Procedures and Standard for College Operations

Procedure 211.1
Faculty Observation Procedure

Approved by: H Williams
President
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Revised:

Related Policies, Procedures or Standards: Standard 211 Faculty Observation

Additional References:

I. Introduction

The observation process is designed to support Central Penn College faculty in their teaching. The process provides opportunities for faculty to reflect on their teaching and, in collaboration with the observer, assess both teaching skills and learning outcomes. Created to be both supportive and helpful, the process also serves as an effective evaluation tool so that faculty can enhance the quality of the education they provide students. Assessment of teaching effectiveness focuses on mastery of course content, ability to apply appropriate instructional methods for students, maximizing student engagement in the learning process, and creating learning experiences that link stated learning outcomes to actual student achievement. Because observations will occur at meaningful intervals, faculty will be able to improve their teaching and demonstrate that improvement over time.

Observations are commonly used for two purposes. "Formative observations" are specifically designed to help instructors improve their teaching. "Summative observations," while they may improve teaching, are used primarily in personnel decisions as they are a way to record an instructor's "efforts to deliver superior academic programs in-person and online" and "pursuit of excellence in generating, communicating, delivering, and preserving knowledge" (see Standard 208). Although both should help improve teaching, formative procedures are most effective when kept separate from the summative process.

II. Definitions

Formative Observation: A teaching observation conducted by a peer wherein the primary goal is to inform and enhance teaching and learning. Formative observations are confidential, given directly to the faculty member being observed, and are development and consultative in nature.

Summative Observation: A teaching observation conducted by an administrator or supervisor wherein the primary goal is to assess performance for use in personnel decisions (e.g., annual reviews, promotion decisions, teaching awards). Summative observations become a part of the faculty member's permanent file.

Peer: Any colleague who, upon invitation, provides course evaluation with the goal to inform and enhance teaching and learning.

Supervisor: Faculty member in supervisory role who conducts the observation with the goal of personal decisions.

III. Procedure

Observer Credentials

Formative observations must be completed by Central Penn College full-time faculty, Program Directors, or Academic Deans. Summative observations must be completed by Program Directors or Academic Deans. Other administrators may not serve as observers. Adjunct faculty may serve as formative observers only if they are approved by the Program Director or Academic Dean of the faculty being observed. All observers must complete the training program sponsored by the Center for Teaching Excellence before they are eligible to conduct observations.

Observation Procedure

The summative and formative observations both have components of a pre-observation conversation, the actual observation, a post-observation conversation, completion of the approved observation forms and for the summative observation there is the additional step of submission of the signed observation form.

<u>Formative Observation</u>

1. The Pre-Observation Conversation

   The purpose of the pre-observation conversation is to establish the context for the class visit and should be conducted at least a week before an observation at a time that is convenient to both.

   To establish this context the observee should:

   - Select a peer observer.
   - Schedule a conversation with the observer. This conversation may take place in person, over the phone, virtually, or by any other strategy that permits a substantive conversation.
   - Identify any areas they would like the observer to focus on specific to that class or related to his or her teaching style.

   The observer should:

   - Access and be familiar with the peer observation form.
   - If observing an online course, the observer should request access to the course.

2. The Observation

   Many standard teaching observation forms use Likert scales because they are easy and commonly accepted tools for assessment. The disadvantages of Likert scales are that they only provide a general assessment, use limited criteria, and lack reliability unless ratings are very well defined and observers are like-minded. Therefore, the classroom observation process does not include any Likert scales and instead, encourages a more open-ended approach.

   The process for an in-person observation requires that the observer:

   - Keep notes of what transpires in the classroom and highlight teaching strategies that were particularly effective or could be improved upon.

- Not disrupt classroom proceedings by asking questions or making remarks. Similarly, the observee should not ask for the observer's input at any point during the observation.
- Observe the class for the entire class period or at least 60 minutes. Observers are encouraged to stay longer if needed to complete a thorough evaluation.
- Refer to the peer observation form a reminder of some teaching effectiveness indicators but should not feel limited by this list.

The process for an online observation requires that the observer:

- Keep notes about the course organization, structure, classroom interaction and use of pedagogical tools and strategies.
- Once the observation is complete, the observer should remove themselves from the course.

3. The Post-Observation Conversation

After the observation, the observer should set-up a meeting with the instructor. If a meeting is not possible, a phone or virtual conversation is acceptable and should be conducted no later than ten-working days after the observation.

The post-observation conversation should be handled in a collegial manner. During the conversation, the observer should ask the instructor to openly convey perceptions and opinions about the class, especially those associated with the areas of focus identified by the observee. The observer should be prepared to reflect on a variety of teaching effectiveness criteria and provide actual examples whenever possible.

Recognizing positive teaching strategies is just as important as identifying areas for improvement. Therefore, the post-observation conversation should begin with a discussion about the most effective teaching strategies observed.

When discussing areas for improvement, the observer should provide the reasons why a particular strategy seemed less effective and suggest one or more alternatives that could be utilized instead. The observer should ask the instructor if they have any ideas for changes that would enhance his or her own teaching effectiveness.

4. Completion of the Peer Observation Form

Within ten-working days of the post-observation conversation, the observer should complete the peer observation form. Thoughtful and detailed comments are essential to this process. The report should include positive and specific feedback about the instructor's strengths, specifically identify areas for improvement, and reflect on collaborative strategies identified for enhanced teaching that were discussed in the post-observation conversation.

The observer should sign and e-mail a PDF copy of the peer observation form to the instructor for review and to be kept as a record.

Summative Observation

1. The Pre-Observation Conversation

The purpose of the pre-observation conversation is to establish the context for the class visit and should be conducted at least a week before an observation at a time that is convenient to both. To establish this context the supervising observer should:

- Request copies of the syllabus and other materials to be used during the class.
- Provide the instructor with teaching observation document.

- Schedule a conversation with the faculty member being observed. This conversation may take place in person, over the phone, virtually, or by any other strategy that permits a substantive conversation.
- Explain the observation process to the faculty member being observed and review the observation form as a tool that begins the conversation about effective teaching.
- Inquire if the faculty member wants the observer to focus on anything specific to that class or related to his or her teaching style.
- Ask the instructor to inform the class that a visitor will be in attendance and the class will proceed normally.

2. The Observation

Many standard teaching observation forms use Likert scales because they are easy and commonly accepted tools for assessment. The disadvantages of Likert scales are that they only provide a general assessment, use limited criteria, and lack reliability unless ratings are very well defined and observers are like minded. Therefore, the classroom observation process does not include any Likert scales and instead, encourages a more open-ended approach.

The process for an in-person observation requires that the observer:

- Keep notes of what transpires in the classroom and highlight teaching strategies that were particularly effective or could be improved upon.
- Not disrupt classroom proceedings by asking questions or making remarks. Similarly, the observee should not ask for the observer's input at any point during the observation.
- Observe the class for at least 60 minutes but is encouraged to stay longer if needed to complete a thorough evaluation.
- Refer to the observation from as a reminder of some teaching effectiveness indicators but should not feel limited by this list.

The process for an online observation requires the observer:

- Keep notes about the course organization, structure, interaction and use of pedagogical tools and strategies.
- Once the observation is complete, the observer should remove themselves from the course.

3. The Post-Observation Conversation

After the observation, the observer should set-up a meeting with the instructor. If a meeting is not possible, a phone or virtual conversation is acceptable and should be conducted no later than ten-working days week after the observation.

The post-observation conversation should be handled in a collegial manner. During an open conversation, the observer should ask the instructor to openly convey perceptions and opinions about the class. The observer should be prepared to reflect on a variety of teaching effectiveness criteria and provide actual examples whenever possible.

Recognizing positive teaching strategies is just as important as identifying areas for improvement. Therefore, the post-observation conversation should begin with a discussion about the most effective teaching strategies observed. Additionally, if superior teaching strategies were observed, both parties should collaborate on ways the instructor could share those strategies with other colleagues.

When discussing areas for improvement, the observer should provide the reasons why a particular strategy seemed less effective and suggest one or more alternatives that could be utilized instead.

The observer should ask the instructor if they have any ideas for changes that would enhance his or her own teaching effectiveness.

4. Completion of the observation form

   Within ten-working days of the post-observation conversation, the observer should complete the observation form. Thoughtful and detailed comments are essential to this process. The report should include positive and specific feedback about the instructor's strengths, specifically identify areas for improvement, and reflect on collaborative strategies identified for enhanced teaching that were discussed in the post-observation conversation.

   The observer should sign and e-mail a PDF copy of the observation form to the instructor for review and signature.

5. Submission of the final observation form

   After receiving the completed observation form the instructor may elect to add comments but is not required to do so. The instructor must sign the completed form, scan it, and e-mail it back to the observer within one week of receipt. Once the observer has a signed copy of the report, they must submit it to the Office of Academic Affairs.

Appeal

If the observee is convinced that the observation report is unfair, inaccurate, or reflective of an unusually unrepresentative teaching performance, they may pursue one or more of the following options.

1. Submit a written response to the observation report to be attached to and filed with the report.
2. Request a second observation by the same or a different observer to be added to the record.

IV. Implementation or Effective Date

Immediate upon approval.