, etc.)	
Returns graded materials in a timely manner	
Submits book orders in a timely manner	
Seeks opportunities for professional development	
Seeks help and assistance when necessary	
Critically self-reflects on teaching	
Other:	
General Comments:	

## Peer Observation Checklist Summary

Faculty Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Course # and Section: \_\_\_\_\_ Course Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_ -- \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Observer: \_\_\_\_\_ # of Students: \_\_\_\_\_

Directions: In most cases this checklist will be completed *following* the observation and the rankings will be based on comments that were recorded on the previous Observation Checklist for Note-taking. Observers should refrain from making any judgments during the observation.

Legend:

I	Area for Improvement
A	Average/Satisfactory
S	Area of Strength
N	Not Observed

	I	A	S	N	Comments
<b>Planning and Organization</b>					
Follows a well thought out plan for the class					
Demonstrates a clear focus throughout the class based on learner objectives					
Selects specific class topics that are consistent with the course syllabus					
Sequences the class in a logical manner					
Begins class on time					
Ends class on time					
Moves at a good pace					
Uses time effectively and efficiently					
Moves smoothly from one segment to the next					
Comments:					
<b>Content, Rigor, Critical/Higher Order Thinking</b>					
Presents accurate and current content					
Provides context for the content; makes connections to prior learning, reading, assignments, etc.					
Makes information meaningful to students; presents rationales for topics addressed					
Presents key concepts					
Provides relevant examples					
Elaborates on content without reading or referring to notes					
Presents information at a level that is appropriate for the particular class and group of students					
Challenges students to think in new, different and/or deeper ways					
Makes modifications based on student responses; presents information in alternative ways when necessary					
Requires students to reflect and think critically					

Meets objectives for the day					
Comments:					

Pedagogy, Teaching Strategies, Audio Visual Aids					
Uses a variety of teaching strategies					
Uses strategies that engage students					
Teaches in a well organized and thoughtfully sequenced manner					
Assesses students' understanding throughout the lesson; makes modification as necessary					
Uses a variety of audio and visuals aids to enhance learning					
Comments:					

Questioning Skills					
Restates questions for all to hear when necessary					
Uses questions to assess students' understanding					
Asks clarifying follow-up questions when necessary					
Uses questions to guide students to a higher level of thinking					
Uses questions, prompts, and clues to help students correct misinformation or to gain a different understanding					
Asks questions in a respectful manner					
Listens carefully to students' comments/ responses					
Answers students' questions accurately or by guiding students to find the answer					
Comments:					

Interactions/Rapport with Students					
Greets students as they enter the classroom					
Treats students and their ideas with respect; does not demean, belittle, or demoralize students					
Treats students equitably					
Students demonstrate respect for instructor					
Supports and encourages students					
Engages students					
Provides feedback in a helpful and constructive manner					
Converses with and calls on a variety of students					
Uses humor appropriately					
Provides feedback in a supportive and constructive manner					
Demonstrates care and concern for students'					

<b>learning and well being</b>					
Keeps students focused and on track					
Comments:					

<b>Learning Environment</b>
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Creates a positive learning environment					
Creates a safe learning environment where students speak freely and are willing to take risks					
Creates an organized learning environment that is conducive to learning					
Clearly communicates/establishes expectations for student and instructor behavior (e.g. raising/not raising hands before speaking, noise level, talking to others, texting, wearing/not wearing hats, being respectful to others, etc.)					
Does not allow students to sidetrack the class					

Comments:

<b>Communication Skills</b>
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Speaks clearly					
Varies voice tone, rate, inflection, etc.					
Speaks loudly enough to be heard by all					
Demonstrates correct English grammar and usage					
Writes legibly on the board, overhead, etc.					
Maintains eye contact					
Uses positive and helpful nonverbal communication					
Moves around the classroom and gets away from the front table or lectern					
Uses humor effectively and appropriately					
Uses nonverbal communication (e.g. proximity, facial expressions) effectively					

Comments:

<b>Professional and Ethical Behaviors</b>
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Demonstrates scholarly and professional ethics					
Provides students with a complete syllabus (e.g. Instructor Information, Textual					

<b>Information, Course Topics, Assignments, Student Expectations, Grading Policies, Policy on Course Continuity, Policy on Plagiarism and Attendance, etc.)</b>					
Returns graded materials in a timely manner					
Submits book orders in a timely manner					
Seeks opportunities for professional development					
Seeks help and assistance when necessary					
Critically self-reflects on teaching					
<b>Comments:</b>					
<b>Summary of Strengths</b>					
<b>Possible Areas for Improvement</b>					