

Classroom Teaching Peer Observation Protocol

Instructor _____

The Center for Teaching Excellence's **Classroom Teaching Observation Checklist** provides performance descriptions for four levels of classroom instructional practices. Tiers 1, 2, and 3 include a progression of recommended teaching practices. The substandard tier includes items that are contrary to best practices and/or USC policies.

The checklist can be used for two purposes. It can be used as a developmental tool to provide instructors formative feedback to enhance their teaching, by showing progression over multiple observations. It can also be used as an evaluative tool to document evidence of teaching performance for promotion, tenure, or continuing appointment.

Not Included in the Classroom Teaching Peer Observation Protocol

- Evaluation of course design, which should be addressed using a separate [Course Syllabus Best Practices Checklist](#).
- Aspects of teaching that cannot be observed.
- Best practices that are specific to certain fields, class types (e.g., labs, studios, clinics), or instructional styles.

Pre-Observation Conditions

- The protocol requires that Observer and Instructor have met prior to the observation and discussed class format and purpose and determine what should be accomplished by the scheduled visit.
- Observer and Instructor must meet for a debrief after the observation.

Observer

- Is familiar with the course learning objectives listed in the syllabus.
- Understands the content of the course well enough to evaluate effectiveness of instruction in that topic.
- Has been trained by CTE staff or CTE Faculty Mentor to use the Protocol.

Observation Items

- Are observable actions and behaviors of the instructor (observable during a single visited class session), not the behaviors of students.
- Describe practices that can be implemented within a wide variety of teaching models, both traditional and innovative.
- Reflect actions and behaviors that should be observable in *nearly* all classes, regardless of level, field, or student population. Some items may not be applicable to certain educational contexts, which should be noted in the comments sections.
- Are rated in such a way that achieving mastery in one level implies mastery of the previous level(s), as well.

Instructor: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Course Observed: _____

Observer Name, Department: _____

This Classroom Teaching Observation Checklist was developed by the **University of Southern California's Center for Excellence in Teaching (CET)** (<https://cet.usc.edu/teaching-resources/classroom-teaching-observation-checklist/>) to include dimensions of best teaching practices relevant to most teaching environments at that university. Each dimension in the checklist measures one or more criteria in the University of Southern California's Definition of Excellence in Teaching (<http://cet.usc.edu/about/usc-definition-of-excellence-in-teaching/>). However, the dimensions are editable so that other schools may add or delete items to customize it to their needs. Schools should determine how many criteria in each level should be met in order to qualify for the various levels of advancement in the school.

This checklist is being used and altered with permission by the Center for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles.



Center for Teaching Excellence
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

DIMENSION	SUBSTANDARD	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
	Performing Below Minimum Teaching Expectations	Performing at Minimum Teaching Expectations	Performing at Proficient Level of Teaching Expectations	Performing at Excellent Level of Teaching Expectations
CLASS ORGANIZATION				
Instructional plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Established class session plan altered without prior notification to students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clear signs of planning and organization that follows a logical flow.	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes instruction and formative assessment to assess student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes instruction, formative assessment, and reflection components.
Communication of clear learning goals for the class session	<input type="checkbox"/> Learning goals for class or lesson not communicated. <input type="checkbox"/> Communicates inappropriate or unrealistic learning goals for the class session or lesson activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly identifies realistic learning goals for class session.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly connects learning goals for the class session to course learning outcomes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly identifies learning goals for each activity and connects them to course learning outcomes.
Time management	<input type="checkbox"/> Room and/or technology issues occur during class that could have been addressed before the start of class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Class starts and ends on time. <input type="checkbox"/> Planned sections of the class session are well-timed. <input type="checkbox"/> Little or no time spent on non-instructional activities.	<input type="checkbox"/> Instructor incorporates educational technology for learning activities outside of class to support effective use of in-class time.	<input type="checkbox"/> Instructor maximizes in-class time, using active learning or applications rather than passive learning.
Comments				
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT				
Classroom climate	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses discriminatory, dismissive, or other abusive language. <input type="checkbox"/> Minimizes students' struggle with material. <input type="checkbox"/> Discourages student input. <input type="checkbox"/> Ignores disruptive student behaviors.	<input type="checkbox"/> Language used is responsive to students' anxieties. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages participation. <input type="checkbox"/> Treats all students equitably and respectfully. <input type="checkbox"/> Responsive to students' different educational backgrounds, learning needs.	<input type="checkbox"/> Has established classroom norms that foster a positive and inclusive environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Encourages interaction between students. <input type="checkbox"/> Exhibits an approachable and accessible demeanor. <input type="checkbox"/> Responds effectively to issues or problems raised in class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses practices that increase students' motivation and foster a growth mindset.

DIMENSION	SUBSTANDARD	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
Presentation substance	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not use, or uses inappropriate, visual support for presentation and/or examples/illustrations.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides visuals, uses concrete examples to clarify content. <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation format is easy to see/hear and understand.	<input type="checkbox"/> Cites sources for content discussed.	<input type="checkbox"/> Follows accessibility best practices by verbally describing and/or captioning any images used in presentation.
Presentation form	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses inappropriate or offensive gestures and/or speech. <input type="checkbox"/> Displays a negative attitude in tone and/or content.	<input type="checkbox"/> Volume, pace, and diction allow observer to follow the class session. <input type="checkbox"/> Faces students when speaking.	<input type="checkbox"/> Incorporates appropriate eye contact, effective non-verbal communication. <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids distracting speech patterns or mannerisms.	<input type="checkbox"/> Engaging, responsive, and constructive in both tone and content of their speech. <input type="checkbox"/> Models discipline's professional behaviors and attitude.
Comments:				
INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT				
Knowledge of subject	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not appear to understand course content.	<input type="checkbox"/> Factual statements are consistent with current knowledge in the field. <input type="checkbox"/> Correctly answers questions about course-level content.	<input type="checkbox"/> Answers questions clearly, confidently, and simply. <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrates mastery of content and subject knowledge and application.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ties current content to topics or knowledge from the profession and/or more advanced courses.
Discipline-specific language	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not use, or incorrectly uses, discipline-specific and/or academic language.	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses discipline-specific and academic language.	<input type="checkbox"/> Explains use of discipline-specific terms.	<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitates the use of discipline-specific language by students.
Contextual relevance and transferability	<input type="checkbox"/> Teaches content devoid of real-world scenarios and/or examples. <input type="checkbox"/> Assumes unrealistic skill level of students in the class.	<input type="checkbox"/> Provides real-world applications of class content. <input type="checkbox"/> Explicitly builds on prior student knowledge. <input type="checkbox"/> Effectively communicates ideas and information to students.	<input type="checkbox"/> Has students provide real-world examples of class content or apply content to real-world scenarios.	<input type="checkbox"/> Where appropriate, uses examples where discipline converges with other disciplines in addressing challenges, global issues on a local, national, or global level.
Comments:				

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

<p>Appropriate content or level</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Class content too easy/difficult for student knowledge level. <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor does not encourage higher-order thinking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Class content appropriately challenges students. <input type="checkbox"/> Class content promotes mastery of learning outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor engages students in higher-order thinking skills during class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor spends majority of class time leading students in higher-order thinking activities.
<p>Active learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses no active-learning exercises. <input type="checkbox"/> Has unrealistic expectations for active-learning exercises. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses inappropriate or offensive active-learning exercises. <input type="checkbox"/> Uses active-learning exercises that are not accessible to everyone in the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Class session contains at least one active-learning exercise to apply course content. <input type="checkbox"/> Instructor monitors and manages active-learning exercises. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses active-learning exercises after no more than 30 minutes of lecture. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensures students are on-task, responsive to student engagement and adjusts strategy accordingly. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitates student-led explanations / discussions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uses active-learning exercises after no more than 15 minutes of lecture. <input type="checkbox"/> Where appropriate, instructor leverages student use of electronic technology to facilitate active learning.
<p>Formative assessment/feedback</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Violates FERPA by publicly sharing student grades. <input type="checkbox"/> Provides non-constructive and/or discouraging feedback. <input type="checkbox"/> Compares student work to an ambiguous, unrealistic standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides students constructive and encouraging feedback on how to improve their comprehension or performance in class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provides information to students about their performance on class activities compared to a pre-established standard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Leads students in structured reflection on class learning activities.
<p>Comments:</p>				
<p>CONTEXT Record pertinent characteristics of the course, student population, and physical environment. (Examples: enrollment, student demographics, classroom type (stadium, small room, etc.), class meeting time, and general education status.)</p>		<p>Context:</p>		

Additional Comments – include observed strengths of the instructor and any suggestions for improvement (use back of page and attach additional sheet as necessary):

I affirm that the class observation and this review and comments were done by myself as an objective observer.

Signature of Observer

Date