



An excellent way to gain insight into your teaching is to observe a colleague. Whether you observe someone from your department, or a colleague from another department, peer observation is useful as a teaching enrichment activity even if you do not have any particular areas of concern. It can also be more directed, for instance, in response to student comments on evaluations.

This Peer Observation Guide is designed to help your analysis of a class you are observing, in turn being able to identify the key components relevant to your teaching, and finally being able to reflect on how to translate those observed components into your pedagogical practice.

You decide how best to utilize this checklist. You may wish to observe all aspects of a peer's class, or you may decide to focus on one single area. The guide provides 7 areas for observation. Each area includes prompts regarding what could be observed.

Peer Observation Guide

This guide is intended to focus on the mechanics of the classroom interaction, not on the content of the course.

1. Physical Features

- How is the room setup? How does this contribute to the learning activities of the class?
 - position of seats
 - doors (e.g., at front or back)
 - blackboards, other equipment, podium
 - general noise level (does room echo; is there street noise, air conditioning noise, etc.)
 - ventilation (stuffy, cold, hot, etc.)

2. Traffic Flow

- Where do students sit? in back? down front?
 - disruptions if people come late? (having to find a seat in middle, squeaky doors, etc.)
- Where are handouts placed?
- Is material handed out at beginning/end/how?

3. Preliminary Activities

- What material is on the board when students first enter? (i.e. outline of the day)
- Are there interactions with students while handing out material?
- What are the ways the instructor demonstrated preparation for class?
- Do students know what preparation (reading or other assignments) they should have completed prior to class?
- Beginning the class:
 - is there a real beginning or does it just start?

- does the beginning encourage engagement, make students feel welcome?
 - how are learning objectives for the class given (verbally, written, or not at all)?
- are specific instructional outcomes used?

5. The Main Event

- Instructional methods: List *instructor* activities.
 - how are they the best tools for students to achieve the learning outcomes?
 - do films, websites, and other audiovisual materials have a clear purpose?
 - does timing of classroom activities consider attention spans?
 - does instructor involve students in deciding what issues to discuss?
- Opportunity for student participation: List *students'* activities.
 - how does instructor encourage students to summarize and add to other's summaries?
 - how does instructor help quieter students interact with others?
 - how are students engaging in class, and being invited to engage in class? (i.e. taking notes, looking over prepared notes)
 - how does the instructor encourage general attentiveness in class?
- Class flow:
 - is class flow easy to follow?
 - is lecture easy to follow (even if detail of the subject matter isn't easily accessible to observer)?
 - are there distinct sections to the class?
 - how does the instructor transition between sections?
 - how is all material covered in allotted class time?
 - are objectives discussed at the end of class?
- Instructional activities:
 - how are important points emphasized and summarized?
 - how is time used for questions?
 - how are explanations made clear to students?
 - how are the emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of students met?
 - how does the instructor prompt awareness of students' prior learning and experiences?
 - how does the instructor offer "real world" application?
 - is the instructor available before or after class?
 - how does the instructor relate class to course goals, students' personal goals, or societal concerns?
- Responsiveness to student feedback:
 - Is the instructor paying attention to cues of boredom and confusion?
 - How does the instructor encourage or discourage questions (dissension)?
 - How does the instructor provide students opportunities to mention problems/concerns with the class, either verbally or in writing?

6. Interaction with Audience

- What presentation techniques or skills are utilized and to what end? (i.e. movement, lecturing from notes vs. manuscript, eye contact)
 - Voice:

- how are important points properly emphasized?
- other characteristics of the voice, e.g., does tone indicate interest in the subject/in the audience/in their questions?
- How are student questions encouraged? when? how?
- How are questions handled? repeating them? can everyone hear all questions? are the answers clear?
- Is the interaction continuous/frequent/occasional/rare?
- Are students AND teacher interested and enthusiastic?
- Does the instructor use student names?
- How is humor used appropriately?
- How does the instructor not embarrass or belittle students in any way?
- How does the instructor create a participatory classroom atmosphere?

7. Integration of Technology

- What technology/ies are used during the class? How?
- What technology/ies are used outside of class? How is the work done via technology outside of class integrated into class sessions?
- How is technology used to engage students, enhance learning, and/or generally enrich students' class experience?
 - Is it part of lecture, activities, discussion?
 - Is it used by the instructor, students, or both?
 - What type of technical support is available for instructor and students, if any is used?
- How is technology leveraged to facilitate a learning experience that would otherwise not be possible?