

Learning Environment Observation Guidelines

Purpose

The purpose of the learning environment observation is to provide information to highlight the faculty's teaching strengths and to improve faculty performance. It will be used by observers to evaluate faculty in the learning environment and also to provide feedback that will support and enhance faculty's performance as learning facilitators and promote the continuous improvement of teaching quality throughout the college.

Before the Observation

- The observer and faculty will schedule the class observation and observation review at least one week in advance.
- The observer and faculty will complete the pre-observation form indicating the goals and format of the class; and outlining and agreeing the mutual expectations of the observation.

During the Observation

- The faculty will introduce the observer to the students and explain the purpose of the visit.
- The observer will not participate in the class session unless agreed upon with the faculty in advance.
- The observer will use the Learning environment Observation Form to ensure completeness and consistency.

After the Observation

- The observer and the faculty will each provide overall summaries of the class on the Post-Observation Summary and Feedback section.
- The observer and faculty will meet to discuss the observation report and to identify follow-up actions.

Learning environment Observation Form

The observer should remain in the learning environment for the full class period or a minimum of 50 minutes. The observer will evaluate the faculty using the criteria listed according to the rating scale:

1. demonstrated consistently throughout the class observed.
2. demonstrated on one or more occasions in the class observed, but not in a consistent or systematic way.
3. not demonstrated in the class observed.

Explanatory comments on each category may be noted. Explanations and exemplars of the criteria used in the Learning environment Observation Form are given below.

Observation Exemplars

A. Structure and Organization
Relates the objectives of class to prior learning and the course as a whole <i>e.g. shows how current class ties into previous class, frames class in context of current module or course overall.</i>
Provides an overview of class topics and content <i>e.g. gives an agenda or plan for the class so that students know what will be covered</i>
Clearly transitions from one topic to next <i>e.g. summarizes one point then shows how it links into next point</i>
Wraps up class with summary of main points <i>e.g. provides clear conclusion to class, highlights key points, provides opportunity for students to ask for clarification.</i>
Provides direction to students on expected follow-up activities <i>e.g. indicates out-of-class or assignments to be done, directs to supplemental readings, exercises etc.</i>

B. Content

Presents content with logical sequencing and development

e.g. moves from concept to application; from simple to complex. Defines elements then links together.

Presents content which is accurate and consistent

e.g. information is up-to-date and reflects best practices. There are no contradictions or inconsistencies in the content

Illustrates points with metaphors, examples and/or cases

e.g. uses case-studies or real-life examples to show applications of content, uses analogies to explain concepts

Expands on points to answer students' questions

e.g. can provide more in-depth explanation, gives alternative examples or analogies to meet students' needs

Communicates clearly and effectively to the level of the students.

e.g. defines new terms before applying, builds on existing knowledge

C. Delivery and Activities

Selects learning activities to engage students with content

e.g. uses a variety of activities such as lecture, group discussion or problem-solving, worked examples, quizzes

Adapts pacing of delivery and learning activities to students' capabilities

e.g. checks for understanding at intervals, gives sufficient time for students to consider answers, or to take notes

Varies activities and learning experiences to maintain interest

e.g. recognizes when student attention declines, changes learning activities at intervals,

Speaks clearly and audibly with variation in tone and inflection

e.g. uses voice effectively to convey energy, enthusiasm and/or significance. Audible in all parts of classroom, uses amplification effectively

Uses technology to enhance learning activities

e.g. uses presentation tools, applications, clickers, effectively and skillfully

Uses body language and eye contact to maintain student attention

e.g. moves around classroom, makes eye contact with students in all areas of classroom

D. Learning environment Management

Establishes and maintains expectations of learning environment behavior

e.g. controls orderly participation, effectively calls class back after group activities,

Makes effective use of space and resources

e.g. adapts layout to activities where possible, or adapts activities to layout. Ensures limited resources, models etc are shared equitably

Is aware of behavior and level of engagement in learning environment as a whole

e.g. engages whole class, not just front rows, is alert to distracting behaviours

Is inclusive and encourages participation by all students

e.g. controls contribution from over-keen students, allows time for students to formulate answers to questions, uses in-class discussions

Promotes respect for students' diversity and individuality

e.g. welcomes alternative views and perspectives; respects students' previous experiences; uses inclusive and people-first language