

Peer Observation of Teaching Process

Peer observation is the process of an instructor being observed by a colleague with the purpose of encouraging his/her professional growth in the field of teaching and learning. The process can enhance teaching practices, build collaboration and collegiality, and improve the quality of instruction and educational experience for our students

Several factors guided our efforts to establish a peer observation of teaching process at WKU:

- Improve student success by providing a mechanism for improving the quality of teaching and student learning on campus.
- Create a standard for teaching performance using establishing benchmarks supported by empirical evidence.
- Expand the evaluation of teaching beyond SITE evaluations.
- Promote collegiality and collaboration within academic units. Such efforts can highlight individual strengths and identify areas where resources could be allocated for improvement within the unit.
- Provide a source of innovation through the sharing and dissemination of unique and effective techniques and strategies within and across departments.

Key Considerations:

- Successful observations are primarily used as a formative process, as opposed to a summative/evaluative process, to assist instructors as they grow in their understanding and application of teaching principles.
- Observed instructors should have full control over the use of observation data. They may elect to use it as a part of their promotion and tenure file, annual review, and/or to develop a teaching improvement plan.
- Instructors should use peer observations along with other data points, such as student evaluations, to evaluate their teaching skills and overall effectiveness. Instructors can demonstrate their teaching skills by triangulating different sources of data/information.
- It is important to have a trusting collegial relationship between the Observer and the Instructor to ensure the process is a positive learning experience for the Instructor and successfully nurtures his/her teaching skills.

Steps in Process:

1. Observers are strongly encouraged to participate in a short training session sponsored by the Center for Innovative Teaching & Learning (CITL) prior to conducting a peer observation.
2. The Instructor should complete the ***Pre-Observation Questionnaire*** (attached) and email it to the Observer at least two business days before the Observer conducts the classroom observation.
3. The Observer should use the ***Classroom Teaching Observation Instrument*** (provided) and mark each quality indicator in the areas of Pedagogy, Student Engagement, and Classroom Management. Two versions of the document are available: (1) a printed version that may be printed and completed with a pen/pencil; (2) an interactive version that may be completed electronically using a computer or tablet.
4. If the Observer marks a Growth Indicator, documentation should be noted in the comments section. This documentation might include a specific example from the class. In addition, in the comments section, the observer may provide other qualitative feedback noting specific areas of strength. Key considerations when writing feedback:
 - The observer should be clear and specific.
 - The observer should provide comments/information that help the instructor promote student learning and success in the classroom; comments comparing the instructor to other teachers/educators should be avoided.
5. Conduct a face-to-face or phone post-observation debrief no more than five business days after the observation. The observer should address the following:
 - Note the indicators that were observed.
 - Discuss areas of potential growth. Identity one or two growth indicators that the Instructor could practice in the future to improve his/her teaching. Brainstorm how these growth indicators could be observed in subsequent observations.
 - Seek out resources/assistance from the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (citl@wku.edu) and other professional resources as needed/desired.

*Prepared by WKU Center for Innovative Teaching & Learning
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Pre-Observation Questionnaire

The Instructor should complete the questionnaire below and send to the Observer via email at least two business days before the Observer visits the Instructor's class session to conduct the peer-observation. Please type your answers directly into the space provided (add additional space as needed).

Question 1: What does a typical class session look like in this course? Please provide a brief discussion of what someone might see if they observed your course.

Question 2: How would you describe your teaching approach? What strategies do you use in the classroom?

Question 3: What forms of technology do you use?

Question 4: How do you promote student engagement/interaction?

Question 5: What are the instructional goals for the lesson that will be observed?

Question 6: Where is this class session situated in the context of the course? (e.g. Have the students just completed an exam, or will students be taking an exam in the near future? Is there a major assignment on the horizon? Will this observation be conducted when you are introducing new lesson, or are you in the middle of a topic/lesson with students?)

Question 7: Are there any classroom concerns (e.g., student behavioral issues, lack of student engagement) you would like to note prior to the observation?

Question 8: What are some potential areas of growth that you would like to pursue in your teaching?