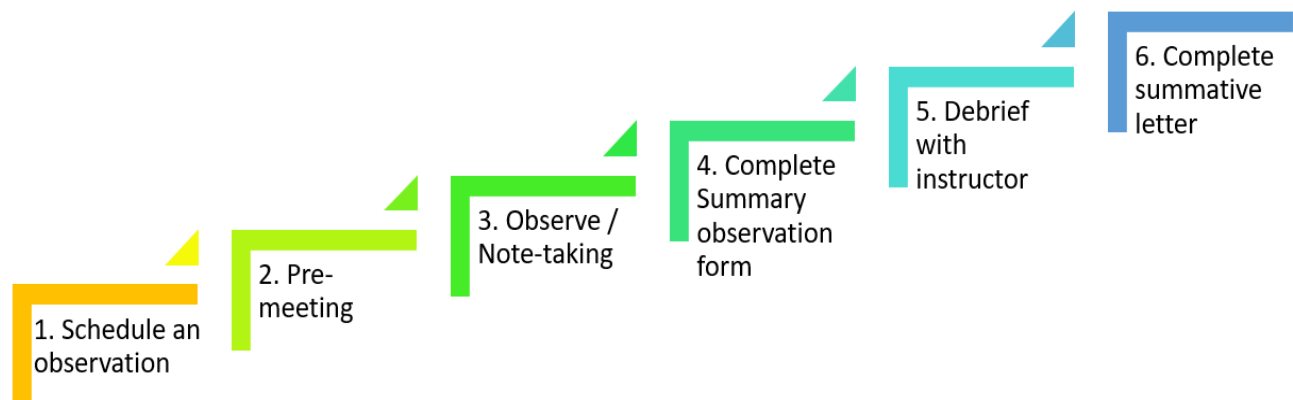**College of Behavioral, Social, and Health Sciences**
Teaching Effectiveness Community (TEC)
Peer-supported Observation Protocol

This Clemson University document provides the basic elements for peer observation of teaching (PoT). After a review of the literature the Teaching Effectiveness Committee of the College of Behavioral, Social, and Health Sciences (CBSHS) created and uses this evidence-based system to offer peer observations in a formative process. Items in this document include: the process chart for steps, the observational sheet, pre-and post-meeting guidance, and a teaching behaviors list that is used not as a checklist but as a foundational document. The teaching committee, with support from OTEI: the Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation, provides each peer reviewer with training on this process, with emphasis on supporting peers in effective teaching practices and better reporting out of their teaching successes. We encourage others who use this process to connect with either the committee or OTEI (or a teaching center in your own institution) for suggestions on training for this process.

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CBSHS Observation Flow Chart

This flow chart lists the steps taken by the peer observer, in sequence:

Overview of each step

1. **Pre-observation meeting** - The pre-meeting is an opportunity to explore the motives of the instructor. Since the purpose of the observation is for professional development, what does this person want to gain? The discussion may include goals of the class/lesson, background information on students, methodology of the class, and effective teaching strategies. This meeting should occur approximately one week before observing the class. Observer will explain to the instructor that he/she will be taking notes of all class interaction (both verbal and nonverbal) to create a summary of the experience between the instructor and the students.
2. **Observation** - Using TEC observation guidelines, the observer will take notes during the class (up to 90 minutes). The instructor has the option to explain why the observer is in the room to the students. It is recommended to send the instructor reflective questions at the end of the session.
3. **Observation summary draft** - The observer will describe experience based on their notes in the Summary Observation Form. This document can be shared with the instructor before or during the post-observation meeting.
4. **Post-observation -** This meeting will occur within two weeks of the observation. The discussion will include an explanation of the Summary Form, a discussion of the experience from both perspectives, and allow the instructor to identify areas for modification.
5. **Final summary draft** - The observer will then modify the summary draft based on feedback during the discussion. This will be the final version for the instructor's record.   For professional development purposes, it is strongly recommended that the instructor write a reflection of the teaching observation process that will include a personal plan of action for any modifications to the lesson, course, or teaching methods.
6. **Optional modified summary** - If this peer observation is used for annual evaluation/promotion purposes, a condensed version will be created to simplify the process for Chair/TPR reviewers. The instructor will have the option of whether they want the full version or the condensed version submitted. Our recommendation is to include the plan of action reflection to show growth.

Pre-observation meeting (30 minutes)

A mutual benefit opportunity between the faculty members to understand expectations for the observation. This meeting should occur in a private space, with the optimal time being within a two-week time frame prior to the observation. The conversation should remain confidential. The duration of the meeting is dependent on the conversation. However, most meetings last approximately thirty minutes.

Introduction speech to pre-meeting (observer)
- Thank them for taking the initiative to be a part of this process
- Purpose - professional development opportunity to provide non-discipline feedback on pedagogy
- College initiative - explain the TEC and our goals
- Explain logistics
  - Timeline
    - Pre-meeting
    - Observation - confirm observation date, time, location

- - - Post meeting (within two weeks after observation)- give them a heads up that you will send self-reflection questions after observation. **Arrange time for post-observation debrief at this time.**
      - The reason is for them to come to the meeting with their thoughts on how the class went.
- "After the observation, we will provide you with a summary form which is based on our post observation discussion. This can be included in your TPR (tenure/promotion/annual review) materials but certainly does not have to be. Essentially, we hope this is a low risk/high reward endeavor."

Possible questions to ask the person being observed during the meeting:

- ➢ What are you hoping to get out of the observation?
- ➢ Have a discussion on what is going to be covered in class and how it relates to the course as a whole.
- ➢ Tell me about your classroom environment.
- ➢ Where is the course within the program?
- ➢ Course- is it required?
- ➢ Tell me about the class set-up.
- ➢ Two key areas for feedback/improvements? (give examples if necessary as they may not know off their head what they should improve on)
- ➢ Have you adopted a specific pedagogy?

Overview of what we will be observing:

"We are sitting in the back (or an area where we can best see both the students and instructor) and taking notes. It will be your choice if you want to tell the students why we are there." Categories (tell them)

- Organization
- Presentation Skills
- Class Climate
- Teaching strategies

Classroom Observation - Peer Review Categories

Organization of content

Introductory Portion
- Presents brief overview
- Makes relationship between today's and previous course content
- Uses a hook to get students interest - possible icebreaker, catchy introduction etc.

Main component of class
- Presents content in a systematic and organized fashion
- Provides occasional summaries and restatement of important ideas
- Allows opportunities for students to ask questions
- Includes clear directions for assessment or activity

Conclusion of lecture
- Restates what was expected to be gained from the presented material
- Allows for an opportunity to debrief or have students reflect on class content
- Sets stage for next class period
- Shares/reminds students of upcoming due dates

Presentation Skills

Voice characteristics
- Speaks with a volume could be easily heard
- Raises or lowers voice for variety and emphasis
- Avoid speech fillers (ok now, ah or umm) that are distracting
- Speaks at an appropriate rate of speech

Non-Verbal Communication
- Consistently makes eye contact with students
- Listens carefully to student comments and questions
- Refrains from distracting mannerisms
- Avoids excessively referring to notes or block students view of visuals

General Style
- Demonstrates enthusiasm for the subject matter
- Demonstrates command of subject matter
- Models professional and ethical behavior
- Uses visual appealing instructional aids to facilitate important points
- Incorporates effective questioning techniques (i.e. limits rhetorical questions, pauses for time for reflection, doesn't let students off the hook)
- Orchestrates a natural class flow (not rushed or too slow)
- Speaks at a rate that allows students to take notes
- Incorporates the use of technology benefits lesson
- Asks questions periodically to gauge student progress
- Includes examples that form a connection with student's experiences
- Presents examples to clarify very abstract and difficult ideas

Class Climate

- Greets students with a bit of small talk
- Notes and responds to signs of puzzlement, boredom, curiosity, etc

- Uses humor effectively, non-threatening
- Treats students with respect/promotes students to show respect of each other opinions
- Moves around room effectively/ Makes use of space effectively (manages physical room challenges)
- Maintains effective guidance and control of discussion
- Deals effectively with sleeping or unruly students
- Solves or deals with any problems raised
- Creates an environment where students appear comfortable (good rapport is obvious)
- Involves of majority/all students in activity/discussion
- Utilizes effective facilitation skills
- Use of names

Teaching strategies - If they use any of these techniques, please identify them

- Uses innovative teachings strategies (besides lecture) effectively
- Incorporates active learning strategies
- Uses games
- Illustrates concepts with videos/visuals
- Considers multiple learning preferences
- Promotes critical thinking
- Demonstrates and/or promotes problems solving
- Incorporates real life examples/case studies
- Challenges without overwhelming
- Utilizes polling techniques
- Promotes student to share ideas/feedback with each other (collaborative opportunities)
- Displays Canvas information that appears organized and clear in intent (student can navigate easily)

Adapted from Diamond N, Sharp G, Ory J, Improving your listening, U. of Ill. 1978 and Mills (1996) Conducting Effective Classroom Observations with Focused Feedback, POD 1996 Salt Lake. Nilson, L Teaching at its best, 2005.

Observational Worksheet

Directions: *Use this observational worksheet for an in-person class and for an online synchronous session if the whole room is visible.* ***When observing class, sit in an area of the room where you can best view both the students and the instructor without being a distraction. Take notes on observable behaviors. Reserve judgments until later. You are simply collecting data.***

Interval Time Notes
On the sheet below, note the time at regular intervals (suggestion, five-minute intervals). Note teaching and learning behaviors that are observable for both the students and the instructor
Note the approximate number of students in the session:

Note time (approx. every 5 minutes)	Observational notes for the whole class (instructor and student actions). What is happening at this time? Use your class diagram as well to note behaviors.

Create additional lines as needed for session

Student Engagement

Overall level of student engagement for the whole session: VHI   HI   MED   LO

VHI Very High: More than 75% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor/course materials or (c) involved in an activity

HI High: Between 50% and 75% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor or (c) involved in an activity

MED Medium: Between 25% and 50% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor or (c) involved in an activity
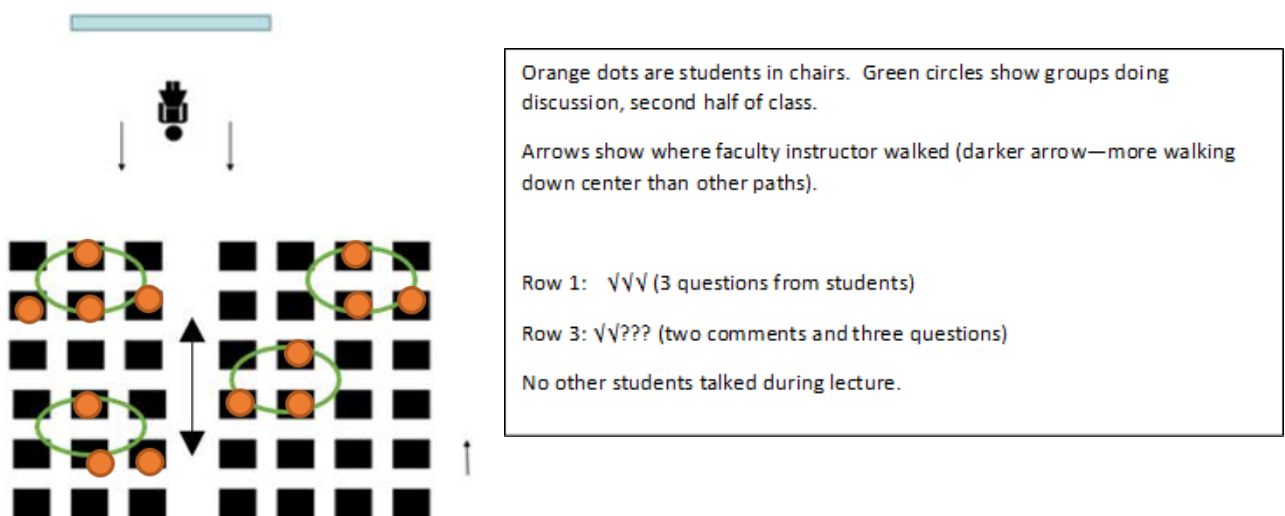
LO Low: Less than 25% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor or (c) involved in an activity

Classroom Set-up

Describe/draw the physical layout of the room (e.g., type of student seating, technology accessible by students, instructor on dais, number of projection screens and their positioning, configuration and size of the room etc)

Draw a diagram of the room and mark where students are sitting. Use your own graphics but for example, you can draw tables or chairs as rectangles, dots or circles as students. Draw a figure or a T for the teacher. Use arrows to show where the teacher walks in the room. Use check marks and letters Q or A to indicate which students talk, how many times, and whether they ask a question or answer a question. In the drawing below, the circles show how students were grouped for a short discussion activity.

For example:

Orange dots are students in chairs. Green circles show groups doing discussion, second half of class.

Arrows show where faculty instructor walked (darker arrow—more walking down center than other paths).

Row 1:   √√√ (3 questions from students)

Row 3: √√??? (two comments and three questions)

No other students talked during lecture.

Summary Form

Observer	
Teacher	
Department	
Observation Date/Time	

The following boxes contain a summary of observations based on "Classroom Observation - Peer Review Categories". This document is not a summative teaching evaluation, but a tool to discuss what was observed on the above date/time. The observer will take their notes from the observation and summarize their thoughts below to be a guide for the debrief.

Organization of Content	
Introduction	
Main component	
Conclusion	

Presentation skills	
Voice	
Non-verbal	
General style	

Class Climate

Teaching Strategies Used

Notes for the post-observation discussion:

Post-meeting (30 minutes)

Introduction to post-meeting (observer)
- Thank them for taking the time to be a part of this process
- Purpose - reminder that observation is a development tool
- Logistics
  - Timeline (reiterate)
    - Pre-meeting (an opportunity to understand the class objectives)
    - Observation completed
    - Post meeting (an opportunity discuss the events and brainstorm an possible improvements)

- Explain: We will provide you with a summary letter that will align with the content in this post observation discussion. This can be included in your TPR materials but certainly does not have to be. Essentially, we hope this is a low risk/high reward endeavor.

Discuss
Ask instructor:
- How do you think class went? (Encourage self-reflection and focus on positives)
- Was this a typical structure for your class?
- Would there be anything you would have done differently?

Overview
Start off on the positive–name something that went well in class
Categories (reviews; the order of categories can be shifted)

- Organization
- Presentation Skills
- Class Climate
- Teaching strategies

Share/discuss
Ideas for resources, teaching development
Encourage further self-reflection
What stood out to you about my feedback?
Do you need additional resources to improve your teaching?

Tell them they should expect the observation summary letter within two weeks (after the post-meeting). As the instructor, they can check the letter for accuracy and contact you with any concerns.

Template for Observation Letter:

(Date)

Dear (Name of Person Observer),

(A overview of what the process entailed and the reason for the observation)

Below is a summary of my observations in the areas of organization, presentation, class climate, and teaching activities.

Organization:

Presentation:

Class Climate:

Teaching Activities:

When we met in our debrief, we discussed…

In discussing ideas to further develop effective teaching practices, please reach out to the Office of Teaching Effectiveness (website). They can provide additional resources.

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