

General Guidelines for Peer Observation of *Online* Teaching (Spring 2025)

The goal of the peer observation process is continually to assess ourselves as a community of teachers to grow and improve in our pedagogical practices to benefit our students. Because online instruction carries particular pedagogical demands, this form is tailored to fit the needs of those teaching in fully online and hybrid modalities.

There are four parts to the observation process: (1) make an Observation Plan; (2) prepare the observation logistics; (3) conduct the observation; and (4) observer and candidate discuss the observation, all of which is documented.

Below are general guidelines that explain logistics for conducting observations in an online or hybrid course, along with an Observation Plan and feedback report template. (This template may be particularly appropriate for asynchronous online courses/modules.) Departments may have additional guidance as well.

(1) Make an Observation Plan:

Observer contacts the candidate (i.e., individual being observed) to make an observation plan, taking into account the course and teaching modality to be observed (see Observation Plan, pg. 3). This is an important step because aspects of the observation process differ, depending on how the course is observed, as detailed below.

(2) Prepare observation logistics:

For the Candidate (i.e., individual being observed)

Live, in-person class observation (for a full class period):

- If a course will be observed in person in a classroom (whether the whole course is in-person or hybrid), ensure the observer knows where and when the class meets.
- It will be helpful to provide the observer with the syllabus and learning objectives for the selected class along with any contextual information you deem relevant. Include specific requests for feedback/advice, if desired.

Online, synchronous, virtual class observation (for a full class period):

- If a class is being observed synchronously and virtually online, ensure the observer has the relevant link to Zoom to sign on and observe the session.
- It will be helpful to provide the observer with the syllabus and learning objectives for the selected class along with any contextual information you deem relevant. Include specific requests for feedback/advice, if desired.

Online, asynchronous or online, hybrid (face-to-face and online) or fully online mixed (synchronous and asynchronous), by candidate request, with chair approval; see Observation Plan) module via Brightspace: If the observation is for an online course module in Brightspace, please follow these steps:

- Email a completed [Brightspace Enrollment Request Form](#) to apfaculty@jjay.cuny.edu to request that your observer be added to the class being observed. (Observer and candidate EMPLIDs are requested on the form, which should be submitted from your jjay email address.)

- From the time the observer is added to Brightspace, observations must be completed within 48 hours, per PSC guidelines. (Observe specific timing and access constraints in chart on Observation Plan page.)
- Provide the observer with the learning objectives for the selected online learning module along with contextual information you deem relevant. Include specific requests for feedback/advice, if desired.
- Please note that the observer will be enrolled ONLY in a *student* role (not instructor), per PSC guidelines (see chart on Observation Plan page). This means that any materials that are no longer visible to students will not be visible to the observer. Observers are automatically removed after 48 hours.
- When the observation is complete, the completed observation forms (observation report template and post-observation memo) should be submitted to your department.

Online (asynchronous or hybrid module) via other platforms: If the observation is for an online course that is managed through some other online platform. Note: D2L Brightspace is our CUNY-supported LMS.

- Follow the same observation process as detailed for Brightspace – except that you as instructor would provide and remove observer access yourself at the start and completion of the observation process. You must comply with [CUNY Policy 1.6: Policy for Use of a Learning Management System for Online Classes](#).
- Please note: Student information must be password protected on any teaching platform, according to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) guidelines. Use of Brightspace is strongly recommended.

For the Observer

Live, in-person class or Online, synchronous virtual class observations (for a full class period):

- If you are observing a class in person, in a classroom, or if you are observing a virtual, synchronous class, be sure to have the information you need to attend (e.g., classroom location, link to sign on).
- Use the regular Peer “Observation of Teaching Form” to document your observation. ([Forms available HERE.](#))

Online (asynchronous, hybrid, or fully online mixed) module via Brightspace: If the observation is for an online course in Brightspace, please follow these steps:

- The candidate will arrange for you to be enrolled in Brightspace.
- Your EMPLID will be required to facilitate your Brightspace access as a *student* only, as per PSC guidelines. In the student role, “hidden” modules or sections are not accessible to the observer.
- Candidates must be given a 7-day notice prior to the start of the observation period. From the time you are added to Brightspace, observations must be completed within 48 hours per PSC guidelines.
- In consultation with the candidate, select an online learning module for evaluation. (Observe timing and access constraints in chart on Observation Plan page, per PSC guidelines.)
- Within the course module selected for review, review a representative range both of student contributions in the form of discussion boards, blogs, wikis, etc., and of instructor’s feedback to student contributions/submissions.
- See the observation report template below as a guide to evaluate the individual unit/module and the online learning environment.
- After 48 hours, access will end automatically.

For all observations: Complete a post-observation discussion with the candidate, document it (link called “[Post-Observation Discussion Form](#)” available [HERE](#)), and submit all signed forms to your department.

Observation Plan

Date: _____ **Semester:** _____

Candidate Name: _____ **Email:** _____

Dept Chair Name: _____ **Department:** _____

Observer Name: _____ **Email:** _____

In accordance with Article 18.2 of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY Agreement, the Candidate named above will be observed by the Observer named above as detailed below.

Course & Section to be Observed: _____

The observation will take place in the format below (check one) – see guidelines chart below:

- a face-to-face classroom setting for an in-person or hybrid class (face-to-face and online; this is default for hybrid; see chart below)
- a virtual (i.e., Zoom) session of a fully online, fully synchronous course or a fully online, mixed course (part synchronous, part asynchronous – see chart below)
- an online learning unit in a fully online asynchronous course or in a hybrid course (see below)

Observation guidelines for courses *with some online element*, per the Collective Bargaining Agreement

Course Type	Period of Observation	BB Role	Other
Fully Online, Fully Synchronous	Only for the scheduled class period, for the full class period.	Student* (if needed)	Do not refer to the conduct of course activities outside of the observation period.
Fully Online Mixed (Synchronous and Asynchronous)	Adhere to Online, Fully Synchronous, unless instructor requests and department chair consents to observation adhering to the parameters of an online, fully asynchronous course.	Student* (if needed)	The instructor must be given a 7-day notice prior to the start of the observation period. The post observation memo should not refer to any course activities that occurred more than seven calendar days before the 48-hour period of access.
Hybrid or Blended, Face-to-Face and Online	Adhere to Face-to-face instructions to observe for a full class period, unless instructor requests and department chair consents to observation adhering to parameters for an online course.	Student* (if needed)	
Fully Online, Fully Asynchronous	No more than a 48-hour period that will commence at a specified time not earlier than seven calendar days after the notice of the teaching observation has been given to the instructor.	Student	

* Only relevant if both parties agree to an observation of a Brightspace section of a synchronous course.

Online Peer Observation of Teaching Report Template

Semester: _____ Course & Section Observed: _____

Candidate Name: _____ Department: _____

Candidate Rank: _____ Date of Observation: _____

Observer: _____

Please present your observations and comments below. Reflect on all aspects of the candidate’s performance in relation to: overall course design and organization, specific module design and organization, as well as your summary and analysis of the online learning environment that has been created. When illustrations will clarify your comments, please illustrate with constructive feedback and suggestions. A balanced assessment of strengths and weaknesses will be most helpful. In your summary comments, please try to estimate whether this candidate’s level of competence is at, above or below average.

<i>Expectations:</i>	<i>Y</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>Notes/Comments/Feedback:</i>
Overall Course Design and Organization				
Course site is easy to navigate and welcoming. Course structure is logical and consistent; information and policies are comprehensive and clearly posted; course materials are complete and easy to locate.				
Opportunities/tools for direct instruction, for student interaction, and for instructor feedback are consistently provided.				
Technological guidance or referral for technological support is consistently available.				
Specific Module Design and Organization				
The learning objectives in the module are clear and measurable.				
Instructions, expectations and reasonably paced deadlines for assignments and student participation are clearly communicated.				
The module is designed to promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and self-directed learning through student collaboration / interaction. Discussion prompts invite a diversity of approaches and complex analysis.				

Direct instruction (through appropriate resources such as lectures, readings, feedback, and multimedia content) supports student achievement of the module's learning objectives.				
Assignments and learning activities are varied in kind and designed to help students fulfill the module's learning objectives.				
Assessment of student work is aligned with the module's learning objectives.				
Instructor remains accessible throughout activities and maintains a motivational presence without dominating student interaction.				
Instructor demonstrates mastery of material covered in module.				
Instructor-student and student-student interactions are professional and collegial.				

Summary Description and Analysis of Observation: (add additional pages if/as needed)

"

Suggestions: (add additional pages if/as needed)

Observer's Signature Date

Chairperson's Signature Date