

Asynchronous Online Course Observation Guidelines

Overview

An observation is a spot check of one small portion of a course by a peer or an administrator, to get a snapshot of the student experience and teaching method used during one lesson that is selected by the instructor. In an online course, this might be equivalent to one lesson, or a portion of material the instructor has provided in Canvas. ***If a course has synchronous meetings, do not use this process—observe a synchronous meeting instead.***

	Course Observation	Course Review
Done by	Peer or administrator	Trained online quality reviewer
Context	Portion of course – lesson, discussion group, course section (getting started module), etc.	Entire course – navigation, UDL, accessibility standards, assessment alignment, engagement throughout entire course

A course observer does not typically have access to an entire course online, while a course reviewer does.

Conducting an online course *observation in an asynchronous course*

The instructor of the course has control of the observer’s access in both online and classroom observations. The observer does not have unlimited access to the course; rather, the instructor shares with the observer a selected lesson or section agreed upon for observation. This might entail scheduling a time when the instructor and the observer can view the course simultaneously, either online through webinar with screen sharing or in person. It could also mean the instructor pulls materials from Canvas to allow an observer to review them. Optionally, an observer could ask to use the ‘Remote Access’ feature in Zoom to take control of the observation so they can navigate the Canvas site.

Instructions: Before the observation.

1. Schedule time with the instructor being observed. Observers should budget approximately one hour for the observation, and it is advisable to plan for 15 extra minutes for any technical issues (log in, get the webinar platform to work, share the instructor’s screen, etc.).
2. Select an online webinar platform you’re both comfortable using that allows for screen sharing (such as Zoom, Teams, Skype or WebEx, etc.).
3. Ask the instructor to select, ahead of time, the lesson, course section, discussion group, etc., they would like to have observed.
4. Alert the instructor that you will also be looking at the way students navigate to the lesson (home page, modules—however students are expected to access the lesson and materials required for that lesson), just as you would see the way students interact with the physical classroom during a class observation.
5. Obtain a copy of the instructor’s syllabus to review ahead of time.
6. If the instructor is not familiar with these observation guidelines, send them a copy.

Instructions: During the observation.

The instructor could display and walk through materials related to the lesson being observed or optionally, the observer can use 'Remote Access' control in Zoom with permission from the instructor. Examples of elements that might be observed are:

- a. Home page and/or navigation. Things to look for might include accessibility, instructor contact information, ease of navigation, etc.
- b. Preparatory materials for the lesson (presentations, readings, etc.). Things to look for might include applicability of preparatory materials to lesson objectives and/or related assessments.
- c. One assessment for the lesson (assignment, quiz, writing, project, etc.). Things to look for might include alignment of the assessment with course objectives, clarity of assignment instructions, etc.

Instructions: After the observation.

1. Thank the course instructor for their willingness to open their course and share the lesson with you. Within a week of the observation, share your preliminary findings with the instructor in a constructive way and solicit their input if there are any questions.
2. Add your summary to form U.

The online observation guidelines above were reviewed on 15 February 2022 by the Bellevue College Labor Management Committee and edits to that document were agreed upon by all parties on 23 February 2022.

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