Classroom Teaching Peer Observation Protocol

Instructor _____

The Center for Teaching Excellence's **Classroom Teaching Observation Checklist** provides performance descriptions for four levels of classroom instructional practices. Tiers 1, 2, and 3 include a progression of recommended teaching practices. The substandard tier includes items that are contrary to best practices and/or USC policies.

The checklist can be used for two purposes. It can be used as a developmental tool to provide instructors formative feedback to enhance their teaching, by showing progression over multiple observations. It can also be used as an evaluative tool to document evidence of teaching performance for promotion, tenure, or continuing appointment.

Not Included in the Classroom Teaching Peer Observation Protocol

- Evaluation of course design, which should be addressed using a separate **Course Syllabus Review Checklist**.

- Aspects of teaching that cannot be observed.

- Best practices that are specific to certain fields, class types (e.g., labs, studios, clinics), or instructional styles.

Pre-Observation Conditions

- The protocol requires that Observer and Instructor have met prior to the observation and discussed class format and purpose and determine what should be accomplished by the scheduled visit.

- Observer and Instructor must meet for a debrief after the observation.

Observer

- Is familiar with the course learning objectives listed in the syllabus.

- Understands the content of the course well enough to evaluate effectiveness of instruction in that topic.

- Has been trained by CTE staff or CTE Faculty Mentor to use the Protocol.

Observation Items

- Are observable actions and behaviors of the instructor (observable during a single visited class session), not the behaviors of students.

- Describe practices that can be implemented within a wide variety of teaching models, both traditional and innovative.

- Reflect actions and behaviors that should be observable in *nearly* all classes, regardless of level, field, or student population. Some items may not be applicable to certain educational contexts, which should be noted in the comments sections.

- Are rated in such a way that achieving mastery in one level implies mastery of the previous level(s), as well.

Instructor: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Course Observed: _____

Observer Name, Department: _____

DIMENSION	SUBSTANDARD	TIER 1	TIER 2	TIER 3
	Performing Below Minimum Teaching Expectations	Performing at Minimum Teaching Expectations	Performing at Proficient Level of Teaching Expectations	Performing at Excellent Level of Teaching Expectations
CLASS ORGANIZATION				
Instructional plan	☐ Established class session plan altered without prior notification to students.	☐ Clear signs of planning and organization that follows a logical flow.	☐ Includes instruction and formative assessment to assess student learning.	☐ Includes instruction, formative assessment, and reflection components.
Communication of clear learning goals for the class session	☐ Learning goals for class or lesson not communicated. ☐ Communicates inappropriate or unrealistic learning goals for the class session or lesson activity.	☐ Clearly identifies realistic learning goals for class session.	☐ Clearly connects learning goals for the class session to course learning outcomes.	☐ Clearly identifies learning goals for each activity and connects them to course learning outcomes.
Time management	☐ Room and/or technology issues occur during class that could have been addressed before the start of class.	☐ Class starts and ends on time. ☐ Planned sections of the class session are well-timed. ☐ Little or no time spent on non-instructional activities.	☐ Instructor incorporates educational technology for learning activities outside of class to support effective use of in-class time.	☐ Instructor maximizes in-class time, using active learning or applications rather than passive learning.
Comments				
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT				
Classroom climate	☐ Uses discriminatory, dismissive, or other abusive language. ☐ Minimizes students' struggle with material. ☐ Discourages student input. ☐ Ignores disruptive student behaviors.	☐ Language used is responsive to students' anxieties. ☐ Encourages participation. ☐ Treats all students equitably and respectfully. ☐ Responsive to students' different educational backgrounds, learning needs.	☐ Has established classroom norms that foster a positive and inclusive environment. ☐ Encourages interaction between students. ☐ Exhibits an approachable and accessible demeanor. ☐ Responds effectively to issues or problems raised in class.	☐ Uses practices that increase students' motivation and foster a growth mindset.

Presentation substance	☐ Does not use, or uses inappropriate, visual support for presentation and/or examples/illustrations.	☐ Provides visuals, uses concrete examples to clarify content. ☐ Presentation format is easy to see/hear and understand.	☐ Cites sources for content discussed.	☐ Follows accessibility best practices by verbally describing and/or captioning any images used in presentation.
Presentation form	☐ Uses inappropriate or offensive gestures and/or speech. ☐ Displays a negative attitude in tone and/or content.	☐ Volume, pace, and diction allow observer to follow the class session. ☐ Faces students when speaking.	☐ Incorporates appropriate eye contact, effective non-verbal communication. ☐ Avoids distracting speech patterns or mannerisms.	☐ Engaging, responsive, and constructive in both tone and content of their speech. ☐ Models discipline's professional behaviors and attitude.
Comments:				

INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT

Knowledge of subject	☐ Does not appear to understand course content.	☐ Factual statements are consistent with current knowledge in the field. ☐ Correctly answers questions about course-level content.	☐ Answers questions clearly, confidently, and simply. ☐ Demonstrates mastery of content and subject knowledge and application.	☐ Ties current content to topics or knowledge from the profession and/or more advanced courses.
Discipline-specific language	☐ Does not use, or incorrectly uses, discipline-specific and/or academic language.	☐ Uses discipline-specific and academic language.	☐ Explains use of discipline-specific terms.	☐ Facilitates the use of discipline-specific language by students.
Contextual relevance and transferability	☐ Teaches content devoid of real-world scenarios and/or examples. ☐ Assumes unrealistic skill level of students in the class.	☐ Provides real-world applications of class content. ☐ Explicitly builds on prior student knowledge. ☐ Effectively communicates ideas and information to students.	☐ Has students provide real-world examples of class content or apply content to real-world scenarios.	☐ Where appropriate, uses examples where discipline converges with other disciplines in addressing challenges, global issues on a local, national, or global level.
Comments:				

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT				
Appropriate content or level	☐ Class content too easy/difficult for student knowledge level. ☐ Instructor does not encourage higher-order thinking.	☐ Class content appropriately challenges students. ☐ Class content promotes mastery of learning outcomes.	☐ Instructor engages students in higher-order thinking skills during class.	☐ Instructor spends majority of class time leading students in higher-order thinking activities.
Active learning	☐ Uses no active-learning exercises. ☐ Has unrealistic expectations for active-learning exercises. ☐ Uses inappropriate or offensive active-learning exercises. ☐ Uses active-learning exercises that are not accessible to everyone in the class.	☐ Class session contains at least one active-learning exercise to apply course content. ☐ Instructor monitors and manages active-learning exercises.	☐ Uses active-learning exercises after no more than 30 minutes of lecture. ☐ Ensures students are on-task, responsive to student engagement and adjusts strategy accordingly. ☐ Facilitates student-led explanations / discussions.	☐ Uses active-learning exercises after no more than 15 minutes of lecture. ☐ Where appropriate, instructor leverages student use of electronic technology to facilitate active learning.
Formative assessment/feedback	☐ Violates FERPA by publicly sharing student grades. ☐ Provides non-constructive and/or discouraging feedback. ☐ Compares student work to an ambiguous, unrealistic standard.	☐ Provides students constructive and encouraging feedback on how to improve their comprehension or performance in class.	☐ Provides information to students about their performance on class activities compared to a pre-established standard.	☐ Leads students in structured reflection on class learning activities.
Comments:				

CONTEXT Record pertinent characteristics of the course, student population, and physical environment. (Examples: enrollment, student demographics, classroom type (stadium, small room, etc.), class meeting time, and general education status.)	Context:

Additional Comments – include observed strengths of the instructor and any suggestions for improvement (use back of page and attach additional sheet as necessary):

I affirm that the class observation and this review and comments were done by myself as an objective observer.

_____   _____

Signature of Observer   **Date**