

Peer Observation Processes
Soules College of Business
The University of Texas at Tyler

Statement of purpose of peer observation process:

The purpose of this policy is to honor the importance of teaching by providing a system for formative feedback designed to strengthen teaching in the College of Business and Technology at the University of Texas at Tyler. The university recognizes the essential contribution of its faculty members to the quality of students' education and learning experiences and supports faculty development in all aspects of instruction. An effective tool for faculty development is formative peer observation of teaching, which involves a constructive and open review of teaching for the sole purpose of fostering improvement.

The goal of the peer observation process is to improve teaching and student learning and should serve as a tool for mentoring. The peer observation process should foster a culture of teaching excellence through collegial dialogue. Thus, the outcome of the faculty peer observation process should be a reflective summary written by the observed faculty member describing any steps taken or changes made towards the enhancement of teaching and improvement of student learning.

A. Frequency of Peer Observations:

For tenure track Assistant Professors, peer observations will be conducted every other year unless an unfavorable review determines the need for additional observations.

Tenured faculty will have a peer observation every three years. If a post-tenure review determines that a tenured faculty member needs to improve in the area of teaching, more frequent peer observations can be scheduled.

Beginning fall 2015 full-time lecturers, senior lecturers, visiting faculty, and clinical faculty would be observed every three years.

The Associate Dean will develop and maintain a rotation schedule for observations.

B. Timeline for peer observation process:

Chairpersons should identify and notify each faculty member who will be observed by a peer at least two weeks prior to the beginning of that semester. The chairperson and faculty member should determine in which course the observation will occur and in which semester. A recommended timeline is provided below.

<i>Timeline</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Responsible Party</i>
At least two weeks* prior to first day of the semester.	Provide Faculty Member with department guidelines.	Department chair or unit head or equivalent
No later than the third week of the semester.	Provide the names of three acceptable Observers to chair.	Faculty Member
No later than fourth week of semester.	Assign Peer Observer	Department chair
No later than fifth week of semester.	Meet to discuss teaching materials and set date(s) for observation.	Faculty Member and Peer Observer.
No later than twelfth week of semester.	Peer observation(s)	Peer Observer
Within one week of observation.	Post-observation meeting	Faculty Member and Peer Observer
No later than last day of class.	Peer Observation Report provided to chair.	Faculty Member

* In the event a faculty member is hired within one month of the beginning of a semester, their observation would be moved to the next semester to allow reasonable notification.

Section A of the Peer Observation Report will be provided to the department chair or unit head or equivalent (or to the dean in the event the faculty member being observed is the department chair) no later than the last day of classes for the semester in which the observation takes place. The department chair, unit head, or equivalent or dean will file the report with the Faculty Member's record.

By October 1 each year, the unit responsible for peer observation of teaching will submit to the Provost's office a list of faculty who were observed during the prior academic year.

C. Process for identifying peer observers

All full-time faculty in the College of Business and Technology may serve as Peer Observers. Faculty members will generally conduct no more than two peer observations in any academic year.

D. Description of how detailed guidance and opportunity for training will be provided to observers:

Before peer observations are conducted peer observers shall be provided detailed guidance and opportunities for training on effective observation procedures using observation instruments, pre- and post- observation conferencing, and on the preparation of summary statements based on observations.

E. Assurance that observed faculty members will have a say in the selection of peer observers

Faculty members will submit three peer observers from a list of approved observers. The observer may come from any department within the College of Business and Technology, but must be at least at the same rank as the instructor.

F. Number of visits per observation

The number of observations is at the discretion of the faculty member and peer observer. A minimum of one visit is required.

G. Assurance that class visits will occur only after prior notification and discussion with the faculty member being observed:

Observations will be conducted in accordance with the table in section B. of this document.

H. In classes consisting of lecture and lab will both lecture and lab be observed?

In classes consisting of lecture and lab the number of observations is at the discretion of the faculty member and peer observer.

I. Description of content of peer observation report: (Refer to Appendix A for required content.)

- i. Number and title of course observed
 - ii. Date of report
 - iii. Name and signature of observer
 - iv. Date of pre-observation meeting between observer and instructor, at which the syllabus and assignments are reviewed, special instructor concerns are addressed, and a mutually agreed class and date are specified
 - v. Date of classroom or online observation
 - vi. An instrument that reflects methods by which instructor engages students in active learning
 - vii. Date of post-observation meeting of observer with instructor, at which the observation was discussed
 - viii. Instructor's signature affirming that the discussions took place
- and Sections B and C.

J. Attach observation instrument(s) that will be used by the unit.

Peer observation instrument is in Appendix B below.

Description of requirements for pre- and post-observation meetings.

The purpose of the pre-observation meeting between the peer observer and instructor is to help the observer understand the context of the classroom, receive and review a copy of the syllabus and selected instructional materials, address special instructor concerns, and mutually agree on a class and date for the observation. The observation instrument will be reviewed and discussed as part of the pre-observation conference. For online courses the aforementioned information can be shared electronically through the use of appropriate technologies.

A post observation conference must take place soon after the observation. During the post-observation session the instructor will receive a Peer Observation Report prepared by the peer observer. The report will include observed strengths and suggested areas for improvement (Section B). Feedback should be constructive, specific, focused, action oriented, clear, honest and positively phrased. The instructor will prepare a summary statement on how he/she will use suggestions from the observation (Section C).

K. Statement regarding the confidential nature of the peer observation report and pre-and post-observation meetings.

The Peer Observation Report is considered “collegial communication” between observer and instructor. Section B of the Observation Report is considered to be confidential and will not be submitted to the department by the observer. It may be given to the department by the instructor.

Approved by:

Dean: _____ **Date:** _____

Provost: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix A Peer Observation Report Requirements

Section A

(This section must be included in T&P package)

Faculty Member: _____ Date: _____

Course: _____

Observer: _____

Date of Pre-Observation Meeting: _____

Date of Observation: _____

Date of Post-Observation Meeting: _____

Peer Observer's Signature

Instructor's Signature Affirming the Discussions Occurred

Section B

(Written report of what was observed and given to faculty member by peer observer)

Section C

(Narrative prepared by observed faculty member describing what was learned from the observation)

Appendix B Peer Observation instrument

Peer Observation Checklist

Faculty member being observed _____ Course _____

Observer _____ Date _____

	Observed (check if yes)	Comments
Faculty colleague clearly communicates the purpose of class session and instructional activities.		
Faculty colleague uses concrete examples and illustrations that clarify the material.		
Faculty colleague uses a variety of activities to ensure all students are engaged.		
Faculty colleague challenges students to think analytically.		
Faculty colleague uses activities in class to determine whether students understand course material.		
Faculty colleague fosters student-to student interaction.		
Faculty colleague links new material to previously learned concepts.		
Faculty colleague uses visuals and handouts where appropriate to accompany verbal presentation.		
Faculty colleague requires students to be active (e.g., completing a task, applying concepts, or engaging in discussion instead of passively listening).		
Students are comfortable asking questions.		
Students actively participate in class activities and discussion.		

Include comments on next page

Additional comments/observations:

Major strengths demonstrated by faculty colleague in this peer observation:

Suggested areas for faculty colleague's improvement based upon this peer observation:

Source: www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning/tir/peer_obs/, Adapted for The University of Texas at Tyler Soules College of Business

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