Guiding Principles for Conducting Effective Classroom Observations for Lecturer Faculty

Overview:
Per Article XIX of the UM|LEO Collective Bargaining Agreement, Academic Units are required to establish and distribute written procedures and criteria for Interim Reviews, Major Reviews, and Continuing Reviews. This document is a resource for those Units who, as a standard practice, incorporate classroom observations into their reviews.

Observation Process:
The following steps can be utilized to serve as guiding principles for conducting effective, and collaborative classroom observations. While these steps are **not** contractually mandated, they provide guidance on creating a structure for a robust observation process.

Pre-Observation:

Pre-Meeting: The course instructor and assigned observer should convene to discuss relevant topics pertaining to the course observation. The assigned observer should take this time to familiarize themselves with the course content, and gain a better understanding of the course goals and objectives. This also allows the course instructor to provide the observer the framework, plan, and intent of the course.

Peer Observation: In preparation for the formal evaluation, course instructors are encouraged to collaborate with colleagues in their respective field. The goal of effective peer observation is to offer feedback that encourages continuous improvement in course delivery; it is **not** intended to serve as an evaluation of performance.

Self-Assessment: Prior to the formal evaluation, the course instructor can complete a self-assessment regarding the known criteria for the classroom observation. The instructor is encouraged to discuss this during the pre-meeting with the assigned observer.

Observation:

Each Academic Unit has established procedures and criteria for conducting classroom observations. Please refer to Article XIX of the UM|LEO Collective Bargaining Agreement as well as your respective Academic Unit's policies for conducting the formal observation.

Post-Observation:

Written Report: If the Academic Unit prepares a written report subsequent to the observation, the observer will provide a copy of the report to the instructor for review. The instructor may provide additional written information, or reflections about the observation.

Post-Meeting: The course instructor and assigned observer are encouraged to convene again to debrief, and discuss relevant feedback regarding the set criteria. The course instructor is encouraged to ask questions, and review and compare their self-assessment with the outcome of the formal observation.

Observer Assessment: Academic Units are encouraged to provide an opportunity for the course instructor to provide feedback on the observer regarding the overall process.

<u>Example Criterion for Evaluation</u>:

While observation criteria may be course specific, below is a list of generally applicable criteria that can be observed during instruction in most academic courses. The following criteria were developed by the UM-Flint Office of Extended Learning; the criteria below are **not** contractually mandated, but are provided merely as examples. Incorporated below each criteria is a list of possible documents or resources where you could find examples of each criteria in the virtual classroom.

1. Is the course goals/major competencies clearly stated and explained?
   a. Possible evidence: syllabus; classroom policies; grading criteria; video or audio welcome introduction
2. Does the course instructor establish and maintain a presence throughout the course?
   a. Possible evidence: frequent announcements; participation in discussion boards; prompt replies to inquiries; audio/videos in the instructors voice
3. Does the instructor establish a positive community of learning?
   a. Possible evidence: instructor encourages student self-introductions/bios; group projects; peer reviews; collaborative sessions; active discussion boards
4. Is the course navigation consistent and clearly explained?
   a. Possible evidence: is the course divided into weekly Units; is the instructor explaining the course structure
5. Are the class materials and instruction comparable to those offered in the same face-to-face course?
   a. Possible evidence: video lecturers
6. Does the course instructor solicit feedback from the students for the purpose of continuous improvement?
   a. Possible evidence: periodic surveys to students, or creating a Q&A discussion board.
7. Does the Unit have measurable learning objectives?
   a. Possible evidence: Unit preamble or listed course objectives that match related outcomes/competencies
8. Is the course assignments aligned to the learning objectives?
   a. Possible evidence: quizzes; tests; assignments etc.
9. Is the instruction appropriately "chunked" in that material focuses on one concept at a time and complex issues are scaffolded?
   a. Possible evidence: opportunities for demonstration, explanation and practice centered around distinct concepts; multiple low-stakes, formative assessments
10. Does the instructor provide opportunities for student feedback, practice, or learning reinforcement?
    a. Possible evidence: knowledge-check activities, or discussion of materials
11. Are the instructional materials addressing multiple ways for students to learn the material?
    a. Possible evidence: variety of different content and activities in the virtual classroom; materials are being offered in alternate versions (i.e. audio, video, and text)
12. Does the instructor summarize the Unit, connecting the Unit to course goals/competencies and foreshadowing what will come in the next Unit?
    a. Possible evidence: Unit summaries, introductions, or previews
13. Are the requirements for learner interaction clearly stated?
    a. Possible evidence: policies in the syllabus or course information section, or simply clarifying directions prior to an in-class assignment
14. Is there a variety of opportunity for regular interaction through the discussion forums and group projects?
    a. Possible evidence: discussion forum topics; group project topics
15. Are the implemented communication technologies promoting thought-provoking interaction for learners in the classroom?
    a. Possible ways to demonstrate this criteria are discussion boards, blogs, or synchronous meetings.
16. Does the peer-to-peer interaction indicate engaged and active learning?
    a. Possible evidence: rates of student participation; quality of student participation
17. Does the instructor regularly, individually or collectively, communicates with students about their progress?
    a. Possible evidence: frequency of feedback to students; course evaluations