SOME BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

- **Peer observation** should be voluntary, scheduled at mutually convenient dates, and undertaken by colleagues who respect one another.
- Before an observation, both parties should have a shared understanding of the goals and focus for the observation and the type of feedback that will be provided.
- There isn’t only one good way to teach – and teachers need feedback about their own style of teaching, not the preferred methods of the observer.
- It can make an instructor anxious to be observed.
- Reciprocal (non-hierarchical) observation is a good practice.
- Ideally peer observation leads to exploration of what works and reflection on the assumptions underpinning practices rather than simply focusing narrowly on one class meeting, which is just one “snapshot.”

PEER OBSERVATION SHOULD BE 3-STEP PROCESS

BEFORE THE OBSERVATION

- Understand why the instructor wants an observation.
- Discuss where the class meeting fits into the goals of the course, the specific objectives and methods for that class meeting, how the students prepared.
- Discuss exactly what the instructor wants feedback on. (Consider the options.)
- Discuss the observation tool observer will use. (See examples.)

DURING THE OBSERVATION

- Observer should arrive early and be as unobtrusive as possible.
- Observer should use some systematic method for focusing on the agreed upon areas and recording specific observations.
- Decide which specific moments in the class and/or behaviors by students or instructor illustrate what works effectively and which few things might be improved.

AFTER THE OBSERVATION

- Schedule a conversation as soon as possible after both have had a chance to reflect.
- Observer should begin by asking the instructor how s/he felt about the class meeting (to what degree met goals, what worked well and why, what was disappointing, what s/he would change next time, and whether the class meeting was typical).
- Reinforce positive behaviors – with specific examples.
- Make sure feedback is aligned with what was agreed upon.
- Target just a few areas for improvement.

ABOUT FEEDBACK

- Where possible, provide specific observed information. For example, instead of just saying “You’re very clear,” explain “When you said/did _____, I saw numerous students nodding.”
- Feedback should be both candid and tactful.
- Feedback should be descriptive, not judgmental.
- Provide a balance between praise and constructive criticism; it’s crucial to give positive reinforcement for things going well.
- Results should be strictly confidential and apart from summative evaluation.
## SOME OPTIONS FOR WHAT AN OBSERVER COULD FOCUS ON

- Content
- Use of materials
- Class organization
- Presentation forms
- Teacher-student interactions
- Student participation/engagement
- Assessment practice

## RESOURCES

Bandy, Joe. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching Peer Review of Teaching guide.  
[https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/peer-review-of-teaching/](https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/peer-review-of-teaching/)


College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Life Sciences, University of Illinois. “Peer Observation for Teaching Assessment.”  
[http://academics.aces.illinois.edu/sites/academics.aces.illinois.edu/files/peerob_0.pdf](http://academics.aces.illinois.edu/sites/academics.aces.illinois.edu/files/peerob_0.pdf)


Franchini, Billie. 2008. University of Albany Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership. “Peer Observation and Assessment of Teaching.” Adapted from original guide by Bill Roberson for the *University of Texas El Paso*.  
[http://www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning/ltr/peer_obs/Peer%20Observation%20Resource%20Book%20for%20University%20of%20Albany.pdf](http://www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning/ltr/peer_obs/Peer%20Observation%20Resource%20Book%20for%20University%20of%20Albany.pdf)

see also [https://www.itlal.org/index.php?q=node/90](https://www.itlal.org/index.php?q=node/90)


University of Texas Austin Learning Sciences, “Peer Review of Teaching.”  
[https://learningsciences.utexas.edu/teaching/professional-development/peer-review-teaching](https://learningsciences.utexas.edu/teaching/professional-development/peer-review-teaching)

Utah Valley University Faculty Center, “Rubric for Classroom Observation of Teaching.”  
[http://www.uvu.edu/facultycenter/docs/Evaluating%20Teaching_Classroom%20Observation%20Rubric.docx](http://www.uvu.edu/facultycenter/docs/Evaluating%20Teaching_Classroom%20Observation%20Rubric.docx)