

Classroom Observation Rating Forms

A variety of pre-constructed forms are available for the rating of classroom instruction by peer observers. These range from checklists of behaviors to higher inference forms that ask for the observer's assessment of the quality of the teaching. Some instruments are general in nature and intended for use in a traditional classroom setting where lecture-discussion is the format. Other instruments are tailored to specific settings, such as the studio or laboratory or to specific learning formats, such as collaborative learning. Since it is important that the rating form match the context of the teaching, this resource materials section will illustrate general formats for forms and present a list of items that can be used to design a form for a particular setting.

FORMAT CONSIDERATIONS

Each form should contain course information, directions for completing the form, and items to be completed.

Course information. The form should contain specific information about the course and observation. For an example, see the template that follows.

Directions. The form should contain directions for reviewers. For an example, see the template that follows.

Template: Classroom Observation Rating Form

Instructor: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Course Number: _____ Course Title: _____

Course Meeting Time: _____ Level of Students: _____

Number of Students Present: _____ Reviewer: _____

Directions

For formative peer review use: Focus on providing comments.

For summative peer review use: Complete ratings and use comments to explain them.

Ratings Scale

5 = Extremely effective

4 = Effective

3 = Somewhat effective

2 = Inconsistently effective

1 = Not at all effective

Item Formats

The items that the rater will use are listed next. These may be in the following formats:

- Narrative prompt forms
- Checklists with or without comments
- Scaled rating forms with or without comments

Examples are provided on the following pages.

Narrative Prompt Forms

Narrative prompt forms focus on pre-specified target areas and call for extended comment incorporating the combined description and judgment of the reviewer. For example:

- *Teacher organization.* Comment on the extent to which the teacher made the class plan explicit, followed the plan, had the materials needed for the class, showed evidence of having prepared the content, and the like.

Examples of Prompts in Specific Areas of Instruction

- *Variety and pacing of instruction.* Comment on the extent to which the teacher employed a variety of instructional strategies and paced the class for interest and accomplishment of the goals.
- *Content knowledge.* Comment on the importance, currency, and accuracy of the content presented by the instructor.
- *Presentation skills.* Comment on the instructor's voice, tone, fluency, eye contact, rate of speech, gestures, use of space.
- *Teacher-student rapport.* Comment on the verbal interaction present in class, the extent to which the teacher welcomed and appreciated student discussion, the teacher's openness to class suggestions, and his or her interpersonal skills.
- *Clarity.* Comment on the extent to which the teacher uses examples, is clear with explanations or answers to student questions, defines new terms or concepts.

Examples of General Prompts

- What things went well for this instructor and/or the class?
- What things did not go so well during this particular class?
- What specific suggestions for improvement do you have?
- What things did you learn in the pre- or post-observation conference that influenced your observation and feedback?
- How does this instructor compare with others in the department?

Peer Observation Log

Center for Teaching & Assessment of Learning University of Delaware

(Based on instrument developed at University of Maryland, 1987)

Instructor: _____

Course: _____

Faculty Observer: _____

Class Session Content: _____

Length of Visit: _____

Observation Date: _____

Complete this form during the class observation. Assume a student perspective rather than content expert. Be as specific and objective as you can.

Peer Observation Notes (note what you observe)	Worked Well, Suggestions for Enhancement
<p>Goals for Student Learning From a student's perspective, what did you take away from this class session? What did you learn as a result of this session?</p>	
<p>Method of Instruction Comment on the presentation of the course material and how the teaching method supported student learning – organization (introduction, main points, summary), presentation style, use of examples, use of technology, variety of instructional activities, use of class time, pacing of material, interest in students, instructor knowledge/preparation.</p>	
<p>Instructor/Student Interaction Comment on student involvement and interaction and its support of student learning (how does the level of interaction align with the goals for student learning) - opportunities for questions and interaction among students, answers to questions, comprehension checks, facilitation of discussion, level of student engagement, rapport, feedback to students and assessment of student comprehension.</p>	

Peer Observation Notes (note what you observe)	Worked Well, Suggestions for Enhancement
<p>Classroom Space Note aspects of the classroom space that either facilitated or inhibited aspects of teaching: seating arrangement, size of room, location of media equipment, physical access to students, sound.</p>	
<p>General Observations When did the students seem particularly engaged? What worked well from your perspective? Why? What didn't work well for you? Why? What areas need improvement? How could these improvements be made (consider long-term vs. short-term possibilities)?</p>	

Note. The instrument attempts to capture what actually occurs in the class during the observation without presupposing any particular instructional approach. The narrative allows for a more holistic and contextual description.

Reflective Narrative

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University of Delaware

Instructor: _____ Date: _____

The narrative allows you to synthesize, evaluate and reflect on the issues discussed during your post-observation meeting with the peer observer. The reflection intends to help you think about your approach to teaching based on constructive feedback and discussion. Be as specific as you can.

What have you learned about your teaching as a result of this observation process? How does your teaching approach support student learning? What has been confirmed for you? What have you become aware of that you didn't know before?

What will you definitely keep in your teaching repertoire? Why? Focus on 1-2 specific aspects of your teaching.

What will you most likely change about your teaching approach? Why? How? Focus on 1-2 specific aspects for change and outline how you intend to implement that change in your class.

Checklist Forms

Checklist forms, with or without space for comments, focus on description (the presence or absence of certain characteristics) and emphasize low inference items. Items are chosen in accordance with the instructional values of the instructor's unit. The measures can be simply "yes" or "no" or can be measures of frequency, such as "Always, Often, Sometimes, Never." Comments can be used by the reviewer to explain the rationale for choosing the rating or for providing additional information. For example:

The instructor states the objectives of the class. Yes No
 Comment:

Possible Items for Checklist Forms (*lower inference items*)

Instructor organization

- The instructor arrives to class on time.
- The instructor states the relation of the class to the previous one.
- The instructor locates class materials as they are needed.
- The instructor knows how to use the educational technology needed for the class.
- The instructor posts class goals or objectives on the board or overhead.
- The instructor posts or verbally provides an outline of the organization of the class.
- The instructor makes transitional statements between class segments.
- The instructor follows the preset structure.
- The instructor conveys the purpose of each class activity.
- The instructor summarizes periodically and at the end of class.

Variety and pacing of instruction

- More than one form of instruction is used.
- During discussion, the instructor pauses after asking questions.
- The instructor accepts student responses.
- The instructor draws nonparticipating students into the discussion.
- The instructor prevents specific students from dominating the discussion.
- The instructor helps students extend their responses.
- The instructor maps the direction of the discussion.
- The instructor mediates conflict or differences of opinion.
- The instructor demonstrates active listening techniques.
- The instructor provides explicit directions for active learning tasks.

- The instructor allows enough time to complete active learning tasks, such as group work.
- The instructor specifies how active learning tasks will be evaluated.
- The instructor is able to complete the topics scheduled for the class.
- The instructor provides time for students to practice.

Content knowledge

- The instructor's statements are accurate according to the standards of the field.
- The instructor incorporates current research in the field.
- The instructor identifies sources, perspectives, and authorities in the field.
- The instructor communicates the reasoning process behind operations or concepts.

Presentation skills

- The instructor's voice is audible.
- The instructor varies the tone and pitch of voice for emphasis and interest.
- The instructor avoids distracting mannerisms.
- The instructor maintains eye contact throughout the class.
- The instructor avoids extended reading from notes or texts.
- The instructor speaks at a pace that allows students to take notes.

Rapport with students

- The instructor addresses students by name.
- The instructor attends to student comprehension or puzzlement.
- The instructor provides feedback at given intervals.
- The instructor uses positive reinforcement.
- The instructor incorporates student ideas into the class.

Clarity

- The instructor defines new terms or concepts.
- The instructor elaborates or repeats complex information.
- The instructor uses examples to explain content.
- The instructor makes explicit statements drawing student attention to certain ideas.
- The instructor pauses during explanations to allow students to ask questions.

Scaled Rating Forms

Rating forms with scales and with or without space for comments focus on higher inference evaluation of specific behaviors. Usually a 5-point scale with specific anchor words such as “Strongly agree/Strongly disagree, Effective/Ineffective, Excellent/Poor” is used. Arreola (2007) cautions that standards of performance be identified (e.g., “The syllabus contains the following items:” etc.) so that reviewers are rating the same thing, and labels on the rating scale are related to the criteria to be evaluated. He notes that interior points of the rating scale should be labeled as well as end points. Others would argue that such precision is cumbersome and ignores the contextual differences between settings. For example, one department might expect a bibliography to be an essential part of a good syllabus, while less print-oriented departments might not. Within a given context, however, it is important that reviewers have some common understanding of what constitutes “Excellent” as opposed to “Very good,” “Fair,” and the like.

Comments can go below each item, in spaces to the right or left of the item, or at the end of the form. When one form is used for a variety of situations, the rating N/A is provided if certain specific behaviors are not applicable to the setting that is being observed. Illustration:

The instructor is well prepared for class	Extremely	Very well	Adequately	Inconsistently	Not at all		Comment
	5	4	3	2	1	N/A	

Sometimes, such instruments give behavioral indicators of general characteristics in order to increase the likelihood that raters will be attending to the same characteristics. In the above item, for example, the following might be included:

	Exceeds level of expected qualities	Meets level on all qualities	Meets level on most qualities	Meets level on some qualities	Meets no/few expected qualities
The instructor is well prepared for class. (Arrives and starts promptly, has all materials ready and in order, has an articulated class plan, shows content preparation.)	5	4	3	2	1

Possible Items for Scaled Ratings Forms (*higher inference items involving values*)

Teacher organization

- The instructor is well prepared for class.
- The objectives of the class are clearly stated.
- The instructor uses class time efficiently.
- The learning activities are well organized.
- The class remains focused on its objectives.

Instructional strategies

- The instructor's choice of teaching techniques is appropriate for the goals.
- The instructor has good questioning skills.
- The instructor raises stimulating and challenging questions.
- The instructor mediates discussion well.
- The class schedule proceeds at an appropriate pace.
- The instructor uses multimedia effectively.
- Board work is legible and organized.
- Course handouts are used effectively.
- The instructor provides clear directions for group work or other forms of active learning.
- The instructor facilitates group work well.
- The instructor helps students to learn from each other.
- The instructor helps students apply theory to solve problems.
- The instructor effectively holds class attention.
- The instructor provides an effective range of challenges.

Instruction in laboratories, studios, or field settings

- Experiments/exercises are well chosen and well organized.
- Procedures/techniques are clearly explained/demonstrated.
- The instructor is thoroughly familiar with experiments/exercises.
- The instructor is thoroughly familiar with equipment/tools used.
- Assistance is always available during experiments/exercises.
- Experiments/exercises are important supplements to the course.
- Experiments/exercises develop important skills.
- Experiments/exercises are of appropriate length.
- Experiments/exercises are of appropriate level of difficulty.
- Experiments/exercises help to develop confidence in the subject area.
- The instructor provides aid with interpretation of data.
- The instructor's emphasis on safety is evident.

- Criticism of procedures/techniques is constructive.
- The instructor works well with students and other parties in the setting.
- Clinical or field experiences are realistic.

Content knowledge

- The instructor is knowledgeable about the subject matter.
- The instructor is confident in explaining the subject matter.
- The instructor pitches instruction to an appropriate level.
- The instructor uses a variety of illustrations to explain content.
- The instructor provides for sufficient content detail.
- The instructor focuses on important content in the field.
- The instructor demonstrates intellectual curiosity toward new ideas or perspectives.
- The instructor incorporates views of women and minorities.
- The instructor corrects bias in assigned materials.

Presentation skills

- The instructor is an effective speaker.
- The instructor employs an appropriate rate of speech.
- The instructor uses classroom space well.
- The instructor is enthusiastic about the subject matter.
- The instructor makes the subject matter interesting.
- The instructor's command of English is adequate.

Rapport with students

- The instructor welcomes student participation.
- The instructor models good listening habits.
- The instructor motivates students.
- The instructor stimulates interest in the course subject(s).
- The instructor responds well to student differences.
- The instructor demonstrates a sense of humor.
- The instructor uses effective classroom management techniques.
- The instructor demonstrates flexibility in responding to student concerns or interests.
- The instructor welcomes multiple perspectives.
- The instructor anticipates student problems.
- The instructor treats students impartially.
- The instructor respects constructive criticism.

- The instructor celebrates diversity and avoids statements that demean particular groups.
- The instructor is able to help many kinds of students.
- The instructor is sensitive to individual interests and abilities.

Clarity

- The instructor responds to questions clearly.
- The instructor emphasizes major points in the delivery of the subject matter.
- The instructor explains the subject matter clearly.
- The instructor relates course material to practical situations.

Impact on learning

- The instructor helps develop rational thinking.
- The instructor helps develop problem-solving ability.
- The instructor helps develop skills/techniques/views needed in the field.
- The instructor broadens student views.
- The instructor encourages the development of students' analytic ability.
- The instructor provides a healthy challenge to former attitudes.
- The instructor helps develop students' creative capacity.
- The instructor fosters respect for diverse points of view.
- The instructor sensitizes students to views or feelings of others.
- The instructor helps develop students' decision-making abilities.
- The instructor develops students' appreciation of intellectual activity.
- The instructor develops students' cultural awareness.
- The instructor helps students develop awareness of the process used to gain new knowledge.
- The instructor stimulates independent thinking.

Overall

- The overall teaching performance of the instructor is high.