

Observing colleagues in the classroom and providing feedback on teaching are critical components of faculty development. Below are guidelines on recommended principles and processes to support faculty observations. Based on a review of the research, we recommend a three-part process for conducting observations: 1) a substantive pre-observation conference; 2) an in-class observation; and 3) a reflective post-observation conference.

Pre-Observation Conference	Observation	Post-Observation Conference
<p>Discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • relevant instructor background • notes from any previous observations • context of the course • class design • objectives of the class session • purpose of the observation • teaching strengths • particular teaching concerns/challenges wanting to be addressed • special behaviors to observe • teaching goals • observation process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ how notes will be taken ○ where the observer will sit <p>Collect relevant materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • syllabus • supplemental readings • class materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe the entire class period (for 75 minute classes) or part of the class session (3 hour classes). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Videotaping is an option. • Introducing the observer is optional. • Many methods for collecting data during the observations exist (anecdotal records, running records, or observation guides). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The faculty member can be included in the decision of what procedure to use. • Be as unobtrusive as possible. Don't interrupt or participate in the lesson. • Observe both small details and the big picture. • Take notes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Class notes vary, from detailed, minute-by-minute transcripts to brief remarks on various aspects of the class. ○ Effective notes should aid recall of specific examples as well as broader impressions. ○ Consider questions and statements, call patterns, student responses, transitions, and board work, discussions, learning activities/events, student engagement and participation, time on task, questions asked, opportunities for student reflection, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief soon after the observation. • All results of the observation are confidential. • Participate in productive exchanges about teaching and course content. • Allow the faculty member to begin the conversation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ask the instructor to reflect on the class – including what went well and where there might be potential for improvement. • Be particularly sensitive to gaps between observations of the class and the instructor's self-evaluation. • Praise the faculty member, but give honest and useful feedback. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remain constructive and forthcoming throughout debrief. ○ Do not write a report for the teacher. • Distill many potential pieces of feedback into a core set of 3 strengths and 3 opportunities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the instructor's principal strengths, and are there ways these strengths could be leveraged more extensively in the classroom? ○ What opportunities for growth, if addressed, would yield the greatest improvement in teaching effectiveness? • Provide specific examples to illustrate each strength and opportunity. • Collaboratively generate general yet actionable recommendations for future class sessions. • Make yourself available to discuss questions or revisit points raised during the observation process.

References:

C. Roland Christensen Center for Teaching and Learning, Harvard Business School. Retrieved October 30, 2015 from <http://www.hbs.edu/teaching/docs/Guidelines-for-Effective-Observation-of-Case-Instructors.pdf>

Reformed Teaching Observation Protocol (RTOP): Reference Manual Michael Piburn and Daiyo Sawada ACEPT Technical Report No. IN00-3 Arizona Collaborative for Excellence in the Preparation of Teachers. Retrieved October 30, 2015 from https://mathed.asu.edu/instruments/rtop/RTOP_Reference_Manual.pdf

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