

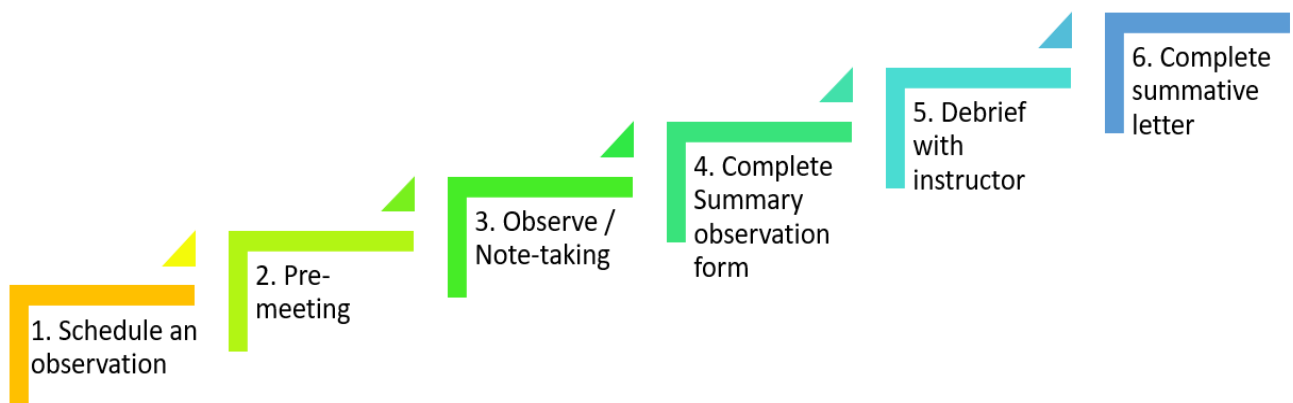
**College of Behavioral, Social and Health Sciences**  
**Teaching Effectiveness Community**  
**Peer-supported Observation Protocol**

This Clemson University document provides the basic elements for peer observation of teaching. After a review of the literature the Teaching Effectiveness Committee of the College of Behavioral, Social, and Health Sciences (CBSHS) created and uses this evidence-based system to offer peer observations in a formative process. Items in this document include: the process chart for steps, the observational sheet, pre-and post-meeting guidance, and a teaching behaviors list that is used not as a checklist but as a foundational document. With support from OTEI: the Office of Teaching Effectiveness and Innovation, the teaching committee provides each peer reviewer with training on this process, emphasizing supporting peers in effective teaching practices and better reporting on their teaching successes. We encourage others who use this process to connect with either the committee or OTEI (or a teaching center in your institution) for suggestions on training for this process.

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## CBSHS Observation Flow Chart

This flow chart lists the steps taken by the peer observer in sequence:



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## Overview of each step

1. **Pre-observation meeting** - The pre-meeting is an opportunity to explore the motives of the instructor. Since the purpose of the observation is for professional development, what does this person want to gain? The discussion may include goals of the class/lesson, background information on students, methodology of the class, and effective teaching strategies. This meeting should occur approximately one week before the class. Observers will share with the instructor that they will be taking notes of all observations to create a summary of the class period.
2. **Observation** - Using the committee observation guidelines, the observer will take notes during the class (up to 90 minutes). The instructor should explain to students why the observer is in the room.
3. **Observation summary draft** - The observer will describe the experience based on their notes on the Summary Observation Form. This will be the document shared with the instructor at least a few days before the post-observation meeting.  
*(Food for Thought - have the instructor also reflect on how they think it went with a few guided questions. They could bring this form with them to post-discussion)*
4. **Post-observation debrief** - This meeting will occur within two weeks of the observation. The discussion will include an explanation of the evidence gathered and allow the instructor to identify areas of strengths and areas for modification.
5. **Final summary draft** - The observer will then modify the summary draft into a letter based on feedback during the discussion. This will be the final version for the instructor's record. For professional development purposes, the instructor can write a reflection that will include a personal plan of action for any modifications to the lesson, course, or teaching methods.
6. **Optional modified summary** - If this peer observation is to be used for annual evaluation/promotion purposes, the letter can be used for Chair/TPR reviewers. The instructor will have the option of whether they want to submit both the letter and the self-reflection. Our recommendation is to include the plan of action-reflection to show growth.

## Pre-meeting (30 minutes)

### Introduction speech to pre-meeting (observer)

- Thank them for taking the initiative to be a part of this process
- Purpose - professional development opportunity to provide outsider feedback
- College initiative - explain the CBSHS college community (if applicable)
- Training—explain all observers have gone through the evidence-based training
- Explain logistics
  - Timeline
    - Pre-meeting
    - Observation - confirm observation date, time, location
    - Post meeting (within two weeks after observation)- give them a heads up that there will be some self-reflection questions.
      - A common question to you is whether they should come to the meeting with their thoughts on how the class went.
- After the observation, the suggested script follows: “We will provide you with a summary form based on our post-observation debrief. This can be included in your TPR (tenure/promotion/annual review) materials but certainly does not have to be. Essentially, we hope this is a low-risk and high-reward endeavor.”

### Suggested questions to gauge course information:

- ✓ What are you hoping to get out of the observation?
- ✓ What will be covered in class, and how it relates to the course as a whole?
- ✓ Tell me about your classroom environment.
- ✓ Where is the course within the program?
- ✓ This course- is it required?
- ✓ Tell me about the class set-up.
- ✓ What are two key areas for feedback/improvements that you want me to look at? (Be ready to give examples if necessary as they may not know at the moment what they should improve on)
- ✓ Have you adopted a specific pedagogy?

### Overview of what we will be observing:

Explain you will be watching student and taking notes (observable actions without judgment) on what happens during class. After class, you review notes based on the following categories:

- Organization
- Presentation Skills
- Class Climate
- Teaching strategies

Inform them that we may be staying a few minutes after class observation to self-reflect. And that feedback will be at the post-meeting.

# Classroom Observation Guide - Peer Review Categories

CBSHS Teaching Effectiveness Community created this list to align with peer observation of teaching (PoT) literature. **Note - this is a guide to assist in documenting teaching practices.** It is not intended to be used as a checklist; as no checklist can be completed, nor is this an observational protocol intended for educational research. It is, however, a useful framework to consider the key aspects of teaching and is a useful list for observers to review beforehand and for preparing afterward. Under each category are examples of teaching techniques.

## **Organization of content**

### Introductory portion

- Provides a welcome/ brief overview
- Makes the relationship between today's and previous course content
- Hook student interest - a possible icebreaker, catchy introduction etc.

### The main component of the class

- Content is presented in a systematic and organized fashion
- Provides occasional summaries and restatement of important ideas
- Allows opportunities for students to ask questions
- Includes clear directions for assessment or activity

### Conclusion of class

- Restates what was expected to be gained from the presented material
- Opportunity to debrief or have students reflect on class content
- Sets stage for next class period
- Shares/reminds students of upcoming due dates

### Noted at any point:

In-class or "live" display of Canvas information is organized and clear in intent (student can navigate easily)

Other organizational methods not listed above (add in what you see):

## **Presentation Skills**

### Voice characteristics

- Speaks with a voice that could be easily heard
- Speaks with a voice raised or lowered for variety and emphasis
- Avoids distracting speech fillers (okay, now, ahem)
- Uses an appropriate rate of speech

### Non-Verbal Communication

- Maintains eye contact with students
- Listens carefully to student comments and questions
- Refrains from distracting mannerisms
- Does not refer to notes excessively or block students' view of visuals

### General Style

- Demonstrates enthusiasm for the subject matter (\*remember that enthusiasm, humor, and similar behaviors can differ in how they look across cultures)
- Demonstrates command of subject matter (i.e., does not show nervousness, hesitation, or confusion)

- Where appropriate, models professional and ethical behavior
- Uses visually appealing instructional aids to facilitate important points
- Maintains a temporal flow seems natural and is not rushed or too slow
- Speaks at a rate that allows students to take notes
- Use of technology benefits lesson
  - Integration of technology (slides, apps, clickers) is fluid and beneficial to the lesson
- Asks questions periodically to gauge student progress
- Uses effective questioning techniques: i.e.
  - limits rhetorical questions
  - pauses for time for reflection or offers an activity for thinking
  - encourages student answers
  - uses a variety of questioning techniques
  - uses techniques to bring in student answers around the entire room
  - encourages students “cross-talk” with each other, supporting or elaborating on answers
- Clarifies confusion without embarrassing the student
- Utilizes examples to form a connection with student’s experiences
- Presents examples to clarify very abstract and difficult ideas

Other presentation skills (instructor behaviors) can also be noted.

### ***Class Climate: strategies and approaches used to encourage positive class climate***

- ❖ Greets students with a bit of small talk
- ❖ Uses student names naturally (as able, given the size of the class)
- ❖ Notes and responds to signs of puzzlement, boredom, curiosity, etc
- ❖ Uses humor effectively, non-threatening
- ❖ Treats students with respect/promotes students to show respect for each other opinions
- ❖ Moves around the room effectively/ Makes use of space effectively (manages physical room challenges)
- ❖ Maintains effective guidance and control of the discussion
- ❖ Deals effectively with sleeping or unruly students
- ❖ Solves or deals with any problems raised
- ❖ Students seem comfortable (good rapport is obvious)
- ❖ Involvement of majority/all students in activity/discussion
- ❖ Effective facilitation skills of a discussion, including multiple students
- ❖ Moves away from the podium as able

Other observed strategies and methods to encourage a positive class climate, add here:

### ***Teaching strategies - please identify any techniques used for student learning and engagement. \*The following is a sampling, not exhaustive.***

With any approach to organizing class time, instructors find ways to engage students in learning. This list is not exhaustive but includes possible methodologies to note.

- ✓ Incorporates short forms of active learning strategies intentionally (such as “pair-share” or “minute papers,” for example)
- ✓ Builds in directions for student learning, note-taking, reading
- ✓ Uses intentional pauses for student thinking, other forms of engaging introverts
- ✓ Uses games/gamification during the class session
- ✓ Guides students to illustrate concepts visually (e.g., mapping, diagramming, drawing)
- ✓ Provides choices of activity (builds in flexibility, appeals to learning preferences)

- ✓ Critical thinking tasks built-in
- ✓ Problem-solving practice built-in
- ✓ Incorporates real-life examples and involves student reaction/participation
- ✓ Students work through case studies or mini-scenarios
- ✓ Polling techniques used (with technology or not)
- ✓ Collaborative pair or group tasks during the class session (more extended active learning)
- ✓ Promotes students to share ideas/feedback with each other (collaborative opportunities)
- ✓ Uses innovative teaching strategies effectively. These can include many styles (e.g., flipped in-session work, team-based learning, and other options)
- ✓ Guides whole class discussion or activity involving most or all students

Other observed teaching methods:

Adapted from

Sorcinelli, M. D. (1984). An Approach to Colleague Evaluation of Classroom Instruction. *Journal of Instructional Development*, 7(4), 11–17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30221398>

Nilson, L (2010). *Teaching at its best*. Jossey-Bass



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Use the back for further notes.

### Student Engagement

*The overall level of student engagement for the whole session: VHI HI MED LO*

**VHI Very High:** More than 75% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor/course materials, or (c) involved in an activity

**HI High:** Between 50% and 75% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor or (c) involved in an activity.

**MED Medium:** Between 25% and 50% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor or (c) involved in an activity

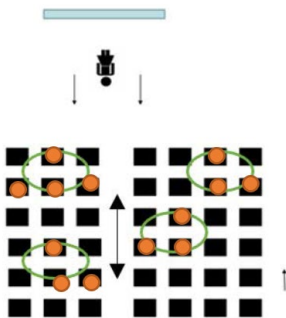
**LO Low:** Less than 25% of the students in the immediate area of the observer are either (a) actively taking notes, or (b) looking at the instructor or (c) involved in an activity

### Classroom

Describe the physical layout of the room (e.g., type of student seating, technology directly accessible by students, instructor location, number of projection screens and their positioning, configuration and size of the room etc.)

**Draw a diagram of the room** and mark where students are sitting.

For example:



Orange dots are students in chairs. Green circles show groups doing discussion, second half of class.

Arrows show where faculty instructor walked (darker arrow—more walking down center than other paths).

Row 1:  $\sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{\quad}}}$  (3 questions from students)

Row 3:  $\sqrt{\sqrt{????}}$  (two comments and three questions)

No other students talked during lecture.



## Summary Form

Observer	
Teacher	
Department	
Observation Date/Time	

*The following boxes contain a summary of observations based on "Classroom Observation - Peer Review Categories". This document is not a summative teaching evaluation but a tool to discuss what was observed on the above date/time. The observer will take notes from the observation and add key notes below.*

Organization of Content	
Introduction	
Main component	
Conclusion	

Presentation skills	
Voice	
Non-verbal	
General style	

Class Climate

Teaching Strategies Used

Other comments:

Notes from the post-observation discussion:

## Post-meeting (30 minutes)

### Introduction to post-meeting (observer)

- Thank them for taking the time to be a part of this process
- Purpose - a reminder that observation is a development tool
- Logistics
  - Timeline (reiterate)
    - Pre-meeting
    - Observation - confirm observation date, time, location
    - Post-meeting debrief (within two weeks after observation)
- After the observation, we will provide you with a summary form which will lead our post-observation discussion. This can be included in your TPR materials but certainly does not have to be. We hope this is a low-risk/high-reward endeavor.

### Overview

Start off on the positive—name something that went well in class

Categories (reviews; the order of categories can be shifted)

- Organization
- Presentation Skills
- Class Climate
- Teaching strategies

### Discuss

Ask instructor:

- How do you think the class went? (Encourage self-reflection and focus on positives)
- What do you think went well?
- Was this a typical structure for your class?
- Would there be anything you would have done differently?

### Share/Discuss

Ideas for resources, teaching development

Encourage further self-reflection

What stood out to you about my feedback?

Do you need additional resources to improve your teaching?

Tell them they should expect a letter based on observation within two weeks (after the post-meeting).  
Have the instructor check the letter for accuracy.

## Template for Observation Letter:

(Date)

Dear (Name of Person Observer),

(An overview of what the process entailed and the reason for the observation)

Below is a summary of my observations in the areas of organization, presentation, class climate, and teaching activities.

Organization:

Presentation:

Class Climate:

Teaching Activities:

When we met in our debrief, we discussed...

In discussing ideas to further develop effective teaching practices, please reach out to the Office of Teaching Effectiveness ([website](#)). They can provide additional resources.

## Selected Literature

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