



Guidelines for Peer Teaching Observations

If you are asked to observe a peer to provide evaluative feedback on their teaching, plan on a pre-observation meeting to go over the syllabus, course design, and goals for the class, and schedule a visit to observe their class for at least an hour¹. You may wish to stay the entire class or leave during a break. You should also plan on a post-observation meeting to go over your feedback. You are not responsible for assessing the content of the course; rather, focus on 1) pedagogy, 2) the classroom setting, and 3) student reactions and learning.

Pre-Observation

Ask for (temporary) access to the course Canvas site and syllabus to familiarize yourself with the course objectives, pedagogies, and the specific expectations of the day you will be observing. Schedule a short meeting with your peer prior to the scheduled observation to discuss the course objectives and what he or she expects to accomplish during that period.

Observation

Arrive five minutes early and sit in the back and side so that you are not only observing your peer but also the students' actions, reactions, and interactions. Ask your peer to introduce you at the beginning of the class time so that students know why you are in the class. Take notes on what you are seeing both with the instruction and student reaction at least every 5 minutes. Don't give in to the temptation to summarize: suspend judgment and just start by jotting down what you are seeing around you.

You will want to focus your attention on curriculum, classroom management, and student engagement and learning. The list below is not meant to be exhaustive nor do you need to address all of these items. But these are typical activities to pay attention to when observing SPU classroom experiences.

- **Pedagogy**
 - Are learning objectives for the day clearly stated, easy to infer from introductory material, or written somewhere for students to see? How did they align with the overall objectives of the course and those listed in the syllabus for the day?
 - Was the day's material linked to prior days' classes?
 - Was the material presented in a coherent manner?
 - As appropriate, did the instructor meaningfully integrate Christian faith and / or address faith-discipline intersections?
 - If technology was used, did it enhance presentations, involvement and/or opportunities for learning?
 - Were reading materials or other assigned media integrated into the class time?
 - If there were handouts, notes or other electronic resources, did students use them?
 - Did the instructor summarize, ask students to summarize or work with students to talk about appropriate applications?
 - Did the instructor mention expectations for the next class period?
- **Classroom Setting**
 - Did the class start and end on time?
 - Did the instructor maintain eye contact with students and know their names?

¹ Preferably stay for the entire session if possible

- How was the pacing of the material? Did the instructor speed up in order to “get through” material?
 - Did the instructor create “learning pockets” where students engage with the instructor or each other?
 - Did the instructor ask questions in a way that he or she genuinely wanted to hear what students think?
 - How would you describe the class atmosphere (rigorous, challenging, intellectual, respectful, energetic, encouraging, etc.)?
 - Did the instructor check in with the students periodically to insure that they were following along and absorbing the material?
 - Did the instructor check for student understanding by asking appropriate questions?
 - How did the instructor respond to student questions?
- **Student Reactions and Learning**
 - Were students willing to be involved or were just a few or none participating? Was there any sense that some students were favored over others?
 - Were students asking questions and offering insights to the instructor and each other creating generative learning?
 - Were the students bored, hostile, passive aggressive, checked out or engaged with other electronic media (texting or social media)?
 - Did you observe evidence of student learning?
 - Did the instructor give students time to reflect on their own learning for the class period?

Post-Observation

After formulating your thoughts and writing a draft of your letter, meet with your peer to provide preliminary feedback. You can set this time up when you originally agree to observe the class (set up the pre-meeting, observation, and post-meeting – and identify the date that the letter should be submitted). While the idea of this meeting may seem intimidating it will be very helpful for your peer to hear your observations. Give your observations across the three areas including summaries of strengths and areas of development. You should also consider using this time to ask clarifying questions which may help you with some points in the final draft of your letter.

Writing the letter

Letters tend to be about two single-spaced pages. Address the letter to the chair of your peer’s review committee and cc your peer. Begin with an introductory paragraph describing the course and the time that you observed. Give the background of week in the quarter, classroom (e.g. active learning or traditional classroom), and approximate number of students and topics covered.

Start with your summary of the pedagogy and provide specific examples to make your point. Move on to classroom setting. This will probably be the longest section of the letter. Again give summaries with examples. Next, focus on student reactions and evidence of student learning. End your letter with a summary of what went well/strengths, and what were developmental issues/areas that you believe your peer could focus on. When you finish your letter, submit it to the chair of the committee and send a copy to your peer.