This Clemson University document provides the basic elements for peer observation of teaching. 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 the class. Observer will share the instructor that he/she will be taking notes of all observations to create a summary of the class period.

2. **Observation** - Using committee observation guidelines, the observer will take notes during the class (up to 90 minutes). The instructor should explain why the observer is in the room to the students.

3. **Observation summary draft** - The observer will describe experience based on their notes on the Summary Observation Form. This will be the document shared with the instructor at least a few days before the post-observation meeting. *(Food for Thought - have the instructor also reflect on how they think it went with a few guided questions. They could bring this form with them to post-discussion)*

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, 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, the instructor will write a reflection 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 to be 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-meeting (30 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 outsider feedback
- College initiative - explain committee
- Explain Logistics
  - Timeline
    - Pre-meeting
    - Observation - confirm observation date, time, location
Post meeting (within 2 weeks after observation)- give them a heads up that there will be some self-reflection questions.

- A common question will be 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.

Questions to ask the person being observed:

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 and taking notes.
Categories (tell them)
- Organization
- Presentation Skills
- Class Climate
- Teaching strategies
Inform them that we will be staying a few minutes after class observation to self-reflect
Classroom Observation - Peer Review Categories

**Organization of content**

Introductory Portion
- Presents brief overview
- Makes relationship between today's and previous course content
- Hook student interest - possible icebreaker, catchy introduction etc.

Main component of class
- Content is presented 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
- 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
- Voice could be easily heard
- Voice was raised or lowered for variety and emphasis
- Speech fillers (ok now, ah or umm) were not distracting
- Rate of speech was appropriate

Non-Verbal Communication
- Eye contact with students
- Listens carefully to student comments and questions
- Refrains from distracting mannerisms
- Does not refer to notes excessively or block students view of visuals

General Style
- Demonstrates enthusiasm for the subject matter
- Demonstrates command of subject matter
- Where appropriate models professional and ethical behavior
- Uses visual appealing instructional aids to facilitate important points
- Effective questioning techniques (i.e. limits rhetorical questions, pauses for time for reflection, doesn’t let students off the hook)
- Class flow seems natural and is not rushed or too slow
- Speaks at a rate that allows students to take notes
- Use of technology benefits lesson
- Asks questions periodically to gauge student progress
- Examples are given to 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
Students seem comfortable (good rapport is obvious)
Involvement of majority/all students in activity/discussion
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
- Multiple learning preferences
- Critical thinking
- Problems solving
- Incorporate real life examples/case studies
- Challenges without overwhelming
- Polling techniques
- Promotes student to share ideas/feedback with each other (collaborative opportunities)
- Display of Canvas information is organized and clear in intent (student can navigate easily)

Conducting Effective Classroom Observations with Focused Feedback, POD 1996 Salt Lake.
Nilson, L Teaching at its best, 2005.
Observational Worksheet

Directions: Use of an observational sheet for a face-to-face session or online synchronous session if the whole room is visible. When observing class, sit in the back of the room and be sure to observe silently. Take notes on observable behaviors. Reserve judgements until later. You are simply collecting data.

Use this sheet below and note the time at regular intervals (suggestion, 10-minute intervals).

Draw a quick diagram of the room. Use your diagram to note how the instructor moves around the room, to note where students are seated (and how the room is set up), and to record which students interact with the instructor. Names are not necessary, just where students are and how they interact (ask a question, respond to a question, talk to another student etc).

Note # of students in the session:

<table>
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<th>Note time (approx. every 5-10 minutes)</th>
<th>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.</th>
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Use the back for further notes

**Student Engagement**

**Overall level of student engagement for the whole session:**  

**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**

Describe the physical layout of the room (e.g., type of student seating, technology directly 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.

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 notes from the observation and add key notes below.

| Organization of Content |  |
| Introduction |  |
| Main component |  |
| Conclusion |  |

| Presentation skills |  |
| Voice |  |
| Non-verbal |  |
| General style |  |

| Class Climate |  |
### Teaching Strategies Used

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Other comments:

Notes from 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
    - Observation - confirm observation date, time, location
    - Post meeting (within 2 weeks after observation)

- After the observation we will provide you with a summary form which will lead our 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.

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

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

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 a letter based on observation within 2 weeks (after the post-meeting). Have the observee check the letter for accuracy.
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.
Selected Literature


