

# LAFAYETTE

## CENTER FOR THE INTEGRATION OF TEACHING, LEARNING, AND SCHOLARSHIP

### Peer Observation of Teaching

*Encouraging a Good Process*

Peer observation of teaching is a powerful way to encourage a culture of teaching excellence. This handout provides practical advice for instructors carrying out formative or evaluative peer observation sessions to complement institutional and departmental policies and procedures.

#### PRE-OBSERVATION SESSION

- Schedule an individual meeting prior to the observation.
- Establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect.
- Agree upon where and when the observation will occur.
- Discuss aspects of teaching for which feedback is desired.
- Review or discuss the following as appropriate:
  - Course description and learning goals,
  - For observed class session: learning outcomes, pre-assignments, students' prior knowledge and class experiences, as well as classroom activities,
  - Class size and set up of the physical space,
  - Where the observer will sit during the observation, and
  - Any previous feedback on the course and/or class (e.g. student evaluations, instructor reflections).

#### PRIOR TO OBSERVATION

- Observee: Announce to your students that there will be an observer on a specific date. Emphasize that the instructor will be observed and that the students will not be evaluated.

#### DAY OF OBSERVATION

- Observer:
  - Make objective, non-judgmental observations.
  - Take notes.
  - Try to view the class through the lens of a peer or colleague, as well as that of a student.
  - Focus on being an observer, rather than a participant, unless the observee asks you to perform such a role.
  - Avoid making comparisons to your own teaching.

#### POST-OBSERVATION SESSION

- Meet soon after the observation for a debriefing.
- Observer:
  - Invite the observee to first share their reflections on the observed class.
  - Be an excellent listener.
  - Focus on understanding why particular instructional behaviors occurred.
  - Provide specific, constructive, encouraging, non-judgmental feedback.
  - Focus on teaching behaviors that can be changed.
  - Keep the observation feedback confidential unless reporting it for evaluative purposes.

#### References

Fletcher JA. (2017). Peer Observation of Teaching: A Practical Tool in Higher Education. *Journal of Faculty Development* 32(1): 51-64.  
Siddiqui ZS et al. (2007). Twelve Tips for Peer Observation of Teaching. *Medical Teacher* 29: 297-300.



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