

**Loyola Marymount University  
Bellarmine College of Liberal Arts**

**Classroom Observation Guidelines**

The primary goal of the classroom observation is **to help tenure-track faculty hone their skills in the art of teaching.** Although the written feedback will also help departments develop clear and fair standards by which to evaluate colleagues, the observation experience should be supportive, encouraging, and constructive in tone and spirit, with every effort made to be fair and even handed in offering feedback.

**A) Recommended Steps in the Classroom Observation Process**

1. The instructor will provide a syllabus to the observer and note several calendar dates on which he/she would find feedback most beneficial. Note: Mentors may observe a class, but should not provide written formal feedback as other observers do.
2. Both faculty (instructor and observer) will discuss, ahead of time (i.e., through face-to-face meeting, e-mail, phone conversation, etc.), the syllabus, what the goals are for the class meeting to be covered, how the class meeting fits into broader course goals, and teaching strategies favored by the faculty for addressing his/her goals. In this way, the observer will have a framework and context for understanding the class that she/he will observe.
3. During the class observation, the observer should be as unobtrusive as possible (i.e., sit in the back, don't participate in the class discussion, don't interact with the professor during class) and should stay for the entire length of the class (if, for some reason this is not possible, the observer should explicitly note in his/her letter, the time interval that he/she was present in class and note that she/he was not present the entire time). If the observer has any questions about what was observed, she/he has the option of asking a few clarifying questions after the class. Both faculty should reserve about 10 minutes after class, in case of questions.
4. A follow up meeting should be scheduled in which the two parties can discuss the class observation and, if possible, the letter itself (the observer should make every effort to have the letter written by the time of the meeting).
5. The letter should be signed by both faculty, signifying that they met to discuss the letter (signatures do NOT signify complete agreement between faculty regarding the content of the letter) and submitted to the chair of the department.

## **B) Observation Elements**

The classroom observation, and your subsequent letter, should address the following three elements:

**Alignment:** This element addresses the *context* of the class session observed: (1) the goals of the class session and the teaching strategies used to address these goals, and (2) how the particular class observed reflects the broader goals and learning outcomes of the course.

**Teaching Content:** This element addresses the *substance* of what is being taught during the session. It could also address student learning outcomes--for instance, with what tools is the instructor equipping students, unique to his/her course/class/syllabus?

**Teaching Process:** This element addresses the *manner* in which the instructor facilitates student learning. What distinguishes the pedagogy of this instructor? In what ways do they provide innovative, imaginative approaches to teaching the material?

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**Classroom Observation Worksheet**

Instructor: \_\_\_\_\_ Course: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of students present: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

1. (Alignment) Briefly provide a context for the class session observed.

2. Description of class session (i.e., what took place during the class?)



## Classroom Observation Appendix

The following points represent *sample* areas that may be addressed as part of the three classroom observation elements: alignment, teaching content, and teaching process. These points are NOT mandatory elements of the observation process, but may provide ideas for areas that may be relevant for the class and instructor being observed.

### **Alignment: Sample areas that may be addressed**

- Material presented during the session addressed articulated student outcomes
- Material presented during the session addressed articulated course objectives
- Presentation of material reflected instructor's articulated teaching philosophy

### **Teaching Content: Sample areas that may be addressed**

- Provided a context for understanding the content of the day's material
- Demonstrated appropriate mastery of subject matter
- Responses to student input and/or inquiry reflected adequate knowledge and integration of course content
- Encouraged critical thinking and analysis
- Made appropriate links between theory and application/practice
- Pacing of session reflected adequate attention to volume of material to be presented during the session
- Presentation of material appropriately reflected the relative weight and/or import of material per course expectations

### **Teaching Process: Sample areas that may be addressed**

- Provided adequate guidelines and/or other prompts/stimulation for group discussion
- Facilitated student involvement in group discussion (e.g., small and large group)
- Provided adequate instruction/direction for class exercise(s) and/or other activity
- Facilitated group participation/involvement in class exercise(s) and/or other activity
- Responded to student input and/or inquiry with appropriate level of respect, empowerment, and/or challenge
- Responded to extraneous and/or disruptive student input and/or inquiry with appropriate level of authority and redirection
- Pacing of session reflected adequate attention to group dynamics (e.g. indicators of understanding, confusion, boredom)
- Appeared to know students by name