

The Peer Review of Teaching: The Pre-Observation Meeting

UBC Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology

Formative Peer Review Program – Resource (updated November 21, 2011)

This resource is for peer reviewers and reviewees. It contains prompts/questions/ideas that can be used and/or considered in a pre-observation meeting in the context of a peer review of teaching (classroom observation of teaching). This document was developed from ideas generated by workshop participants who attended *Developing your skills as a peer reviewer: An introductory workshop*.

Things to think about prior to/during the pre-observation meeting

First things first

- Connect with one another (ideally, 1 week prior to the classroom observation meeting)
- Establish trust:
 - Discuss your respective backgrounds
 - What is the importance each of you (reviewer & reviewee) places on this process?
- Discuss the reviewee's objectives for the review
- What is reviewer's understanding of their role?
- Why me as the reviewer? Who am I as a reviewer? (Relay experience/confidence in self as teacher, philosophy of teaching etc)
- What will be the impact of this evaluation on reviewee's career?
- How will the information generated be used?

Course specifics (before the observation)

- Reviewee establishes context of the lesson/class within the broader course/curriculum
- Reviewee explains rationale for his/her teaching approach (I'll be doing this b/c...)
- Reviewee tells reviewer about specific activities s/he wants to discuss and gets feedback on
 - Reviewer to probe specifics. For example, does the reviewee want feedback on the extent to which the instructor:
 - Was culturally respectful?
 - Balanced group work with individual work?
 - Balanced didactic teaching/independent thinking?
 - Used a style of teaching appropriate to context/objectives...
- Reviewee shares potential problems occurring in the class
- Determine which materials the reviewer will review
- Determine whether the reviewee wants reviewer to speak with his/her students?
- Determine how this review aligns with current departmental practices



Scheduling and criteria

- Schedule which class to come to and the post-observation meeting
- Discuss what criteria the reviewer will be using when conducting the review
- Review what the post-observation meeting will entail.
- Discuss whether the reviewer will be available to come back and conduct another classroom observation.

Practical considerations

- How do faculty members know this service is available?
- Formalities – peer reviewer in the classroom (how will the instructor present the reviewer in the classroom context?)
- Tell reviewee you will take notes
- How much information does reviewer want ahead of time?
- What effect will a peer reviewer have on the classroom dynamics?

Other

- Reduce anxiety, discuss nervousness
- Reviewer asks questions to better understand what has been happening
- Active listening
- Specific questions
- Reviewer tries to find out how reviewee defines successful teaching
- Rephrasing
- Figure out what the broad statements mean
- Working to reach a shared understanding helps the process move forward
- Develop a process for dealing with disagreements (between reviewer and reviewee)
- Are we a good match? If not, then what?
- Assurance that the review process is confidential, closed door
- Open communication, preferred type of communication
- Other people they can talk to: department head, selection committee, other

Non-verbal cues

- Meet in a comfortable, semi/private place
- Nodding, expressive, relaxed posture, smiling, eye contact



Phrases for the pre-observation meeting

The following are some phrases that a reviewer can use in a pre-observation meeting.

Motivation for review

- What prompted the review?
- What led you to ask for a peer review (provide examples)?
- What is your motivation for requesting a peer review?
- What are your goals and objectives for the peer review process?
- What would you like feedback on?
- What expectations do you have of this review?
- What do you want to get out of this process?
- What are your expectations of my role in this process?

Background

- What is your general teaching approach/philosophy?
- What is the institution's philosophy?
- How is your class going now?
- What has been working well to date?
- What are your strengths/challenges as a teacher?
- Tell me about a strength...
- What aspects of your course are motivating/challenging your students?
- What type of active learning tools do you use? (if any?)
- What are some of your strengths in teaching (provide examples)?
- Tell me about a weakness...
- What is your (content) subject experience?
- Are there any unique features of your program/courses that affect how you teach and the process of evaluating teaching?
- Have you taught this type of class before?
- What is the main objective of the lesson?
- How does this lesson tie into the whole course?
- What do you like about your students?
- How did you plan your course? Who have you talked to, collaborated with, resources you have looked at?
- Tell me about your teaching style.
- What is your methodology for teaching this content?
- How do you feel about your students' participation/attitude/engagement?
- To what extent do you integrate any technologies in your teaching?
- Are there any recent changes that you have made to your teaching?



- What kinds of feedback have you received? For example: have you provided your students with opportunities to provide feedback?
- What sort of preparation do you do?
- Could you share with me an episode that...
 - ... characterizes your teaching?
 - ... demonstrates a challenge you have overcome?
- Have you ever observed/reviewed a peer? How did it go?
- Do you have any concerns about the process?
- How do you feel about this whole review process?
- How comfortable are you with the classroom observation?

How can I help?

- Is there any specific feedback you'd like?
- What are you looking for?
- Do you have any specific aspects of your teaching that you'd like feedback on?
- What are your learning objectives for this peer review process?
- Do you have any preferences of which course/area you would like me to observe?

Clarification about process

- Can I clarify the process...? (Perhaps after circulating process document and expectations)
- One of the first questions I will be asking you in the post-observation meeting is "how did things go?"
- What does the process of peer review mean to you?
- What background information do I need to know to accurately observe your teaching in this particular class?

Additional resources can be found at the Process tab at <http://ctl.t.ubc.ca/programs/all-our-programs/peer-review-of-teaching/>.

We welcome your comments. Please feel free to send suggestions to Isabeau.iqbal@ubc.ca.

