

Peer Observation of Teaching Pilot

Overview

In recent years, scholarship has problematized the role of student evaluations of teaching. While nobody argues against incorporating the student voice in classroom feedback and assessment of teaching, it has also become clear that Course Climate Questionnaires (CCQ's) are distorted window onto teaching performance. CCQ results skew negatively along lines of gender and race. In addition, CCQ's often do not provide information that instructors can use to improve their courses. Finally, student evaluations correlate heavily with a student's expected. Student evaluations provide a valuable window onto the student experience. Yet, considering the recent scholarship, instructors need more information to gauge their teaching and refine their courses.

In response to developments in scholarship, the Center for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning would like to start a pilot for a peer review of teaching program. The goal of this program is to give instructors another source of information on their courses that they can use to revise and refine their teaching. We are encouraging departments and units to apply so as to have a critical mass of reviewers to share the workload of the peer review process.

To volunteer

Send an email to the Center (catl@uwgb.edu) which indicates your interest in participating in this pilot.

Summary of pilot program

Participants in this program will be expected to take part in a four-step peer review process: pre-observation meeting, a review of course materials, a classroom observation, and a post-observation meeting. There is flexibility in how participants fulfill these requirements. Rather than being a one-off classroom observation, this program seeks situate the single observation in the larger context of the course. We hope that this will provide some actionable information for those under review while at the same time not being too much of a time burden.

Pre-observation

The pre-observation meeting is where the reviewer and the instructor situate the lesson under review in the overall flow of the semester and the pedagogical style of the instructor. At this meeting, the reviewer and instructor will fill out a form that provides context for the reviewer on the lesson s/he will observe. This "meeting" can take place face-to-face, over a web-conference application such as Skype, or through a shared document on OneDrive. This meeting will also set the stage for the reviewer's assessment of ancillary materials.

Review of materials

The goal of this section is to help the reviewer see the lesson under review from the perspective of the students. This stage also occurs prior to the classroom visit. The reviewer will systematically go over all relevant materials that the students will have for the lesson under observation: the course syllabus, the D2L/Canvas site, any relevant handouts, etc.

Classroom observation

This step involves observing the instructor and documenting the observation using an instrument that is germane to the discipline and type of lesson. The Center has the following types of observation sheets available: a time log; an annotated checklist; a series of open-ended questions; or, in the case of an online course, an online course evaluation form.

Post-observation meeting

At this meeting the reviewer and instructor will go over the pre-observation form, the review of materials, and the classroom observation form. The goal of this meeting is to provide formative feedback to the instructor on the degree to which they accomplished what they set out to do in the lesson. Ideally, this meeting would occur face-to-face, but could also happen via Skype or a shared document.

Formative and summative tracks

If the pilot group would like to use peer review as a formative evaluation, then the process ends with the post-observation meeting. If, however, departments/units would like to use this for a summative evaluation to go in an instructor's file alongside CCQ data, then the reviewer would write up a formal statement on the lesson. This statement would situate the lesson in the context of the course and contain observations on the lesson under review as well as the review of the course materials. Importantly, reviewers should stick to their observations about the instruction that they saw rather than giving advice based upon what has worked for the reviewer in the past.

Training

The Center will provide training for departments who wish to take part in the pilot on the overall tone of the program as well as nitty gritty details about the various forms to fill out.