

Updated Nov. 2018

## CELT's Recommendations for Teaching Observations

### Areas of focus for pre-observation discussion between instructor and observer:

#### *Context*

- What is the target audience for this course and how does it fit into the major, minor, or core curriculum (if applicable)?
- How does the class session that will be observed fit into the course as a whole—what topics have already been covered and what work have students already completed?
- What work (readings, activities, homework, etc.) are students expected to do to prepare for this class session?
- What other information about the students, the classroom, the course, or the curriculum would be helpful in understanding what happens during the class session?

#### *Learning goals/outcomes*

- What are the learning goals, outcomes, or objectives for this class session?
- What do you plan to do during this class session to help students meet those goals?
- What do you expect your students to do to engage with the learning process during the class?
- How will you know if students meet or make progress towards these goals?

#### *Goals for observation*

- What specific area of interest or concern would you like the observer to focus on?

### Areas of focus for post-observation discussion between instructor and observer, and recommendations for any formal write-up by observer:

#### *For observer*

- Remember to keep in mind the instructor's specific concerns from the pre-observation discussion and focus on those areas. Be particularly mindful of whether

you were asked to provide feedback on pedagogy or content and focus your feedback accordingly. It is not necessary to mention everything you observed. Prioritize your comments on the most important areas for feedback.

- Provide a manageable amount of feedback. You don't want to overwhelm the instructor with information. Focus on areas that the instructor can reasonably change or control.
- When providing feedback, use specific examples from your observations to illustrate or support your recommendations, avoiding generalizations.
- Balance positive and negative feedback. Focusing exclusively on areas in need of improvement can be discouraging to the instructor and counterproductive. And exclusively positive feedback gives the instructor no opportunity to improve their teaching.
- Lead with positive feedback. Even if there is a lot of room for improvement, this will help clarify that there is a foundation to build on. Don't hesitate to mention things you learned or observed that you want to try in your own teaching.
- Frame negative feedback to focus on the potential for improvement rather than only judgment. Make sure that you are providing suggestions of approaches to try rather than prescriptions.

#### *For instructor*

- Value the feedback from your colleague as an opportunity for professional growth.
- Elicit balanced feedback. It can be challenging to provide negative feedback, just as it can be difficult to receive it. Encourage the observer to suggest areas for improvement and be receptive when they are provided.
- Listen to observations completely before responding to them. Try not to immediately explain, rationalize, or become defensive.
- Check that you have understood the feedback and seek clarification as necessary. Ask the observer to provide specific examples.
- Try to accept or incorporate formal and informal teaching observations as a normal and familiar part of your routine as a teacher.