

Peer Teaching and Observation Information

In January 2017 the CTL brought in a speaker from UNC-Chapel Hill to discuss the importance of peer review as a method of improving classroom teaching through formative evaluation, as a method to evaluate the classroom beyond student assessments, and as a way for faculty to learn from other faculty within the UT community. As noted in this session, we are comfortable with peers reviewing our scholarly written work and providing feedback – this method of growth and professional development is no different.

In August 2017, the Center for Teaching and Learning had its first training program for faculty who wish to become peer teaching observers. These trained peer observers will be able to work with faculty on providing specific feedback as requested by the observed faculty. Items that were discussed included voluntary nature of the entire process, determining what components of the classroom or lab the faculty wished to be observed in and the formative nature of the evaluation. A wide variety of options were shared and the flexibility discussed with faculty who attended this session.

Additional training sessions for interested faculty will be scheduled and announced in fall, however, materials from the August session are available for review on the CTL webpage. On Tuesday, October 24, there was a UT-TED talk to launch the fall planned activities.

A sign-up process for faculty wishing to be observed or who wish specific feedback about teaching techniques and approaches will also be launched. The sign up process will be detailed to include the type of feedback the faculty wishes to receive and the nature of the feedback. One crucial component is a pre-conference, classroom scheduled time and post conference that ideally are scheduled at the onset.

Process for Observations of Your Classroom/Lab

1. Decide that you wish to have your teaching observed and critiqued.
2. Choose a faculty member to pair with. You may choose a person to observe you only or agree to each observe the other.
3. Select a peer observation form/ format or create your own version (on ut.edu/ctl)
4. Select the course and class session you wish to have observed. We recommend that you wait until the fifth week of classes or later for an observation. (The exception would be if you wish to be observed/ rated on your performance in the first days of class.)
5. Set up a pre-observation conference meeting. Follow the posted directions for content and process at this meeting.
6. Schedule the class date for observation. Also schedule your post-observation conference for feedback and further discussion. Try to schedule within one week of the observation, preferably within 2-3 days.
7. Have the peer observer attend the class. Decide how they will be introduced and where they will sit ahead of time.

At this point, please report to the CTL (Dr. Martinasek) that you have set up the observation and completed the pre-observation conference with a planned post-observation conference scheduled. (See reporting form below.) After the observation and post-observation feedback conference, please report this step to the CTL for record keeping. (The CTL will not keep any specific feedback or forms on record; this is the property of the observer and observed.)

8. Complete the post-observation conference. Share relevant feedback and information.
9. Optional: share on your annual evaluation the changes that you instituted based on the evaluation.



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Suggested Process for Observations of Teaching in the Classroom, Studio or Lab

Before observation day:

1. Discuss the room lay-out
2. Decide on whether the observer needs to see only the instructor, only the students or both
3. The default should be where the observer sees both the students and instructor. In this case, the observer should sit at the front of the classroom in a chair on a side wall so that they can see student responses and reactions and clearly observe the faculty member's work style.
4. Determine how the guest will be introduced
5. Decide on what forms you will want completed and have them available.
6. The observer needs to know what in particular they are assessing and take proper notes.

On the observation day:

1. Introduce the observer and tell the students you are voluntarily being observed to see how you might improve your teaching skills.
2. Tell your students to act normally (this is hard to do; they will want to help you look good.)
3. Teach your class as if there was no observer present. Make no reference to the observer and do not interact until after the class observation is completed.
4. At the end of class, ask the observer if there is any other material or information they need prior to the post-observation conference.

At the post-conference meeting:

1. The observer begins by asking for feedback from the observed faculty on what they felt went well during the class. What were their impressions of the teaching sample; what tasks or behaviors were conducted; how good a sample of typical teaching was made, etc.
2. The observer responds to this initial feedback and a conversation can start where the observer can tie in their observations and comments.
3. The observer reports back the rest of their observations, comments, suggestions, etc. Conversations about each topic are then begun.
4. The observer can provide additional feedback out of that requested if the faculty member is willing to accept this feedback.
5. Schedule an additional observation if there is a desire/ need for more feedback or if a different type of class format will be observed.

