

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION¹

OVERALL GUIDELINES (WHETHER SUMMATIVE OR FORMATIVE EVALUATION):

- 1) Cannot assume that peer reviewers are skilled classroom observers; need to train observers
- 2) Single classroom observation by one rater is not reliable indicator of teaching quality; if possible use multiple raters and multiple observations
 - especially to establish reliability for summative evaluation
- 3) Observation should be over a substantial amount of time - at least one hour
- 4) Pre-observation information necessary to provide contextual information about the course, instructor, and students.
- 5) Have a planned focused approach
- 6) Observer as unobtrusive as possible
- 7) Observer should complete notes, forms, reports while information is fresh

ISSUES FOR SUMMATIVE EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM TEACHING:

- 1) assure reliability and consistency of the observation
 - guidelines should be agreed upon in department and be followed consistently
 - how observer should be chosen
 - how many observations should occur
 - how long observations last
 - what approach is used to gather and report data
- 2) set of criteria that department determines to be characteristic of good classroom teaching should be developed and used to focus classroom observations
- 3) approach used should result in information that is representative of the instructor's overall teaching and reported in a format that enables it to be compared with information from other instructors
- 4) report should provide information on the process used to gather feedback and the context in which observations took place

¹ (from Peer Review of Teaching: A Sourcebook by Nancy Van Note Chism of Ohio State University; Anker Publishing Co., Inc., Bolton, MA)

ISSUES FOR FORMATIVE EVALUATION OF CLASSROOM TEACHING

1) Based on general characteristics of effective collaborative peer observation:

- Built on premise of improvement, not remedial
- Faculty participation should be voluntary
- Observer and teacher should trust and respect each other
- Classroom visits should be reciprocal
- Visits by invitation only (no surprise visits)
- Determine in advance what other procedures, if any, will be employed in assessing performance
- Balance of praise and constructive criticism should guide feedback
- Results kept strictly confidential and apart from summative evaluation

2) in preobservation meeting, instructor can ask reviewer to provide feedback on certain aspects

- e.g. concerns from prior feedback (like discussion leading skills)

3) extensive notes taken so a rich descriptive record can help provide concrete details and suggestions

4) personal feedback after the observation is essential

- each person providing reflections
- observer providing constructive feedback with goal of helping the instructor map a strategy for improvement

5) observer available for follow-up observations or conversations as improvement plan is implemented