

# **PROTOCOL FOR PEER OBSERVATION OF AN ONLINE COURSE**

- The forms to be used for the peer observation of an online course are modeled on those in current usage in the classroom setting.
- The observer and the observee will arrange the date and time for the observation to take place.
- The observee will inform the observer of the learning unit and its location on the website.
- The observee will provide the observer with the objectives for the online learning unit.
- The observation time should approximate the time allocated for a standard classroom observation.

# KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Peer Review of Online Teaching

Kingsborough Community College values excellence in teaching. Teaching quality and effectiveness include a collaborative effort by the individual instructor and the entire faculty. This shared responsibility should be reflected within the process of evaluating teaching through peer review.

Each untenured member of the faculty is evaluated at least once a semester through classroom/online observation by another faculty member of equal or higher rank in his or her department. Observations of tenured faculty are required for all promotions. The observation and evaluation of teaching effectiveness by a peer has two purposes. Article 18 of the CUNY-PSC Collective Bargaining Agreement states:

The evaluation of the professional activities of all employees in a public institution of higher education is essential to the maintenance of academic and professional standards of excellence. The purpose of professional evaluations shall be to encourage the improvement of individual professional performance and to provide a basis for decisions on reappointment, tenure and promotion.... Evaluation of a member of the teaching faculty shall be based on total academic performance, with especial attention to teaching effectiveness...

The observation and evaluation of teaching by one's peers should foster professional growth. While there is no single best way to deliver instruction, the observation and evaluation of classroom/online teaching should reflect practices of good teaching which the department faculty value.

The purposes of the attached form are to provide a systematic basis for online observation and evaluation that is as equitable as possible for all disciplines and styles of teaching, and to create a standardized record that promotes greater reliability among different observers. The form is a combination of checklist, rating sheet and written analysis. By using the form to its fullest capacity, the observer can mentor new instructors, assist colleagues and promote teaching excellence. Personnel and Budget Committee decisions regarding reappointment, promotion or tenure should not be the first time a member of the faculty hears he or she needs to improve teaching effectiveness. Observers have responsibility for providing specific feedback and suggestions via this process each time they observe someone's class.

Furthermore, the observer accesses a colleague's online course site not only to evaluate, but to create a dialogue between peers. The focus of the discussion should be the theories, best practices and ideas about what constitutes excellence in online teaching. It is hoped that both practitioners of the art of teaching benefit from the peer review process.

## The Observation Report

In observing faculty members, we are looking to see ways in which instructors help students achieve the learning objectives of each course. We can usefully think about the teaching performance under several necessarily interrelated headings. We understand that different disciplines will entail different pedagogical emphases, and so we have allowed room for departments to create their own questions under Departmental Priorities. The following questions are meant to serve as guides in observation of faculty members.

1. **Course Site Management.** Is the instructor in command of the website? Are course policies for online learning, attendance and participation clearly posted? Are assignments and due dates presented? Is the online website conducive to learning?
2. **Instructional Coherence.** Is the lesson under observation coherent in itself, with a clear focus which is clearly presented and reinforced by the instructor? Does the instructor provide/elicit enough depth and detail to adequately consider the subject? Is the learning unit part of a coherent learning process? Is the pacing of the learning unit appropriate to the course and to the students? Are topics/activities sequenced logically? What evidence is there that the learning unit fits in with a series of lessons designed to help students achieve the objectives of the course?
3. **Teaching Strategies.** What teaching strategies or premises about teaching does the instructor rely on? How is the subject of the learning unit related to the course objectives? How effectively does the instructor's teaching help students achieve the course objectives? How does the instructor's presentation of material, including discussion, questioning, class and group activities, support learning objectives? Is the teaching of *critical thinking*\* emphasized? Is there good use of examples/explanation to clarify points, including those questioned by students? Are student questions encouraged? Is there opportunity for students to interact so that they may discover, discuss, or apply content points? Are web tools and other course site tools used effectively?  
  
\**Critical Thinking* could include any of the following: challenging students to understand complex ideas, analyze, compare/contrast, evaluate arguments carefully considering a variety of perspectives, draw conclusions, synthesize.
4. **Subject Mastery.** Does the instructor demonstrate mastery of the subject matter and understanding of the learning situation (including a sense of the students themselves) in which the subject matter is presented? Is the subject matter and level of analysis being asked of the students of a degree of difficulty suitable to the course? Is the material presented relevant to the purpose of the course?
5. **Instructor and Students Attitudes and Characteristics.** Are interactions between the instructor and students respectful, positive, and educationally productive? Is it clear that both instructor and students are prepared for the class? What evidence is there of interest, enthusiasm, and engagement in online activities on the side of the instructor and of the students? Does the instructor motivate students and encourage student learning in appropriate ways? Does the instructor respond appropriately to student behaviors and concerns?
6. **Departmental Priorities.** In what ways does the online course support the specific educational priorities of a given department? Additional Departmental Observation Elements (if needed) will be determined annually by each departmental P&B.)

KINGSBOROUGH COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
of  
The City University of New York

OBSERVATION REPORT of ONLINE INSTRUCTION

INSTRUCTOR \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTMENT \_\_\_\_\_ SUBJECT \_\_\_\_\_

OBSERVER \_\_\_\_\_ DATE OF OBS. \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_ Time Obs. Began \_\_\_\_\_ Purpose: Reappointment [ ] Year \_\_\_\_\_

Section \_\_\_\_\_ Promotion [ ]

Time Obs. Ended \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

What is the topic of this learning unit? \_\_\_\_\_

What are the objectives of this learning unit? (Must be obtained from instructor prior to observation)

Were the objectives of the learning unit communicated to the students? \_\_\_\_\_

Were the objectives of the learning unit met? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

What evidence was there that the instructor did or did not achieve these objectives? \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Summary of learning unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Consider each teaching element below and evaluate the teaching skills of the instructor by placing a check mark under the term best describing your evaluation of the instructor's actions. Add comments to illustrate your evaluation. Provide at least a summary evaluation in each category, and evaluations and comments on individual points where you feel you have observed enough to make them. (N.B. "Needs Improvement", "Effective" and "Highly Effective" are to be considered satisfactory evaluations. "Not Applicable" shall not be interpreted as a negative evaluation.)

<b>Course Site Management</b>	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Not Applicable	Comments
The instructor:						
1. Provided a banner and a welcome announcement for the students.						
2. Posted the course policies for online learning in the information area.						
3. Posted the attendance and participation policies in the information area.						
4. Provided due dates and assignments in the learning unit that are clear.						
5. Posted a policy on communication during a service outage.						
6. Clearly communicated netiquette rules; the tone and atmosphere of discussions are conducive to learning.						
7. Provided contact and availability to the students.						

### Summary

<b>Instructional Coherence</b>	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Not Applicable	Comments
The instructor:						
8. Communicated the objectives of the learning unit.						
9. Introduced the lesson (overview or focusing activity).						
10. Presented topics or activities that are appropriate for the learning unit.						
11. Sequenced the topics or activities logically with continuity between activities in the learning unit.						
12. Related the lesson to other learning units in the course.						

### Summary

<b>Teaching Strategies Used</b>  The instructor:	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Not Applicable	Comments
13. Presented or explained content clearly.						
14. Used examples to clarify points.						
15. Varied explanations in response to student questions or need for clarification.						
16. Fostered critical thinking.						
17. Highlighted important lesson goals in activities.						
18. Makes use of Web 2.0 tools or other course site features including podcasts and multimedia to support learning and to engage the students.						
19. Encouraged student participation/questions.						
20. Asked questions to assess student understanding.						
21. Provided opportunities for students to interact together to discover/discuss or practice content points.						

**Summary**

<b>Subject Mastery</b>  The instructor:	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Not Applicable	Comments
22. Presented content at a level appropriate for the students.						
23. Presented materials relevant to the purpose of the course.						
24. Demonstrated command of the subject matter.						

**Summary**

<b>Instructor and Student Attitudes and Characteristics</b>  The instructor:	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Not Applicable	Comments
25. Instilled appreciation for the subject.						
26. Showed respect for student questions and responses.						
27. Presented information or guided discussions with enthusiasm and interest.						
28. Responded appropriately to student behavior and use of the course website.						

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<b>Instructor and Student Attitudes and Characteristics (continued)</b> The instructor maintained an environment where the students:	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Not Applicable	Comments
29. Showed evidence of preparation.						
30. Had a positive rapport with the instructor based on posts to the website.						

**Summary**

<b>Additional Departmental Observation Elements (if needed)</b> <b>To be determined annually by the departmental P&amp; B.</b>	Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective	Not Applicable	Comments

**Summary**

**Evaluation of Online Lesson:**

Comments:

Specific Recommendations for Improvement:

Additional Comments:

**Overall Evaluation of Online Lesson:**

Unsatisfactory [ ]

Satisfactory [ ]

Signature of Observer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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I understand that my signature means only that I have read this 6-page observation report:

Faculty Member's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_