

Peer Classroom Observations

According to the Collective Bargaining Agreement, all members of the teaching faculty who have not yet attained tenure (professorial titles) or the Certificate of Continuous Employment (lecturers), including those appointed as substitutes, must be observed at least once each semester for a full classroom period. One observation must take place during any scheduled class during the first ten weeks of the semester, after the instructor has been given at least 24 hours notice of observation.

Tenured and certificated faculty may also be observed once each semester, but it has been the general practice to observe only those faculty members eligible for promotion. Adjunct (part-time) teaching personnel must be observed until the adjunct has completed ten semesters of service. After that, observations may be held at the request of the department chairperson or the adjunct.

Each department appointments committee designates a panel, the size to be specified by the chairperson, of department observers (which includes members of the appointments committee). The observers prepare written observation reports which are included in the faculty member's personal file for consideration in personnel actions. After the peer observation, a follow-up conference is scheduled by the chairperson to take place within two weeks of receipt of the written observation report. A conference memorandum, also placed in the faculty member's personal file, is prepared to record the discussion of the post-observation conference.

Currently there is no college-wide standard peer observation or a post-conference report form. Rather each department uses its own set of materials, leading to substantial variation in the coverage, depth and quality of peer observations.

The Faculty Observation Process

It is a provision of the PSC/CUNY Agreement that at least once during each academic semester all non-tenured members of the teaching staff shall be observed for a full classroom period within the first ten weeks of the semester. Tenured faculty may also be observed once each semester during the first ten weeks. The Agreement also sets out much of the process for conducting these observations:

1. Each department's Appointments Committee designates a panel of observers and selects an appropriate observer for each faculty person to be observed.
2. The two individuals are notified and asked to arrange a date for the observation (see the Administrative Calendar for the observation deadline).
3. Within one week of the observation, the observer submits a written observation report to the Chairperson for distribution to the Appointments Committee.
4. The Chairperson schedules a post-observation conference for the two faculty members to meet with one another within two weeks after receiving the observation report. To facilitate scheduling this meeting, at the end of the classroom observation period the observed faculty member and the observer select two mutually agreeable times to meet as well as a place to meet. That information is forwarded to the Chairperson by the faculty member conducting the observation. The Chairperson, after choosing one of the times, notifies the individuals of the time as well as indicates the place of the meeting.
5. Following the conference, the observer prepares a report of the discussion in memorandum form.
6. Both the observation report and the post-observation conference memorandum are placed in the observed faculty member's personal file. The observed faculty member may have a copy of both provided that he/she submits a signed receipt.

Model Letter to Faculty Member Being Observed

Dear Professor X:

It is a provision of the PSC/CUNY Agreement that at least once during each academic semester all non-tenured members of the teaching staff shall be observed for a full classroom period. Tenured faculty may be observed once each semester.

The Department's Appointments Committee has selected Professor _____ to conduct your observation this semester. He/she will contact you to arrange an observation visit at a time that is mutually convenient. You will be given at least 24 hours notice. The deadline for conducting the observation is November 6th. Professor _____ will submit a written report of the observation to me within one week. I will then schedule a post-observation conference for the two of you to meet with one another within two weeks of receiving the report. To facilitate scheduling this conference, at the end of the classroom observation period would you and Professor _____ identify two mutually agreeable times to meet as well as a place to meet. Professor _____ will then forward that information to me. I will inform you of the time I've selected and also indicate the place for your meeting. Following the conference, Professor _____ will prepare a record of your discussion in memorandum form and will submit it to me. The observation report and the memorandum of the post-observation conference will be placed in your personal file. You may have a copy of both provided that you submit a signed receipt.

To promote a constructive outcome, in advance of the observation please send Professor _____ a copy of the class syllabus and a one paragraph statement that provides context for the particular session. That paragraph might include a discussion of the topic, or the learning objectives for the period and how they fit into the goals of the course, or relevant activities and assignments that have preceded the session, and/or noteworthy pedagogical strategies to be used.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Chairperson

Model Letter to Faculty Member Conducting the Observation

Dear Professor Y:

It is a provision of the PSC/CUNY Agreement that at least once during each academic semester all non-tenured members of the teaching staff shall be observed for a full classroom period. Tenured faculty may be observed once each semester.

The Department's Appointments Committee has selected you to observe Professor _____ this semester. Please arrange an observation visit with her/him at a time that is mutually convenient. Be sure to allow 24 hours notice. The deadline for conducting the observation is November 6th. Within one week of the observation you must submit a written observation report to me. I will then schedule a post-observation conference for the two of you to meet with one another within two weeks of receiving the report. To facilitate scheduling that conference, at the end of the classroom observation period would you and Professor _____ identify two mutually agreeable times to meet as well as a place to meet and then forward that information to me. I will inform you of the time I've selected and also indicate the place for your meeting. Following the conference you will need to prepare and submit to me a record of your discussion in memorandum form. Both the observation report and the memorandum of the post-observation conference will be placed in the observed faculty member's personal file. He/she will be provided with a copy of both upon submitting a signed receipt.

To promote a constructive outcome, I have asked Professor _____ to send you, in advance of the observation period, a copy of the class syllabus and a one paragraph statement that provides context for the particular session. That paragraph might include a discussion of the topic, or the learning objectives for the period and how they fit into the goals of the course, or relevant activities and assignments that have preceded the session, and/or noteworthy pedagogical strategies to be used.

Thank you for your time and effort in carrying out this observation. Your participation in this process will contribute to enriching teaching and learning at Brooklyn College.

Sincerely,

Chairperson