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**Graduate School**

**GUIDELINES FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS**

The formal observation of teachers in their classrooms will follow a supervision cycle. All classroom observations—whether peer to peer, or administrator to faculty—will follow the same procedure. The purpose of the observation is to assist the person being observed to reflect upon his or her practice for improvement. The ultimate goal is an increase of student learning.

The supervision cycle consists of three phases:

**Phase 1: Pre-observation conference**

*The purpose of the pre-observation conference is to find out what the faculty wants the observer to observe. The instrument to be used is the Classroom Observation Form. The teacher should inform the observer to focus on perhaps 2-4 different items on the Classroom Observation Form. The observer may collect other data for the general purpose of setting the context for the observation. Once the content of the observation has been agreed upon, mostly from the point of view of the teacher (the peer or administrator may suggest other items), the second phase may be scheduled.*

**Phase 2: The observation**

*Phase 2 is the actual observation. An observation should be scheduled for periods of 30 minutes or more. Rarely is it productive to spend less time than that; an hour or more is even better. During this time, the observer gathers data on the agreed-upon items. The purpose is to get as accurate and complete a set of data on the agreed-upon items as is possible during the time allocated. The observation is not meant as an intervention but as a naturalistic observation. In other words, as little disruption to the regular routine as possible is the goal.*

**Phase 3: Post-observation conference**

*After the observation has been completed, it is time for Phase 3. The post-observation conference should be scheduled as soon after the observation as is possible. The presentation of the data should look more like a nondirective counseling session than an intervention. It is best not to use many, if any, evaluative words in your report to the teacher. It is ordinarily best to start with asking the teacher how they think they did on the agreed-upon observation items. Getting the teacher to reflect upon his or her practice is a primary goal. Having someone who is trained in the same process to provide data so that a more complete and accurate reflection happens is very valuable in this process. An important part of the post-observation conference is deciding upon what to work on to improve the teaching/learning process in the classroom. The lead for this should be the teacher observed. Because of the data provided to both the teacher and the observer because of the training received, the teacher should be able to suggest what needs to be worked to improve practice. Of course, the observer may also make suggestions, but it is important not to be too directive until a great deal of trust is earned. Without earned trust, the immediate attitude is defensiveness.*

Two or more observations should be scheduled using the same cycle. Rarely is it helpful to observe just one time. In general, the more observations in the cycle the more likely the teaching learning act will be improved.

***A minimum of two observations per teacher per year should be scheduled. Each teacher should observe a minimum of two different colleagues.***

*Originally developed by William H. Green*

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