Virtual Panel on Online Teaching Observations

October 19, 2020

Note: This panel is intended to provide insights into how colleagues across CUNY are approaching online teaching observations based on their unique experiences and campus contexts. Any insights are informative, not prescriptive, and should be shaped to your own unique settings.

Agenda

Today, we are going to talk about several different topics.

Time	Topic
3:00 – 3:05	**Welcome and introductions**
3:05 – 3:30	Shifting the focus to online
3:30 – 3:45	Different approaches to implementation
3:45 – 3:55	Q&A
3:55 – 4:00	Key takeaways

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A few notes:

- Thank you for being here!
- Due to large attendance, you will only see the panelists.
- Lines are muted.
- If you have questions, submit them through the chat feature.

The purpose of this virtual panel is to:

- Help people learn about the parameters spelled out in our shared collective bargaining agreement (e.g., policies and procedures) related to observing faculty teaching online.

- Share a variety of approaches based on the expertise in the group.

- Provide a high-level framework that can be contextualized based on campus, programs, etc.

- Illuminate best practices and cautionary tales.

To do that we are joined by a group of distinguished colleagues.

Jennifer Sparrow
Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, CUNY School of Professional Studies

Carlos Guevara
Director, Educational Technology and Center for Teaching and Learning, Hostos Community College

Judith Cahn
Director, Department of Online Education and Support, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Susan Ko
Associate Director, Faculty Development and Instructional Technology, Office of Online Education, Lehman College

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What are the guidelines?

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.	Student or Guest	Do not refer to the conduct of course activities outside of the observation period.
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 or Guest	The instructor must be given a 7-day notice prior to the start of the observation period.
Fully Online Mixed (Asynchronous and Synchronous)	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 or Guest	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, unless **instructor requests and department chair consents** to observation adhering to parameters for an online course.	Student or Guest	

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Procedures and protocol of observations

- Departmental P&Bs designate their departments' observer panels, the chair does the pairing (or scheduling) of observer and observee.

- Observations must be completed within the first 10 weeks of the semester.

- Pre-Observation communication.

- Limits on what may be observed.

- Goal of collegiality and improvement.

- Post-Observation Conference and Memorandum.

CUNY School of Professional Studies

- Online Observations since 2007.
- Observation Form One (2007) Free Form, open-ended.
- Observation Form Two (2013) Focus on Course Design.
- Observation Form Three (2020) requirements of new contract and focus on Instructor presence & feedback. Observee makes Observer "available" in the course site.

		Satisfactory	Needs Improvement	Not observed	Comments / Suggest Examples
Instructional Materials	Course site is free of typographical, grammatical, and other errors.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Assignments have clear directions and expectations.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Weekly units clearly state tasks/ activities/ assignments/ readings/videos/quizzes and due dates.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here enter text.
Instructor Presence/Pedagogy	Instructor uses announcements to share information or resources, explain concepts, and/or offer feedback.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Welcome/course tour provides introductory overview to the course.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Instructor contact card information is visible and contains the following information: a bio and photo, office hours, and method of contact.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Instructor participates in discussions directly with their own posts and/or indirectly by referencing the discussion (e.g. via discussion board summaries, announcements or via other tools).	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Instructor demonstrates engagement with students at varying academic levels.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Instructor interaction with students encourages different points of view.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Instructor models the tone and quality of interactions for students.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Instructor demonstrates knowledge of course content (e.g. via postings on discussion boards and/or announcements, additions of supplemental or multimedia resources, etc.).	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Instructor connects weekly topic and material to learning goals for the week and course overall.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
Instructor Presence/Pedagogy	Instructor responds to student questions in a timely manner in the designated Q&A or Ask the Professor forum.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.
	Grading criteria is available to students for major assignments.	☐	☐	☐	Click or tap here t enter text.

Hostos Community College

- Established the Peer Observation Improvement Network for Teaching (POINT) in 2011 under CTL to study and recommend enhancements to the peer observation process

- Initial observation form focused on in-person class observations. POINT developed guidelines for observations in the hybrid and asynchronous modalities

- Current form was the result of a study conducted among faculty to identify the pros and cons of the process of peer observation
  - Promotes this process as an opportunity for professional growth for the observer and observee
  - Includes all teaching modalities
  - Approved by de College Senate in Fall 2018

- Resources: https://commons.hostos.cuny.edu/ctl/peer-observation

Example: John Jay College: Guidelines for Peer Observation of Online Teaching (Fall 20)

If you are conducting a peer observation for an online class, these guidelines explain logistics for accessing the course and include a feedback report template. (This template may be particularly appropriate for asynchronous online courses.)

For the Observer:

- Contact your observee to arrange which online class is to be observed. (Observee will arrange for you to be enrolled).

- Once enrolled, review the course to evaluate its general structure and appropriateness as a learning environment. See "Overall Course Design and Organization" in the feedback report template.

- In consultation with your observee, select a specific, completed course unit or module (rather than one in process) for detailed evaluation.

- 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 "Specific Module Design and Organization" in the observation report template as a guide to evaluate the individual unit/module.

Example: John Jay College (cont'd)

For the Observee:

- Contact your observer to arrange which online class is to be observed.

- Email Blackboard@jjay.cuny.edu to have your observer added to the class being observed in the rank of Teaching Assistant.

- Provide the observer with the learning objectives for the selected online learning module along with any contextual information you deem relevant. Include specific requests for feedback/advice, if desired.

- When the complete file has been submitted (pre-observation materials, observation report template, and post-observation memo), email Blackboard@jjay.cuny.edu to ask them to remove the observer from the class.

Observations as part of a larger framework.

- Make known widely accepted promising practices for online instruction.

- Explain in advance what process entails and the criteria to be used in observation.

- Faculty member has chance to discuss with the observer before final write-up.

- Limitation of observation is covers only specific point in time. Faculty dialogue to explain how that point fits into overall instruction

- Dialogue can provide an opportunity, entry point for professional development and targeted improvements in teaching and learning.

- Consider training or preparation for observers to provide more consistency across the college.

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FACULTY OBSERVATION HANDBOOK

Peer observation of teaching enables educators to:

- Connect with their colleagues in collaborative working relationships,

- Reflect and gain insight on their instructional skills, and

- Engage in public discourse about best teaching practices.

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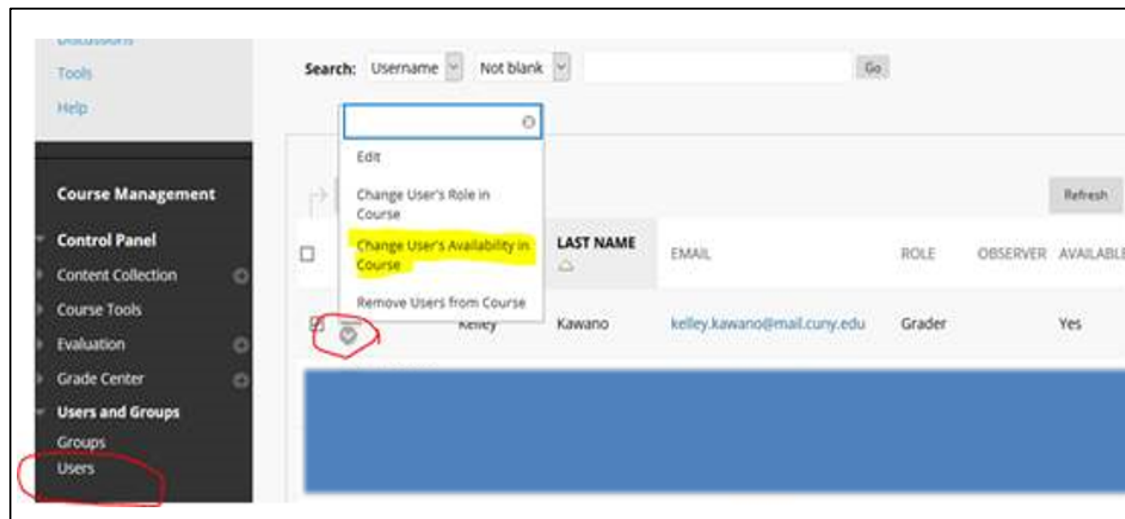
FACULTY OBSERVATION FORM
[to be completed by the observer]

Using the checkboxes and/or the comments section, indicate what was observed during the lesson. The purpose of the checkboxes is to provide a framework for the observation, and thus the amount of checked or unchecked boxes may not correlate to the overall instructor performance during the lesson.

Check if observed			I. Lesson Organization and Presentation
Yes	No	N/A	
○	○	○	The instructor provided a statement of lesson objectives.
○	○	○	The instructor connected the lesson to previous material.
○	○	○	The instructor referenced materials assigned to students in preparation of the lesson.
○	○	○	The lesson was sequential, logical and planned.
○	○	○	The instructor used more than one strategy to address different learning modalities.
○	○	○	The instructor used the board and/or technology to support the lesson.
○	○	○	The instructor's follow-up activities were based on the lesson.
In addition to the above, if the observation was conducted in an asynchronous or in the online part of a hybrid course, consider the following:			
○	○	○	The instructor provided a logical path through the lesson on the course site (e.g. Blackboard).
○	○	○	The instructor provided content directly or through active links for this unit.
○	○	○	If this is a hybrid course, the instructor posted announcements and directions to enable transitions between face-to-face session and online component.
Comments:			

CUNY School of Professional Studies (cont'd)

- Faculty being observed should change the status of the observer to AVAILABLE at the start of the 48-hour period.
- Faculty being observed should change the status of the observer to UNAVAILABLE at the end of the 48-hour period.
- SPS OFDIT will unenroll all observers at the end of the observation period (after November 16th for the Fall 2020 semester).

How does the online environment impact observations?

What does excellence look like in this new context?

Implementation considerations

- Platform-dependent

- Platform limitations

- Synchronous versus asynchronous versus blended

- Comfort with technology

Regardless of approach, consider the key phases of the evaluation.

Pre-Observation	A. Shared expectations. B. Communication. C. Contextualize.

During the Observation	A. Observe time limits. B. Focus on instructor engagement and feedback. C. Learning experience for both sides.

Post-Observation	A. Comment on the lesson or week only. B. Collegial live discussion (not via email). C Adjust Memorandum as needed.

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Questions and Answers

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We want to leave you with a few key takeaways.

The observation process should be:

- an opportunity for growth for the people involved
- iterative and should evolve, as highlighted by the experiences of the panelists.
- simple, and serve as a framework that the observer and observe can shape to their needs and local context.
- collaborative and focus on continuous improvement.
- focused on presence, interaction, dialogue, collegiality, and improvement; and others.

Thank you!