



ONLINE CLASS OBSERVATION PROCESS AND PROCEDURES NYU SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

INTRODUCTION

The online class observation process is designed to support SPS faculty in their teaching. The process provides an opportunity for faculty to reflect on their teaching and, in collaboration with the observer, assess both teaching skills and learning outcomes. Created to be both supportive and helpful, the process also serves as an effective evaluation tool so that faculty can enhance the quality of the education they are providing to our students. Observers observing in online contexts will have already taught online.

Assessment of teaching effectiveness focuses on mastery of course content, ability to apply appropriate instructional methods for the students we serve, maximizing student engagement in the learning process, and creating learning experiences that link stated learning outcomes to actual student achievement.

Because observations will occur at meaningful intervals, faculty will be able to improve their teaching and demonstrate that improvement over time.

ONLINE COURSE FORMAT DESCRIPTIONS

1. Asynchronous: faculty-led, wholly online courses. These use LMS (Learning Management Systems) for posting course materials and communicating/interacting with students. There are no regularly scheduled in-person meetings.
2. Blended: A mix of in-person and asynchronous sessions; these may hold some synchronous sessions via web-based meeting tools.
3. Hybrid: A mix of asynchronous and synchronous sessions via web-based meeting tools.
4. Synchronous: wholly online courses with regularly scheduled real-time sessions via web-based meeting tools. These are most similar to in-person classes and they may use LMS for posting content and communicating with students.

Depending on the format, the procedures may differ slightly. In a blended or hybrid class, the observer will need to attend to all the varied components of the students' experiences in the course. In any class with an online component, the observer should understand that a meaningful observation will require viewing the way the instructor has created his or her learning environment online. Observers will be obliged to follow FERPA guidelines.

ONLINE OBSERVATION PROCEDURES

The five components to each observation are a pre-observation conversation, the actual online observation, a post-observation conversation, completion of the *Online Class Observation Report*, and submission of the final *Online Class Observation Report*.

1. The Pre-Observation Conversation

The purpose of the pre-observation conversation is to establish the context for the online class visit. To establish this context the observer should:

- Request copies of the syllabus and other materials to be used during the class.
- Request access to the LMS for the observation week.

- *For courses with synchronous sessions, request the link to observe web-based class.*
- Provide the instructor with the *SPS Teaching Effectiveness Criteria* document that focuses on seven components of teaching effectiveness: class management, relevance and mastery of course content, instructor communication skills, quality of student engagement, effective use of instructional materials, effective use of the learning management system and other educational technology tools as appropriate. Share the relevant *Guidelines for Observing* online instructional format tip sheet with the faculty member.
- Schedule a conversation with the faculty member being observed. This conversation may take place in person, over the phone, via Skype, or by any other strategy that permits a substantive conversation.
- Explain the observation process to the faculty member being observed and review the *SPS Teaching Effectiveness Criteria* document as a tool that begins the conversation about effective teaching.
- Inquire if the faculty member wants the observer to focus on anything specific to that class or related to his or her teaching style.
- Ask the instructor to inform the class that a visitor will be observing in the LMS course site and if applicable, the web-based meeting, and the class and online learning activities will proceed normally.

2. The Online Observation

Many standard teaching observation forms use Likert scales because they are easy and commonly accepted tools for assessment. The disadvantages of Likert scales are that they only provide a general assessment, use limited criteria, and lack reliability unless ratings are very well defined and observers are like minded. Therefore, the SPS online classroom observation process does not include any Likert scales and instead, encourages a more open-ended approach.

The process for an online observation requires that the observer takes copious notes that can be used later to complete a thorough evaluation. The observer should:

- Keep a detailed narrative of what transpires in the LMS course site as well as the web-based classroom and highlight teaching strategies that were particularly effective or could be improved upon.
- To help the observer in writing his or her account, he or she can refer to the relevant tip sheet for guiding questions as to what makes a well-designed, engaging course.
- Two weeks should be allotted for the observation of the LMS. If possible, the entire web-based class should be observed.
- Refer to the *SPS Teaching Effectiveness Criteria* document as a reminder of some teaching effectiveness indicators but should not feel limited by this list.

3. The Post-Observation Conversation

After the observation, the observer should set-up a meeting with the instructor. If a meeting is not possible, a phone or Skype conversation is acceptable and should be conducted no later than one week after the observation.

The post-observation conversation should be handled in a collegial manner. During an open conversation, the observer should ask the instructor to openly convey perceptions and opinions about the class. The observer should be prepared to reflect on a variety of teaching effectiveness criteria and provide actual examples whenever possible.

Recognizing positive teaching strategies is just as important as identifying areas for improvement. Therefore, the post-observation conversation should begin with a discussion about the most effective teaching strategies observed. Additionally, if superior teaching strategies were observed, both parties should collaborate on ways the instructor could share those strategies with other SPS colleagues.

When discussing areas for improvement, the observer should provide the reasons why a particular strategy seemed less effective and suggest one or more alternatives that could be utilized instead. The observer should ask the instructor if he or she has any ideas for changes that would enhance his or her own teaching effectiveness.

4. Completion of the *Online Class Observation Report*

Within a week of the post-observation conversation, the observer should complete the *Online Class Observation Report*. Thoughtful and detailed comments are essential to this process. The report should include positive and specific feedback about the instructor's strengths, specifically identify areas for improvement, and reflect on collaborative strategies identified for enhanced teaching that were discussed in the post-observation conversation.

The observer should sign and e-mail a PDF copy of the *Online Class Observation Report* to the instructor for review and signature.

5. Submission of the final *Online Class Observation Report*

After receiving the *Online Class Observation Report*, the instructor may elect to add comments but is not required to do so. The instructor must sign the report, scan it, and e-mail it back to the observer within one week of receipt. Once the observer has a signed copy of the report, he or she must submit it to the Academic Director for inclusion in the instructor's personnel file.

OBSERVER CREDENTIALS

Online Observations must be completed by SPS full-time faculty, Academic Directors, or Associate Deans who have taught online. Other administrators may not serve as observers. Adjunct faculty may serve as observers if they are approved by the Academic Director or the Associate Dean. All observers must complete the training program sponsored by the Center for Academic Excellence and Support (CAES) before they are eligible to conduct observations.

SCHEDULE OF OBSERVATIONS FOR NEW FACULTY

All new SPS adjunct and full-time faculty must be observed during the first semester that they teach and again in the second semester that they teach. If possible, observations should take place in different courses. After the two initial observations, the following schedule applies:

- Adjunct faculty must be observed once every five semesters that they teach, including summer sessions, until a minimum of four observations have been completed.
- Full-time faculty must be observed every two years until a minimum of four observations have been completed.

It is important to note that this schedule reflects the minimum expectations. Associate Deans and Academic Directors of each division, department, or program may elect to conduct evaluations for new or continuing faculty more often. Additionally, the schedule could change based on a variety of circumstances, such as, but not limited to the following:

- Additional observations may need to be completed if an adjunct or full-time faculty member plans to apply for promotion. A requirement of promotion is the submission of two class observations completed over the past three years.
- Additional observations may need to be completed if an improvement plan has been executed

Once a full-time faculty member has been formally observed at least four times, he or she is required to ask another SPS or NYU faculty member who has been teaching at least three years to attend a class for a peer observation. This request must be made at least once every three years. The observation is less formal, serves as a refresher for the instructor, and is meant to promote interactive discourse about teaching effectiveness.

SPS TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS CRITERIA

CLASS MANAGEMENT	CONTENT MASTERY, RELEVANCE & DELIVERY	COMMUNICATION SKILLS	STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS	USE OF LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS)	USE OF THE MEETING TOOL
Class started on time	Class Content Reflected Topic(s) on Syllabus	Provided Timely Constructive Feedback	Student Engagement was Purposeful	Easy to Read & Presentable	Use of the LMS features was appropriate	Use of the Meeting tool features was appropriate (hand raise, breakout sessions, polls, sharing of screen, etc.)
Course materials ready	Reviewed Class Content from a Prior Class as a Segue to this Lesson	Provided Specific Positive Feedback	Engagement Reinforced Learning Outcomes	Matched the Learning Outcomes	Navigation was clear to students	Instructor taught from a quiet, distraction-free area.
Appropriate Amount of Time per Topic/Activity	Content Was Covered Adequately	Response to Questions were Positive and Appropriate	Used Strategies for Inclusion of All Students	Updated	All communication was filtered through the LMS (Exclusive to Asynchronous)	
Good Sequencing of Content	Effective Method(s) of Presentation	Demonstrated Multi-Cultural Sensitivity	Peer to peer learning	Creative	All relevant information about the lesson is linked to relevant page/pages	
Technology Set-up Beforehand	Use of Relevant Examples to Enhance Clarity & Interest	Used Acceptable Classroom Language			Unnecessary tabs were made invisible to students	
Kept Class Discussion On-Point	Instructor Expertise Was Evident	Open to Student Opinion			Used strategies to minimize navigation to external pages (For example: videos were embedded)	
Used Other Strategies to Minimize Time Wasted (For Async: are activities – forum topics, assignments, quizzes – linked in the lesson page?)	Presentation targeted different learning styles					

*USE OF LMS & MEETING TOOL N/A or OPTIONAL for In-person Class Observation