PEER OBSERVATION AND ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING

a resource book

for faculty, administrators, and students who teach

produced by
CETaL and ISS

Peer Observation
and
Assessment of Teaching

A Resource Book
for University Faculty, Administrators, and Students who Teach

This resource book offers guidance on the process of university peer observation and supplies a selection of instruments that faculty and departments can adapt for assessment of their teaching, whether for instructional improvement or for regular evaluation of teaching. This document does not express any university policy with respect to evaluation of teaching, nor does it serve any agenda other than the support of best practices in university teaching and assessment.

Edited by
William Roberson, Ph.D.

The Center for Effective Teaching and Learning
&
Instructional Support Services
University of Texas at El Paso

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

If you are pressed for time, here are a few short cuts….

This book provides information and ideas to users at all levels of interest and knowledge. Not every reader will choose to read every chapter, depending on the reasons that bring him/her to this topic. This brief guide identifies where you can find the pieces that are most pertinent to your needs.

Chapter One provides a rationale for using peer observation as a form of teaching assessment. If you have already decided to use peer observation, and understand why you are using it, skip this chapter and go to Chapter Two.

Chapter Two clarifies the different purposes of peer assessment. Will it be used primarily to improve teaching (formative)? Will it be used to evaluate teaching for administrative purposes (summative)? How you define your purpose will affect the process and instruments you use. If you are already clear on this distinction, skip this chapter and go to Chapter Three.

Chapter Three provides practical ideas and strategies for using peer observation for "formative" purposes. Even if your interests are to use peer observation strictly for formal, administrative evaluation of teaching, we recommend that you consult this chapter first, to see how best to create a sound base for evaluation of teaching.

Chapter Four presents programmatic approaches to peer observation for "formative" purposes. If your department wants to build a comprehensive process of peer observation to improve teaching, then this chapter will provide suggestions.

Chapter Five targets those faculty members and administrators who want to incorporate the use of peer observation into the formal faculty evaluation process for tenure and promotion. The emphasis of this chapter is on "summative" assessment and how to build a system that is fair and effective.

Chapter Six addresses the issues around selecting and designing appropriate instruments for peer observation.

The **Appendices** provide a selection of documents and instruments that you can easily adapt to your or your department's purposes in setting up a peer observation process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING AND THE ROLE OF PEER OBSERVATION

Because teaching is a multi-dimensional job, assessing what we do as teachers requires a multi-faceted approach. No single instrument can capture all aspects of any individual style or method of teaching. Student surveys, for instance, can measure whether student perceptions of what we are doing are aligned with what we ourselves think we are doing; but assessing our teaching requires more than consumer impressions.

What is the difference between "assessment" and "evaluation" ? Confusion reigns over these two terms, and their usage wanders, depending on context. In this book we will use the following distinction:

Assessment is the process of objectively understanding the state or condition of a thing, by observation and measurement. Assessment of teaching means taking a measure of its effectiveness. "Formative" assessment is measurement for the purpose of improving it. "Summative" assessment is what we normally call "evaluation."

Evaluation is the process of observing and measuring a thing for the purpose of judging it, of determining its "value," either by comparison to similar things, or to a standard. Evaluation of teaching means passing judgment on it as part of an administrative process.

Ideally, a fair and comprehensive plan to assess and evaluate teaching would incorporate many data points drawn from a broad array of teaching dimensions. Such a plan would include not only student surveys, but also self-assessments, documentation of instructional planning and design, evidence of scholarly activity to improve teaching, and most importantly, evidence of student learning outcomes.

But that is not all. A comprehensive evaluation of teaching would necessarily include various types of peer assessment, more commonly referred to as *"peer observation."*

Peer observation is the process by which university instructors provide feedback to colleagues on their teaching efforts and practices. The process might include, but is not limited to—

- review of course planning and design (syllabus, web presence)
- review of instructional materials (handouts, exercises, readings, lectures, activities)
- review of learning assessments (tests, graded assignments)
- review of in-class interaction with students, and of instructor presentations.

There are two clear benefits to using peer observation.

1. **Our faculty peers are usually aware of the departmental teaching mission and the intended learning outcomes of our programs.** They teach the same students and face the same challenges that we do. Many are, themselves, experienced, effective teachers. Therefore, they are likely to be competent observers of various aspects of our teaching.

2. **Peer observation offers much-needed flexibility in the assessment of teaching effectiveness.** Depending on what a faculty member wants to learn about her/his teaching, a peer can be identified in the instructor's home department in the same content area, so that the observation can be related specifically to an instructor's handling of a given content or to students' progress toward a given learning outcome. In other circumstances, it might be desirable to find a peer observer outside the instructor's department, in order to focus on non-content concerns, such as the flavor and tone of student-faculty interaction, or the design of a particular activity. In some cases, an instructor might invite a faculty member with expertise in a particular method, in order to provide an expert's perspective. ***How the peer observer is chosen will be determined by the purpose of the observation, the political realities of the department, and how the collected data will be used.*** More on these aspects of peer observation will be provided in later chapters.

One downside of peer observation is that it may be difficult for even a well-intended observer to filter out his/her own bias against a given teaching method or personality while conducting an observation. For example, someone who values strict classroom control and considers the instructor's presentation to be the key learning object of the classroom may not keep an open mind when observing moments of seeming chaos in a collaborative learning classroom, and vice versa. **For this reason, instructors who use peer observations for feedback will need to consider the observer's assumptions about teaching and plan for multiple visits by multiple peers.**
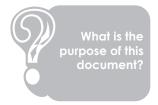
Another risk is that if colleagues within the same department observe one another and the process is not well-managed, relationships may suffer. For many teachers, their classroom performance is a sensitive topic. And because it is performed by colleagues, peer observation requires a particularly delicate touch. Being informed about best practices for peer observation is one way to reduce the risk of potential damage. This resource book will supply a few ideas related to such concerns.

These vary depending on the size of the department. Faculty time and some administrative services will be required, no matter what the plan. For large departments these will be significant, since it may be necessary to form committees and to ask the faculty to engage in some training. It will also be important to support the additional paperwork that will accompany greater attention to assessment.

For these and other reasons, developing a peer observation program will need planning and broad support of the departmental faculty.

It is in the context of developing a *fair, comprehensive, effective and civil* plan for assessing and improving teaching that UTEP's *Teaching Effectiveness Committee* has asked the **Center for Effective Teaching and Learning** and **Instructional Support Services** to produce this resource on peer observation. While peer observation is only one of many ways to provide feedback to faculty on their teaching, it is a highly useful one, and it readily complements the practice of teaching assessment that relies heavily on consumer feedback from students.

We do not offer this resource to promote the exclusive substitution of one type of teaching assessment for another. If anything, the assessment of teaching—whatever the purpose—needs to be *multidimensional* and *customized* from program to program and instructor to instructor, in order to capture those elements most relevant to departmental mission and to the faculty's most valued teaching objectives. We offer this resource in the spirit of facilitating faculty efforts to measure those dimensions of teaching effectiveness that current evaluation practices, such as student surveys alone, might ignore.

chapter two {{

The Story vs. the Snapshot:
PEER OBSERVATION FOR BOTH FORMATIVE AND SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Not all types of assessment serve the same purpose. In some cases, an instructor simply wants to receive personalized feedback on how a course is going, how students are responding to an activity, or simply whether or not students are learning. The purpose of this kind of ongoing, continuous assessment is to help the instructor make adjustments that will improve the quality of the course. This is called *formative assessment* because it is ongoing and its purpose is developmental. It asks; What is going well that I can build on? What can I do better?

If formative assessment is a continuous process aimed at instructional improvement over time, summative assessment is almost the opposite: it is a *snapshot*, an evaluation intended to indicate a level of competence measured against a standard. A common example of summative assessment is the final exam of a college course, which samples evidence of learning that indicates the level of knowledge and skill the student has achieved in a subject area. Summative assessment is the review of evidence in order to make a judgment. At the university, this measurement taken of teaching and research allows administrators to make decisions on such things as promotion, tenure, raises, awards, etc.

> How is formative assessment different from summative assessment?
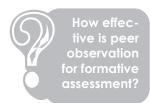
Here is an example of the problem. If you truly want to improve a course you are teaching and you solicit input from a colleague, you are likely to accept his/her honest feedback—however negative it may be— as potentially painful but necessary, and useful rather than threatening. You might even go so far as to invite negative criticism, by explaining to a peer observer, "I'm having a problem in class with the way this activity is working. Could you please take a look at it and

> Why is this distinction so important?

tell me what I need to do differently?" If the negative feedback you get from the observation is accurate, it has the positive benefit of showing you what you might need to do to be more effective. That's the purpose of formative assessment. It has to be confidential. It is for you and nobody else to process and act upon, if you choose to do so.

Now picture the situation where the same peer observer who visited your class is asked to evaluate your teaching summatively for *your **permanent file***, based on the same report he/she created for you, personally and confidentially. The same criticism that you invited from him/her in the first place can suddenly, if handled carelessly or unscrupulously, become evidence that paints your professional practice in a negative light. Your teaching might, in fact, be highly effective overall *(and you even cared enough to solicit feedback in the first place!)*, but the collected evidence now invites a potentially biased or ill-informed reviewer to focus on negative dimensions of your teaching, and these might not even be central to your achievements and competence as a teacher.

The formative assessment you solicited for improvement must be handled in a process completely separate from the formal evaluation, since the purposes that drive the two processes are very different. ***If we want to motivate instructors to seek candid feedback on their teaching, we have to create a process in which they are not penalized for doing so.*** When designing assessment practices for yourself and for your own department, peer observers should carefully separate the procedures and comments designed to improve teaching from the procedures and comments intended for the permanent record.

How effective is peer observation for formative assessment?

The first-hand witnessing by a colleague of what is happening in the classroom can uncover circumstances that otherwise might remain hidden from the instructor. A peer observer can see how students in the back of the classroom react to something the instructor is doing in the front. This person can

share the perspective of the students, and report back to the instructor what that view looks like. In this formative process the observer can also offer feedback on the design of the course, the validity of a test, or the content of a syllabus, to cite a few examples.

Key Principle:
*In order for peer observation for **formative purposes** to be effective, it must respond to the concerns and self-perceived needs of the instructor who requests it. It must also be carried out by someone who is trusted and holds the respect of the person whose teaching is being assessed.*

This is a complexity that is difficult to address. When an administrator demands an assessment, it can quickly cross the line into **summative** evaluation, which we will look at later. Administrators can help the process by creating the conditions for effective formative assessment through their leadership:

How can a chair, dean or other administrator forcefully advance the improvement of teaching if so much responsibility and choice lies with the individual instructor?

- by developing clear, well-articulated expectations for teaching effectiveness
- by sponsoring a process to support teaching skill development
- by conspicuously participating in such a program, him/her self, to set an example.
- by structuring opportunities for confidential peer feedback, such as through mentoring programs or "buddy" systems
- by designing collaboratively with faculty a summative assessment plan, to allow faculty members to agree on the "targets" and criteria by which their teaching will be assessed

Outside agencies, such as CETaL, can be useful to administrators in developing this kind of framework and in providing a wide variety of tools for formative assessment. Outside agencies can also help a department develop a new standard for instructional assessment without the politically perilous act of imposing one from the top.
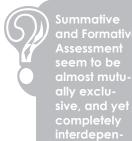
If poorly planned and managed, it most certainly can be destructive. For example, a single unannounced visit to the classroom of a candidate for tenure, for the purpose of making a judgment about his/her teaching, is not just misguided; it is a serious lapse in professional judgment on the part of the administrator involved. ***Summative assessment is valid only as part of a larger process that includes clearly established criteria and systematic formative measures.*** Just as we would never give an unannounced exam to the students in our classes, with no forewarnings about test content and grading criteria, we would not want to snap-judge our peers without allowing them practice, adequate preparation and clarification of the assessment standards being used. Peer observation for summative assessment needs to be planned and scheduled so that the faculty member being assessed knows what is expected of him/her.

But on the positive side of summative assessment, peer observations can capture dimensions of teaching—such as rapport with students, mood of the classroom, student excitement, creative use of visual support, and creativity of teaching materials—that do not typically register through other evaluation processes. For an instructor who has had opportunities for feedback by his peers in a supportive environment, a series of classroom observations for tenure review purposes could be an important part of a comprehensive, multi-faceted summative assessment of teaching. Negative attitudes about summative assessment more often than not have to do with how it is handled by a given administrator. This topic will be treated in greater detail in Chapter 5.

True, these two processes are distinct, but they directly complement one another. Formative assessment is conducted for ourselves and remains self-referential. It occurs within a closed system, and is therefore not the basis for a truly valid evaluation of our teaching. There is a reason, for example, that our court system does not allow a defense attorney to also serve as judge of his client.

Similarly, summative assessment conducted in the absence of a process for formative assessment is not really assessment

at all: rather, it will be seen as punishment. Imagine a biology course in which students have no access to formative feedback on their learning throughout the semester, but then are given a final exam that will determine—once and for all—their acceptance into medical school. Without an extended "formative" process (feedback on homework, quizzes, and midterms, for example), the final or "summative" exam makes no sense. This is analogous to "drop-in" peer observations that affect a faculty member's chances for tenure. If the purpose of an assessment in a course is to measure learning, then we have to design a system that allows that learning to happen.

If a department has no process or procedure in place to help new instructors develop and refine their practices, a summative evaluation—one that has implications for their professional careers—is highly suspect. It builds into the evaluation process the flawed assumption that teaching is a static process. Furthermore, a summative evaluation without its formative complement easily becomes a political tool that can be manipulated to serve individual power interests.

The entire faculty of a department or program should start by identifying the goals of learning and the dimensions of teaching that it values most. This discussion should focus on the following three questions:

> How can formative and summative assessments of teaching be coordinated?

1. How should our students be changed as a result of our program?
2. What should the faculty do to ensure that students change the way we intended?
3. What evidence will tell us if the faculty has been effective in helping students change?

With the answers to these questions made explicit by the department, the faculty now has general agreement on what types of teaching strategies and practices will be encouraged. Resources and faculty development efforts can

be directly tied to these expectations, and veteran faculty members can serve as mentors to new faculty members, to provide personalized, confidential feedback on teaching. Mentors can consult with the new faculty on their course design and visit their classrooms regularly to provide feedback. This "formative" process should be informal, supportive, sympathetic and friendly, with frequent contact between the parties involved.

The summative assessment is built on top of the formative process. The summative assessment is not ongoing but occurs periodically in predetermined windows within a faculty member's pre-tenure probation and subsequent career. Annually or biannually, for example, the department can collect data from several key places to determine how the faculty member is developing as a teacher. The assessment questions in this case would be,

1. Are the instructor's students changing in an aceptable way, at an acceptable rate? (How are the students doing in subsequent courses?)
2. Is the faculty member using strategies and methods consistent with the stated goals of the department?
3. Is the faculty member's use of those methods effective in fostering the changes targeted?

The first question could be answered by tracking student performance through the program. The second and third questions could be answered by structured peer reviews of materials and classroom observations by multiple colleagues, using carefully designed instruments calibrated to reflect the department's teaching mission. Other assessment locations would be student surveys, faculty self-assessment, and evidence gathered about how students performed against a given standard.

chapter three

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT OF TEACHING USING PEER OBSERVATION

Formative assessment of teaching adheres to a few key principles:

1. It is frequent. The goal is to encourage development and track it over time.

2. It is confidential. The observee needs to feel free to invite candid, including negative, feedback.

3. It is analytical without being judgmental. The observee needs accurate, supportive input from colleagues, not accusations about his/her professional practice.

4. It is non-threatening. The assessment should be invited by the observee, and must carry no negative consequences.

5. It is collaborative. The observee should be a partner in deciding which aspects of teaching will be assessed, and who will do it.

Whether you develop a plan for yourself or it is sponsored by your department, there are several issues that you will need to address in using peer observation for the formative assessment of your own teaching.

What is your position/status in your department or program?

1

How you answer this question will suggest the strategy you might pursue in developing a peer observation plan. If you are a tenured faculty member you will probably be less constrained than if you are new and untenured. Clearly, if you are an established, tenured member of the faculty, you are in a position that allows you

to model best practices of peer observation. You can become a leader by initiating formative peer observations for yourself and any willing colleagues who will join you. Over time, you can then report to your colleagues the benefits, and even begin to suggest ways to establish a system that will help newer faculty receive the feedback they need in a non-punitive process.

What if you are a new, untenured faculty member?

If you are untenured and there is a clear process in place, such as a mentoring or "buddy" program, you are very fortunate. However, you may want to examine the process and ask questions to make sure that the distinctions between formative and summative evaluation are clearly respected (refer back to Chapter Two for clarification). Not all of your colleagues will be equally sensitive to the need for confidentiality, so you will want to make sure of the expectations of the person(s) assigned to you. You do not want to get caught in a situation where you invite feedback, only to find that your colleague has discussed his/her observation of your teaching with other members of the department, without your approval.

If no process is in place to guide your formative assessment, you will need to proceed carefully. Here is one great concern: if effective teaching and the evaluation of teaching have not traditionally been an explicit priority of the department, it is quite possible that the formative/summative distinction will not be fully appreciated. In this case, when you ask your chair or other colleagues to evaluate your teaching for formative purposes, you might end up in a de facto summative assessment.

A safer approach in these circumstances is to work with trusted peers across the university, or check with your teaching center, which can help you build the support network you need, and which may be able to help you find colleagues to work with. Ideally, you will make contact with like-minded

faculty members who can cooperate with you to exchange peer observation services, completely separate from departmental evaluations. If these colleagues are not available within your own department (which is often the case in small departments), you can make arrangements with peers in other departments, or even in other colleges.

What type of teaching do you do?

A first step in preparing for peer observation is to get clear on:

    a) what, exactly, you are trying to make happen in or to your students (how do you want them to change)?

    b) what teaching role(s) have you adopted in order to make it happen?

    c) which teaching tools (methods, techniques, technologies) have you chosen to support that role?

As a starting point for this reflection, consider this partial list of what university teachers do:

- Maintenance and furtherance of disciplinary knowledge (via reading, research and publication)
- Curriculum design
- Course and syllabus design
- Assignment design
- Engagement/interaction with students
- Presentation of material (lectures, for example)
- Integration of technology (from low-tech blackboards and chalk to high-tech teaching on-line)
- Assessment of student learning (testing, grading, tracking)
- Direction of student independent study and research
- Advising and mentoring of students
- Scholarship of teaching (reading, presenting, writing about teaching in the discipline)

In any given teaching situation you will be involved in some combination of these activities, and your emphasis will vary from course to course, year to year. Taking stock of what your dominant functions are in any course is key to preparing for peer observation. In order to design a formative peer assessment so it can be effective, develop a clear picture of what you (intend to) do.

4 What's your role as a teacher?

For some instructors it helps to approach the question above from the point of view of the role you play with/for your students. Which of the following concepts best capture the essence of what you do as a teacher?

- Coach
- Director/Manager/Organizer
- Activity or Event Designer
- Case creator
- Consultant
- Content expert
- Coordinator of activities
- Discussion facilitator
- Assessor/Evaluator of learning
- Skeptical Questioner
- Theatrical Performer
- Role model
- Negotiator
- Advisor
- Listener
- Circus ring leader
- Parent
- Colleague or Peer

5 Why do you teach what you teach?

Once you have articulated *who* you are as a teacher, it is equally important to connect your role to the strategies and techniques you have chosen. When communicated to your observer, this

connection creates the context for understanding your choices as a teacher, which is necessary if the feedback you get is to be relevant. If, for example, you intend for a class meeting to encourage lateral thinking by students, the observation by a peer that you did not adequately control the focus of the class or present enough information may not help you become more effective. What you need is for the observer to recommend to you ways to provoke or encourage the lateral thinking you wanted to happen.

The following chart is a resource to help connect the goals and methods of your teaching to categories of observable activities that might be identified for your peers in advance of an observation.

Matching Teaching Method with Observable Teaching Behavior

Teaching Method Used	Instructor's activity to be observed
Problem-solving; Problem-Based Learning	• Design of Problem • Organization of materials • Structure of the learning activity • Management of classroom process
Information Transfer (Lectures)	• Selection of material • Organization of material • Clarity of presentation • Enthusiasm, encouragement of student interest • Translation from abstract to concrete • Engagement with audience • Use of different media for support
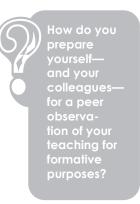
Teaching Method Used	Instructor's activity to be observed
Discussion	• Facilitation of directed conversation • Setting of mood and tone • Questioning strategies • Questioning sequence • Discussion initiation strategies • Engagement of all students • Anchoring, assessing, and clarifying student learning gains
One-on-One	• Mentoring • Guiding without dictating • Personal Communication behavior • Questioning strategies • Affective considerations
Teaching Online	• Design of assignments and activities for accessibility, usability of on-line materials • Conceptualization of learning environment • Constructive online communications • Management of on-line discussion tools

*This list is only partial. An excellent resource to guide a self-analysis of your teaching is Anthony Grasha's **Teaching with Style**, a handbook for university teachers that shows the connection between teaching beliefs, teaching philosophy, methods, and practices.*

An effective process of peer observation includes the following components.

1. Sharing of relevant course materials with the observer, at least 2-3 days before the observation: syllabus; lesson plan; planned future quiz or exam on relevant material, handouts, slides, etc.

2. A face-to-face "pre-observation" meeting at least one day before the observation, between observer and observee. A meeting just before the class is less effective than an advance meeting.

3. The observation, with note-taking by observer. These notes should resemble those of an anthropologist or ethnographer observing a distinct culture. The purpose of the notes is not to simply identify problems but to record accurately what happens in class, whether positive or negative. The observer should also write down analytical questions ("Why did you do that?" for example) that occur to him/her at particular moments in class, for discussion with the instructor afterward.

4. Reflection by both parties. Both observer and observee need to schedule time to reflect—separately—after the observation. The Observer needs to analyze his/her notes and identify the primary themes for discussion. The Observee needs to self-assess, and plan questions for the observer that could be used to help analyze the experience.

5. Second face-to-face meeting. A written assessment alone is inadequate in a formative evaluation. The point of this meeting is to share perspectives on what happened, and to reach greater insight on why things occurred the way they did. The observee should state what he/she observed in the classroom experience from the instructor's perspective; the observer should offer corroborations where appropriate, or additional observations and analysis that help the observee more accurately assess the experience.

6. Written Assessment (optional). Depending on how the observee wishes to use the assessment, a write-up is a possible final step in the process. An instructor *might* want to document a peer observation as part of a teaching portfolio. However, whether or not to use a formative peer observation in a summative assessment has to be the free decision of the observee.

In the pre-observation meeting the instructor needs to be able to explain what will be happening in class and why. The observer needs to understand the instructor's expectations for what will happen in class. The instructor also needs to tell the observer the kinds of things to focus on: delivery, classroom management, student response, etc.

To ensure useful observations by a peer, you will need to be able to communicate to your observer the answers to the following questions, so your peer's observations will be relevant to the context of your own (and not his/her) teaching.

1. What are your objectives for the students in the activity being observed? (What changes do you want students to undergo? What skills, knowledge, and perspectives will they be developing?)
2. What will be your role (your own function) in the process?
3. What have you chosen to do (and how does this choice connect to your objective and role)?
4. What are your expectations for what students will actually do, and for what will actually happen in the classroom?
5. How will you know if you have been successful?

1. Well in advance of the observation, request relevant course materials from the observee. Review them before the pre-class observation. These materials are most likely to be the course syllabus, a lesson plan for the targeted class meeting, copies of exercises and assignments to be used in this particular class meeting, and some sample quiz or exam questions that will be used to test students on this part of the course.

2. Insist on meeting face-to-face with the colleague before the event to be observed.

3. Discuss and make sure you understand your colleague's values and self-image as a teacher.

4. Ask for an explanation of what your colleague will be doing, and why.

5. Ask your colleague to predict what should happen in class.

6. Ask your colleague to explain what his/her measurement of success will be for what happens in the observed class meeting. (How will you both know if he/she has been successful?)

7. Ask your colleague to indicate special issues or concerns that he/she wants you to pay attention to during the observation.

8. Insist on meeting with the observee after the visit.

What should you do if you are invited to observe a colleague's teaching for formative purposes?

The advantage of videotape is that an instructor can have a class videotaped, view it, replay it, and repeat the process for him/herself as many times as desired before showing it to a colleague. This allows for greater safety and comfort, if these are needed.

It also has the advantage of greatly objectifying what happens in the classroom. Viewing the videotape shows not only what the instructor does, but also how students are responding. It is difficult to overlook what is going on in the classroom when it is playing in color before you.

How effective is videotaping a class meeting for formative evaluation purposes?

Another advantage is that the videotape can be discussed with several different colleagues, for differing perspectives on the same class meeting.

Finally, a videotape is an excellent record of certain teaching techniques that are difficult to capture on paper. For some teachers, the videotape can be an effective component of a teaching portfolio, and so have a purpose in summative assessment as well as formative.

What are some of the practical issues of videotaping?

The faculty member and the video camera operator will need to meet in advance of the session to be videotaped in order to reach an understanding of what will happen. Will the operator remain in the room during the shooting? Will the camera be stationary or will it move to follow movements in the classroom? Will the operator focus only on the instructor, or will he/she be asked to track individual students or groups as well?

What are the downsides of videotaping?

The problem with videotape is its potential to needlessly diminish an instructor's confidence by hyper-objectifying (and seemingly exaggerating) small flaws in a teaching performance, which, while often insignificant in terms of student learning, can be deflating to a new instructor watching him/herself for the first time. We recommend working with a member of the instructional development staff to develop a process for both videotaping and reviewing the videotape.

What if an instructor wants a peer observer to interview the students?

Inviting a peer to interview students can be an excellent way to get honest feedback on your teaching. Various entities in education have formalized this process as a kind of "focus group," one version of which is called a SGID, or Small Group Instructional Diagnosis. In the appendices we have included an instrument to guide this process.

chapter four

DEVELOPING A DEPARTAMENTAL PLAN FOR FORMATIVE USE OF
PEER OBSERVATION

Depending on the current politics of your department, you will have to choose between a comprehensive plan and an *ad hoc* approach. If your department's leadership has the trust and respect of most of its faculty, and if the normal fault lines in any academic unit have not evolved into major divides, you have the luxury of working with your chair and other opinion leaders in your department to develop a systematic approach right from the start.

Here is a word of caution:
Setting up a department-wide formative process for peer observation, where none has existed in the past, will require a broad, structured conversation with most department members. You may want to invite a facilitator from outside the department to lead the discussion. Without this conversation, it will be difficult to account for and address the incredible range of issues—many of them emotionally charged—that will be on the minds of your faculty. Historically, university teaching assessment practices nationwide have been deplorable, and nearly everyone will be able to recall a personal experience that illustrates the potential risk and pain of trusting colleagues to participate in the assessment of teaching, even for well-meaning development purposes.

For many of your colleagues the notion of *formative assessment* as distinct from *summative evaluation* will not be seen as essential. This can be a stumbling block. The broad conversation among faculty will therefore need to reach clarity on these two concepts, and ensure that they inform whatever system the department decides to use. In addition, the following principles of formative assessment, iterated in the previous chapter, are useful to keep in mind.

1. It is frequent. The goal is to encourage development and track it over time.

2. It is confidential. The observee needs to feel free to invite candid, including negative, feedback.

3. It is analytical without being judgmental. The observee needs accurate, supportive input from colleagues, not accusations about his/her professional practice.

4. It is non-threatening. The assessment should be invited by the observee, and must carry no negative consequences.

5. It is collaborative. The observee should be a partner in deciding which aspects of teaching will be assessed, and who will do it.

What are some workable, time-tested models for department-sponsored formative assessment of teaching?
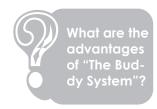
We recommend any of these three. The one your department uses will depend on several factors, which are addressed below.

- The Buddy or Partner System

- The Team System

- The Mentor System

What is "The Buddy System"?
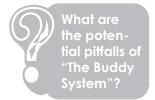
The assumption behind the Buddy System is that the most reliable, most trustworthy observer of your teaching is someone whose professional trajectory, professional status, and teaching interests are most like yours. This is in contrast to the Mentor System, (below) in which you work with an observer who has more experience, seniority, and supposedly more expertise than you do.

The Buddy System emphasizes the friendly, non-threatening aspects of peer observation. For a new pre-tenure faculty member or a lecturer, for example, a peer with the same professional status has no authority with regard to your employment. Free of the hierarchy, you are more likely to have candid communications with this person and share certain perspectives and attitudes. Add to this the probability that you will be closer to this person on the learning curve as a teacher, and will therefore be dealing with many of the same issues. If you are sympathetic to each other's concerns, you will be more likely to find in this person a colleague with whom to collaborate and share openly and selflessly all ideas related to teaching.

Not all buddies are equal, and therefore you risk getting poor advice if you have not chosen your buddy wisely. Beware of the "I'll stroke your ego if you'll stroke mine" trap. Also, if you have only one buddy, you risk getting feedback that might not provide a complete picture. *Particularly important is not to align yourself with someone who has not adapted well to the department.* Rather, seek a buddy who seems well-adjusted and is respected by colleagues.

A complete newbie may also have limited experience—and thus a limited perspective—in teaching. It is important to make sure that your buddies and you are both fully informed about the expectations for teaching in your department. You will need to have conversations about teaching with other departmental colleagues to get a feel for the mission, if it is not already explicit.

Another risk of the Buddy System relates to the size of your department. In small departments where the hiring of new faculty occurs only occasionally, it may be impossible for newer faculty members to find "buddies" in the same or related field. If the Buddy System is what

the department decides to promote, it may be necessary to seek buddy candidates in another department or even in another college.

A final difficulty is that the Buddy System may not work if imposed artificially. It works best when two colleagues "discover" common interests and pursue them together. Engineering such a discovery is a tough act, even for the best administrators.

What do "buddies" do to help each other?
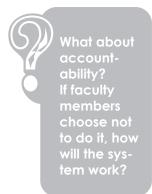
In the Buddy System two colleagues exchange services. These can include but are not restricted to…

- Reviewing, critiquing a syllabus and course design
- Brainstorming lesson plans, assignments and classroom activities
- Reviewing, critiquing tests and quizzes before administering them
- Exchanging classroom visits several times per semester
- Sharing materials, if you are teaching similar courses
- Sharing teaching techniques that have been successful
- Watching **with you** a videotape of your class
- Interpreting **together** the results of student surveys
- Running focus groups in your classes

So how does a department set one up?

Since it rarely works to "assign" a buddy to someone, if the department wants to use this system it will have to make explicit the expectation that incoming faculty members seek out colleagues on their own, either inside or outside the department. For those faculty members who have been at the university for a while, it should be relatively easy for them to find a trusted colleague with whom to work. For newer faculty, it will be necessary to make a conscious, concerted ef-

fort to socialize with other newer faculty from across the university. This is not always easy. Fortunately, this process can be facilitated on your campus by the Center for Effective Teaching and Learning (CETaL), which sponsors workshops, brownbags, and other socializing events on teaching. This office will also have access to an active accounting of which departments have new faculty, and which new faculty are likely to be looking for buddies.

If the department truly wants to be systematic about adopting this strategy, it will need to institute some means of assessing whether faculty are actually doing it. This can be done through each faculty member's documentation of his/her collaboration as a part of an annual teaching self-evaluation or as part of a teaching portfolio. The documentation would *not* include the content (such as results or peer reports) of the peer observations, but just a record that the collaboration occurred, and perhaps an indication of any new instructional ideas that grew from that collaboration.

The assumption behind the Team System is that there is safety in numbers. This is the faculty equivalent of a support group.

The Team System is similar in many ways to the Buddy System in the sense that it is an *exchange of services* (see that list, above), but it has more flexibility in terms of who can comprise a team. Some of the same values prevail, but here there is less emphasis on homogeneity and more room for diversity. Also, there is less concern about power relations and more concern for multiplicity of perspective. While the Buddy System is designed to work around departmental power alignments by avoiding them altogether, the Team System offsets issues of power, authority and hierarchy through multiple participants and multiple perspectives.

What are the challenges?
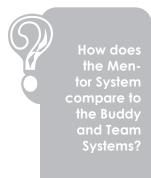
These are the same as they would be for the Buddy System. It is hard to assign a team that works. Accountability is not easy.

What are the advantages?

The great advantage is multiple perspectives on your teaching. You will be amazed at how two or three of your peers can reach such very different conclusions about your teaching, based on their own assumptions. Another advantage is convenience. With more peers available to you, you are more likely to find someone who is free to visit your classroom. You do not need to exchange visits one-on-one. If you observe colleague A, he/she can observe colleague B, who might observe you.

How does the Mentor System compare to the Buddy and Team Systems?

The Mentor system is by far the easiest of the systems for departments to implement formally, since the model works within the power-and-influence relations that are common between veteran and new faculty members. The assumptions are that someone who has "been there and done that" will be an effective guide to a newbie (an apprentice), and that a newbie, out of respect (or fear) will work with whoever is assigned to him/her. Given this traditional format, a department chair or a dean can reasonably assign a mentor to a new faculty member, and expect the new faculty member to feel committed to work with the mentor. The challenge for the administrator is to choose carefully an appropriate mentor for each new faculty member. This decision will be based on a range of criteria, among them being personality, ambition, interests, level of confidence, expertise, and might even include such things as gender and ethnicity.

Ideally, yes, since one good way to mentor someone is to ask them to do for you what you hope they will ask you to do for them. Establishing an exchange of services reduces the potential for friction implied in the power relation. In some mentoring systems, unfortunately, the mentor carries out the feedback services for the mentee, as on a one-way street. Therein lies one of the problems of this system, since it rein-forces systemically the lower status of the mentee.

Mentor systems can go wrong because the assumptions of hierarchy upon which they are based are not true for all of those who participate, whether mentor or mentee. While many new faculty may appreciate the attention of a dedi-cated mentor, others perceive the relationship as an un-wanted intrusion and even a threat. In some cases there are simply clashes of personality, especially since the men-tor is typically imposed, not chosen. In other cases, poorly handled power relations can complicate other embedded issues, such as those of gender and ethnicity.

Mentor systems have a higher rate of success when they are managed outside of the departmental power structure, and when the mentor comes from a different department or col-lege. This removes the mentee's potential fear of being ob-served by the same person who might be in a position of judgment at a later date.

Do the mentor and mentee exchange services, just like in the Buddy and Team System?

Why do Mentor Sys-tems some-times lead to pain and agony?

So, with all that could go wrong, why bother?

There are no rules, since each department has its own strengths and issues. If your department is small and has a history of congeniality and talking openly about teaching, an informal mentoring system can be effective, in that it might function much like a buddy or team system. On the other hand, the mentoring system works better in a large department, where it is possible to assign to a new faculty member someone who can keep some distance from the candidate's tenure judgment.

Departments with severe political divisions or problems of incivility should avoid the department-based mentoring system, and look for mentoring opportunities led by external organizations such as CETaL. Another option in such cases is to encourage new faculty to find buddies or work with teams in other departments, and provide documentation in their teaching portfolios. If this becomes your strategy, be sure to check with the chair to make sure that this documentation will be considered valid as part of your portfolio.

DEVELOPING A DEPARTAMENTAL PLAN FOR SUMMATIVE USE OF PEER OBSERVATION

A careful administrator can minimize the problems inherent in evaluation of teaching by creating the conditions for effective summative assessment through his/her leadership:

What are the key problems in using peer observations summatively?

- by making the departmental learning outcomes and teaching mission public and explicit
- by publicly participating in and offering to model being evaluated
- by making the teaching mission and evaluation forms available prior to classroom visits
- by arranging meetings with faculty prior to an evaluation
- by clearly articulating accepted standards for performance, tied to the values and mission of the department
- by achieving departmental consensus on the objectives of classes that will be evaluated
- by meeting with faculty after an assessment to answer questions
- by asking faculty to develop personal plans of action based on the teaching evaluations

Summative assessment of teaching effectiveness requires a more methodical and procedural approach than does a system for formative assessment. The two should be developed together and should be coordinated, but a summative assessment needs to be formalized and procedurally strict so as not to compromise its integrity at any point during the process. Keep in mind, too, that careers are at stake, so the system must be designed to accomplish its goals fairly and steadily even in the face of controversy.

How can a
fair system be
developed?

The single most important factor in successful peer observation of teaching is the careful preparation (via orientation and training) of the faculty evaluators. This may seem counter-intuitive, since the faculty can cite their great amounts of teaching experience as sufficient training, but it is difficult to over-estimate the risk of launching a program without making sure everyone practices certain procedures and techniques and understands why they are essential. Assessment specialists (CETaL) can be invited into the department to do group sessions for the entire faculty; or those who will conduct peer observations can be asked to attend workshops addressing this set of skills. Practice evaluations, role plays, and case studies are particularly useful in preparing faculty to observe their colleagues in the classroom.

There are several other considerations that need to be addressed in developing a plan for summative assessment of teaching.

- Consider your department's mission and teaching values. If you are going to build a sound teaching evaluation plan, the values that guide the system should be explicit and directly connected to things that are most important to your faculty. Otherwise, the criteria for evaluation will constantly slide, thus invalidating the process and creating political problems.

- If you have not already done so, you will need to identify specific outcomes for your graduating students. This means that you will need to record clearly, through faculty consensus, what you want students to become during their time under the influence of your academic program. Your outcomes will indicate what you value most as teachers, and therefore which approaches to teaching are most likely to generate the results you target in your students.

- Consider the political climate of your department and college. The personalities of the key administrators as well as the unofficial opinion leaders will surely have an effect on both the function of the

process as well as the perceived validity of the results. Depending on the make-up of your department, it may not be enough to simply start with the enthusiasts and hope to pull along the rest. Even the most recalcitrant should be invited into the discussion at some point early in the process. It is often a good idea to invite in a facilitator from outside the department to structure a discussion on the process of developing a summative evaluation plan.

• Consider how the evaluation process will be administered. Will there be a committee that takes responsibility for the process? Or will the whole department share in that responsibility? Even if you go with a committee structure, the whole department will need to be included in the conversation. Either way, the faculty who perform observations for summative purposes need to undergo preparation. This preparation should include developing an appreciation for how the department's teaching and learning values can be supported through a wide range of teaching strategies and styles. Another element of the preparation should be "norming," in which a group of would-be observers watch a videotaped teaching moment or review a document and then compare and discuss their respective evaluations.

• Consider the type of instrument to be used. In the next chapter there is a summary of this topic, and in the appendix there are several instruments that could be adapted to nearly any peer observation plan. Some use a "yes-no" scheme, in which the teaching values of the department have been represented as a set of teaching behaviors that are either present or not in a given instructor's practice. Others allow for scoring on a Likert scale. Others are more flexible still, inviting observers to look for classroom phenomena that represent preferred teaching values. Any of these can be effective as long as the goals, criteria and standards are

clear. It will be necessary for your departmental faculty to decide how narrowly it wants to define effective teaching practices, and how much interpretation to leave to the observer.

- Consider how evaluations will be recorded and communicated both to the person being evaluated and to the administrators who need to know. Summative evaluations can be sensitive, and therefore should be handled with care and confidentiality. The process for who gathers the results of the evaluation process, compiles them, and reports them to the chair should be made explicit. The chair or chief administrator then communicates the conclusions to the evaluated faculty member as part of a larger evaluation process. Contrast the formal handling of summative assessment with the more personal handling of formative assessments.

Can the models used for formative assessment also work in summative assessment?

The two processes should work in tandem, so that the focal points of formative assessment are consistent with the focal points of summative assessment. The feedback a faculty member receives from colleagues during formative assessment should square with the criteria being used in summative assessment for the same department. The person being evaluated needs to see that the criteria and standards do not shift, so that the work he/she does as a result of formative feedback can be measured in the summative assessment process. For example, if a department puts great effort into encouraging its faculty members to adopt collaborative learning models because this model encourages student development consistent with the mission of the department, then the formal evaluation of teaching should be sure to address that primary value. It makes no sense to foster collaborative learning only to follow up with drop-in peer observations that focus on the quality of lectures.

This overlap is not ideal, but sometimes it works just fine. Practically, depending on the size of your department, it may be unavoidable. At a minimum, every member of the department should be aware of the teaching and learning goals and practices expressed in the departmental mission, and receive training in evaluation that addresses those goals and practices. It is possible for the same peer to conduct both formative and summative assessment as long as the process that generates formative recommendations is separated from the summative assessment. The faculty member needs to be confident that the formative assessment is not a definitive judgment.

The two processes have conflicting goals and therefore, at some point, diverge completely. The role of a faculty observer for the purpose of formative assessment is different from the role of a faculty observer for the purpose of summative evaluation. While the former is more closely and consciously aligned with the specific needs of the particular colleague being observed, the latter is more closely and consciously aligned with the teaching values of the department. In the best of all worlds, these two perspectives are very closely aligned, but administratively discrete. In politically healthy departments the distinction is less pronounced because the high level of faculty-to-faculty trust allows for the processes to overlap. But that's not the best case upon which to develop procedures to manage a high-stakes decision process. The summative evaluation process needs to be able to function even in an environment of political dysfunction and distrust. The careful separation of formative and summative processes aids in this purpose.

Should the peer observers who participate in a faculty member's formative assessment also be involved in his/her summative assessment?

Why can't the two processes take place simultaneously, using the same structures and formats?

Summative evaluation applies criteria and standards that are shared by the professional community of the practitioners, for the purpose of making a definitive judgment about a faculty member's teaching effectiveness. Formative processes are guided by those same criteria and standards; however, their purpose is not to generate a final judgment, but rather to point to aspects of teaching that could be further developed.

If we've never done peer assessment of teaching before, how do we start?

1. Start with a departmental discussion of the teaching mission, based on student learning outcomes for your curriculum.
2. Identify the criteria and standards for effective teaching in your program or department.
3. Verify that a formative peer observation plan is in place (see Chapter Four), to ensure that the faculty have an opportunity to develop their teaching toward the mission. If there is not such a plan in place, stop consideration of a summative peer assessment process until a formative process exists.
4. Select or design mission-specific instruments and procedures to guide the evaluation process (see the appendices for models).
5. Prepare and train the faculty on how to conduct peer observations.
6. Decide on a procedure for collecting and communicating the results of the evaluations.

What difficulties will a department need to address in setting up a peer observation program for summative assessment?

1. Consensus on what constitutes "good teaching" will be difficult.
2. Even well-meaning peers may not be consistent in their evaluations of colleagues.
3. Faculty reputations can bias an observation.
4. Peer Observation should be only one part of a larger evaluation of teaching.
5. It is difficult to get faculty to undergo training on observing teaching.

chapter six

CHOOSING OR DESIGNING AN INSTRUMENT TO GUIDE PEER OBSERVATION

The purpose of a peer observation will determine to a great extent the type of instrument that will be appropriate in conducting it. Instruments range from the highly restrictive to the open-ended, and any of them might be effective, depending on the given circumstances.

Yes/No checklists (see sample in appendices) are the most prescriptive and restrictive. The list allows observers to indicate "Yes, I see this teaching behavior" or "No, I don't see this teaching behavior." Here are some sample items in an instrument of this sort.

Are checklists the best way to evaluate teaching?

1. Does the instructor use active learning techniques?
	YES	NO	NA

2. Do students have chances to apply concepts during class?
	YES	NO	NA

The assumption behind this type of instrument is that sound teaching behaviors lead to effective teaching. Using visual support, asking good questions, waiting for answers, calling on students by name: all of these have been shown through educational research to enhance student learning. An instructor who does these things, the logic goes, is doing a good job.

Of course, all of us have taken courses from highly effective teachers who had few (perhaps none) of the textbook behaviors associated with good teaching.

And many of us have taken courses from highly ineffective teachers who serve as textbook examples of "good teaching behaviors." Sometimes, the way a teacher connects (or does not) with students cannot be fully explained by a set of teaching behaviors. Hence, the limitation of the checklist.

So, should we reject the checklist?

No. In fact, the checklist can be very effective when used with other instruments, such as a written analysis (see below). While it may not tell the whole story, a checklist can be a good way to identify potential reasons for why a given instructor is effective or not. It is particularly good for a first-time observation or for troubleshooting a problematic situation. The data collected can point the observer to places to look for a more in-depth analysis. A wide representation of effective behaviors might help explain why a given instructor is successful; a dearth of those behaviors might help explain why an instructor is struggling.

How about ratings using a Likert scale?

These are by far the most common instruments used for peer observation, just as they are used for student evaluation of teaching. These allow for slightly more interpretation than does the Yes/No checklist, but they are still extremely restrictive in that the list of items evaluated is a highly limited selection from a large set of potential criteria. Unless the instrument's items truly reflect the teaching values of the department or the instructor, it risks being invalid. For this reason, a ratings system, too, needs to be accompanied by written analysis, to ensure that its restrictiveness does not lead to a misrepresentation of the teaching being observed.

The ratings instrument has other problems, too. If the scale used is 1-5, there is a great tendency for scores to cluster at 3, a neutral position. This allows for peers to shy away from making a real judgment and thus skews the results of the evaluation. A 4-point scale is much more effective because it forces a decision.

The written analysis requires more work on the part of the observer, but whether it is used as a stand-alone document or in accompaniment with other instruments, it is an essential piece of any peer observation. The analytical process conducted either through a checklist or a ratings instrument needs to be incorporated into a more holistic view, since sometimes the whole can be greater or less than the sum of its parts. The written analysis also allows the observer to address the instructor's goals for that particular session, which is a level of tailoring that the other instruments do not allow. ***However, the written analysis is not merely an open-ended document, expressing an observer's opinion. It should be guided by the agreed-upon criteria (either the individual's or the department's), so as to structure a peer's observation and report. Samples of guided analyses are provided in the appendices.***
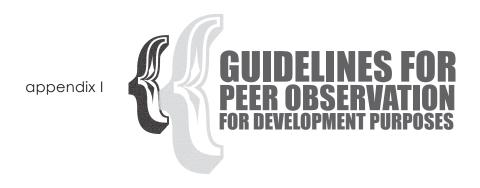
In some cases the function of the observation is to collect observed data from the classroom as a way of providing the communication basis between instructor and observer. An observer engaging in this process tries simply to capture as many details of the event as possible, as objectively as possible. This means transcribing what happens during the class meeting. The resulting document, which looks a bit like an ethnography, can be a powerful way of providing formative feedback to an instructor, and is much less threatening than a videotape. The observer brings the document to the post-observation meeting and goes through it with the instructor. This allows for a conversation about specific choices the instructor made, and alternatives, if appropriate.

Any of these instruments, plus variations found in the appendices, can serve either type of process. Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind is that for summative evaluation, in which careers are at stake, a combination of approaches is more likely to generate a valid and reliable evaluation.

Is the written analysis a superior instrument?

What is an "Open Case Study" as a form of peer observation?

Are any of these more appropriate for one type of evaluation (formative) over the other (summative)?

APPENDICES

appendix I

GUIDELINES FOR PEER OBSERVATION
FOR DEVELOPMENT PURPOSES

1. Meet with the instructor of the class to be observed at least a day before the scheduled class meeting.

The purpose of this meeting is for you to learn as much as possible about the instructor's intentions, and to identify his/her objectives. The discussion should create a context for the class to be observed. Some questions to ask might be

> How does this class fit into the course syllabus?
> What are the specific goals of this class meeting?
> How does this class meet one or more of the course objectives?
> What happened in the previous class meeting?
> What have the students done to prepare for this class?
> What will you do in class? What methods, strategies will you use?
> What would you like for me to focus on when I observe?

2. Visit the class.

Arrive early and take a seat in an inconspicuous part of the room. Bring a watch and a note pad. The most important thing to remember about the class visit is that your primary goal is to observe and record as accurately as possible the events that transpire. Consider it your job to write an "ethnography." Take the point of view of a student in the class, and try to make observations that reflect the learning, rather than the teaching process.
Record what students see, hear, say, and do. Also record what the instructor does, but do so from the student's perspective.
In the left margin of your note pad keep track of time. Indicate the time at least every 5 minutes, or whenever something significant occurs (change in strategy, change in behavior, etc.)

3. Reflect on your experience as an observer.

Reread your notes and identify several items that you can discuss with the observed instructor. You should include things that went well, and that you will want to reinforce in your post-observation meeting. You should also identify places where you could make constructive suggestions for changes in how the class was managed.

4. Meet with the observed instructor.

Start by asking the instructor how he/she felt about the class. Was it a typical class? Were the objectives reached? What went well? Did he/she feel that there were any problems.

Keep in mind that an important goal of the observation is to give the instructor a snapshot of his/her class—free of judgment. Offer to read sections of your notes where interesting, particularly good, or problematic things occurred. Your ability to recapture the class in detail helps your credibility as an observer. The transcript will also give you something concrete to use to demonstrate a point you wish to make about a moment of the class.

Make sure that you indicate to the observed instructor the things that worked. Then limit your suggestions or recommendations for change to just a few. Too many suggestions may leave the instructor less confident as a teacher and uncertain about what to change.

appendix II

OBSERVATION OF CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Teacher_____   Date _____
                                                                                        Course/Section _____
School_____   # of Students _____

Within the spaces provided, list and/or record observed indicators of positive and negative classroom climate.

Indicators of a Positive Climate	Indicators of a Negative Climate
Use of first names (place a check and write the name)	**Use of sarcasm (record examples)**
Specific individual encouragement and corrective feedback—delivered in a way that respects the student's feelings (record examples)	**Use of ridicule or criticism of the student as an individual (record examples)**

Indicators of a Positive Climate	Indicators of a Negative Climate
Specific individual praise (record examples)	**Negative feedback—delivered in a way that disregards the student's feeling (record example)**
Additional comments/observation of positive climate (e.g., use of amenitiess— please/thanks)	**Additional comments/observation of negative climate**

Praise is given as feedback in response to a good effort. Encouragement is given in advance of an effort to prompt the learner to try.

Criticism and ridicule are directed at the learner as a person. Negative feedback is directed at the learner's behavior (skill attempts or conduct) and is delivered in a way that disregards the student's feelings (e.g., "lousy shot"). Negative feedback is distinguished from corrective skill feedback (error correction) (e.g., "Your shot needs more arc").

The **advantage** of this form is that it measures classroom climate. It could very profitably be used with an instructor who is concerned about the climate in a particular class, or someone who has found comments in student evaluations that suggest that there might be a climate issue. It is important to note that such a form should never be *imposed* on a faculty member except in the most extreme of summative situations. Imposition of this kind of form will have only negative effects on climate.

The **disadvantage** of this is that it does not measure any other aspect of the classroom (learning and teaching behaviors, evidence of learning success, etc.).

PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST

Faculty member being evaluated_____

Course and Section_____

Observer_____

Date_____

Length of Visit_____

Number of students present_____

Number of students enrolled_____

Room location _____

Focus your attention on a few teaching skills that are of particular interest to you and that you feel are important to student learning. Respond to each of the following by circling the answer that best expresses your judgment.

Use the following criterion:

> **"Yes" = it was observed**
> **"No" = it was not observed**
> **"NI" =   it was observed but needs improvement**
> **"NA" = not applicable, the item did not apply to this**
> **observation**

Knowledge of subject matter

1. Does the instructor exhibit knowledge and mastery of content?	YES	NO	NI	NA
2. Is the level of material appropriate to the course and students?	YES	NO	NI	NA
3. Does the instructor emphasize a conceptual grasp of the material?	YES	NO	NI	NA
4. Is this content considered important within the discipline?	YES	NO	NI	NA

Organization and clarity of presentation

5. Does the instructor establish the relevance of new information?	YES	NO	NI	NA
6. Link new material to previously learned concepts?	YES	NO	NI	NA
7. Sequence the content logically?	YES	NO	NI	NA
8. Provide appropriate transitions; distinguish major from minor points?	YES	NO	NI	NA
9. Provide periodic summaries of the most important ideas?	YES	NO	NI	NA
10. Define new terms and concepts clearly?	YES	NO	NI	NA
11. Provide appropriate examples and illustrations of difficult ideas?	YES	NO	NI	NA
12. Use visuals and handouts to accompany verbal presentation?	YES	NO	NI	NA
13. Speak loudly enough to be heard throughout the classroom?	YES	NO	NI	NA
14. Does the instructor speak at an appropriate rate for note-taking?	YES	NO	NI	NA

Teaching strategies

15. Does the instructor use active learning techniques?	YES	NO	NI	NA
16. Are teaching methods appropriate to the goals of the class?	YES	NO	NI	NA
17. Do students have chances to discuss or apply concepts during class?	YES	NO	NI	NA
18. If discussion is used, does it stay focused on class goals?	YES	NO	NI	NA
19. Does instructor provide periodic restatements of discussion points?	YES	NO	NI	NA
20. Does instructor record student comments on the board/overhead?	YES	NO	NI	NA

Answering and asking questions

21. Are student questions welcomed and responded to effectively?	YES	NO	NI	NA
22. Do students seem comfortable asking questions?	YES	NO	NI	NA
23. Does the instructor repeat student questions so all can hear?	YES	NO	NI	NA
24. Does the instructor ask questions periodically?	YES	NO	NI	NA
25. Do questions require thinking analytically?	YES	NO	NI	NA
26. Does the instructor use enough "wait time" to allow for responses?	YES	NO	NI	NA
27. Are the answers repeated for clarity?	YES	NO	NI	NA

Teacher-student rapport

28. Does the instructor maintain eye contact with students?	YES	NO	NI	NA
29. Move around the room periodically to maintain student attention?	YES	NO	NI	NA
30. Respond to student questions or comments with respect?	YES	NO	NI	NA
31. Interact with students informally before and after class?	YES	NO	NI	NA
32. Are students attentive and involved during most of the class session?	YES	NO	NI	NA
33. Do they take notes at appropriate times?	YES	NO	NI	NA
34. Does their behavior indicate respect for the instructor?	YES	NO	NI	NA

COMMENTS:

The **advantage** of this form is that it is a thorough look at teaching behaviors. It can easily be used as a guide and reflection tool for a teacher wishing to change certain behaviors in order to provide clear instruction.

The **disadvantage** of this form is that it is very teacher-oriented, and not focused at all on what the students are doing. A faculty member can learn a lot about good practice in general from this form, but not much about what the students are learning or how well they are responding to the teacher's strategies.

RECORD OF TIME ALLOTMENT IN CLASS

Instructor's Name _____   **Date** _____

Task _____

Teacher Talk (demonstration and instruction)	Management (papers handed out, students getting into teams…??)	Observer Comments
Total: _____	Total: _____	Total: _____

Total Length of Lesson =

Positive Feedback	
Specific Feedback	
Student Names	
Filler Words	

Comments:

This form provides the teacher with an objective view of how interactive his or her class really is. Having someone log how much the teacher is talking versus how often the students interact is useful for a teacher wishing to switch to a student-oriented teaching style.

VIDEOTAPED OBSERVATION

Directions:
Check the criteria listed below with an "X" from your observation of the video tape.

Use the following criterion:

1 = Unsatisfactory
2 = Below Average
3 = Average
4 = Above Average
5 = Outstanding
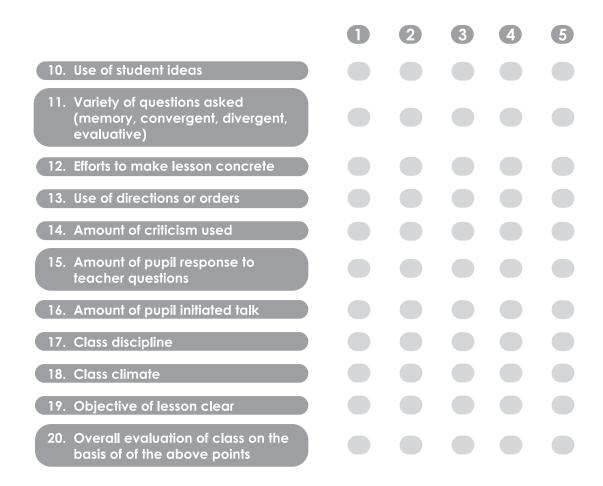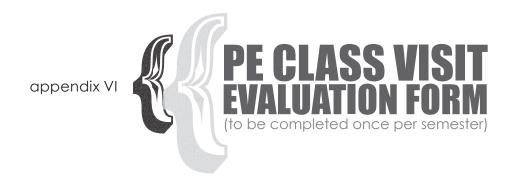
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Voice	○	○	○	○	○
2. Speech	○	○	○	○	○
3. Energy and Vitality	○	○	○	○	○
4. Eye Contact with Students	○	○	○	○	○
5. Use of Teaching Aids (board, posters, etc,)	○	○	○	○	○
6. Class Participation	○	○	○	○	○
7. Ability to Hold Interest of Class	○	○	○	○	○
8. Amount of Time the Teacher Talked	○	○	○	○	○
9. Use of Praise or Encouragement	○	○	○	○	○

		1	2	3	4	5
10.	Use of student ideas	○	○	○	○	○
11.	Variety of questions asked (memory, convergent, divergent, evaluative)	○	○	○	○	○
12.	Efforts to make lesson concrete	○	○	○	○	○
13.	Use of directions or orders	○	○	○	○	○
14.	Amount of criticism used	○	○	○	○	○
15.	Amount of pupil response to teacher questions	○	○	○	○	○
16.	Amount of pupil initiated talk	○	○	○	○	○
17.	Class discipline	○	○	○	○	○
18.	Class climate	○	○	○	○	○
19.	Objective of lesson clear	○	○	○	○	○
20.	Overall evaluation of class on the basis of of the above points	○	○	○	○	○

The **advantage** of this document is that it lists a number of positive teacher behaviors that often result in successful classes. Because it is unlikely that a video will capture all relevant student interaction, this format is not likely to provide as much information on student learning as others. But it is a very good way for an instructor to see him or herself from an outside perspective and gauge whether he or she is actually doing the things s/he believes s/he is doing in class.

The **disadvantage** is that the observer and the instructor will need to come to an agreement on what "unsatisfactory" and "outstanding" actually mean. It is unclear how "average" is measured. Is "average" average in the department, in the university, or in the discipline?

We recommend using a 4-point scale to ensure a more definitive measurement of effectiveness.

appendix VI

PE CLASS VISIT EVALUATION FORM
(to be completed once per semester)

INSTRUCTOR _____   COURSE AND SECTION _____

VISITOR _____   DATE _____

NUMBER OF STUDENTS PRESENT _____   PLACE _____

TEACHING SITE/EQUIPMENT: (size, temp, acoustics, lighting, equipment)

INSTRUCTOR/STUDENT RAPPORT: (student involvement, interaction, etc.)

CLASS FORMAT/ORGANIZATION OF LESSON/STUDENT SAFETY

GENERAL COMMENTS: (suggestions)

Instructor Signature _____

Observer Signature _____

The **advantage** of this form is that it leaves room for the observer to make comments about a variety of aspects of teaching and learning in the classroom, depending on what the observer and instructor have pre-determined is important.

The **disadvantage** is that, unless the observer takes additional notes on another page on specific things that happened, the results may be too vague in nature to help the instructor.

Note: having both instructor and observer sign the document is a good way to make sure that each is honest and forthright in the assessment of what happened in the class. Such a signature should only be added after the post-observation meeting between the two colleagues.

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES

NOTES