

Guidance for Teaching Observations

The follow summary and guidance are as faithful as possible to the *PSC-CUNY Agreement*, while presenting the information in what we hope is a more easily digestible manner. Please refer to §18.2 of the most recent contract and the corresponding sections of the *2019 Memorandum of Agreement* for details.

What?

Observation of teaching of any class for a *full classroom period*. Further details about what this means in the context of online classes may be found below.

When?

The observation shall take place during the first 10 weeks of the semester. This deadline is noted in the Brooklyn College Administrative Calendar.

Who and How Often?

Faculty Being Observed

- Non-tenured and non-certificated members of the teaching staff shall be observed at least once during each academic semester (i.e., fall and spring).
- Tenured and certificated members of the teaching staff may be observed once each semester.
- Adjunct faculty – after 10 semesters of service teaching¹ observation shall be held at the request of the chairperson or the adjunct.

Department Observers

- The appointments committee designates a “panel” of department observers (including members of the appointments committee), the size of which is determined by the chair.
- The chair schedules the members of the panel to conduct the necessary teaching observations.

How?

Unlike certain other evaluation materials, Brooklyn College does not have a standardized observer’s report or the post-observation conference memo format. The format of these two items are currently established at the department-level.

- Observer’s Report – Within a week of the observation, the observer submits a report to the appointments committee (via the chair) and, to facilitate the post-observation conference, a copy to the faculty who was observed.
- Post-observation Conference and Memo – Within two weeks following the observation, the observer and the faculty who was observed will have a follow-up discussion.² The observer will then prepare a report memorializing the discussion, submitted to the chair.
- Both the observer’s report and the post-observation conference memo shall be placed in the faculty member’s personal file.³

¹ Service as a substitute can act as a “bridge” to determine continuous service for the purpose of counting these ten semesters. See §18.2(b) of the PSC-CUNY Contract for more details.

² Either a member of the appointments committee or a member of the department with the rank of tenured associate professor or tenured professor may be assigned by the chairperson to attend the post-observation conference at the request of the employee or the observer.

³ See §18.2(b) of the PSC-CUNY Contract for remedies and limitations for observations and post-observation conferences not held in a timely manner.

What about online teaching?

As noted in the contract, the intent is for observations of online or partially online teaching to replicate as closely as possible the longstanding observation practices at the college.

Fully Online Synchronous Course

Meets online for 100% of the semester's class meetings with a regularly scheduled class period during which students and the instructor are online at the same time.

- The observer shall be given limited access to the course platform, usually defined as "student" or "guest" access, only for the scheduled class period to be observed.
- Via the method for announcements normally employed by the instructor in the course, the instructor shall inform the students that the teaching observation is occurring.
- In no event shall the classroom teaching observation memorandum refer to the conduct of course activities outside of the observation period.

Fully Online Asynchronous Course

A course conducted entirely online without a scheduled class period.

- The observer shall be given limited access to the course platform, usually defined as "student" or "guest" access, for 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.
- Within 48 hours of receiving notice of the observation, the instructor shall inform the students of the teaching observation and its beginning and end time via the method for announcements normally employed by the instructor in the course.

Fully Online "Mixed" Course

A course conducted entirely online using both synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

- The teaching observation shall take place according to the procedures for a fully online synchronous course, as specified above.
- At the request of the instructor, and with the consent of the chair, the teaching observation may be conducted as it would be for a fully online asynchronous course, as specified above.

Hybrid or Blended Course⁴

A course in which some face-to-face classroom periods are replaced by online instruction or any other modality that is not face-to-face.

- If at least 50% of the class sessions are conducted in a traditional face-to-face classroom setting, the observation shall normally take place during a face-to-face classroom period.
 - At the request of the instructor, and with the consent of the chair, the observation may be conducted during an online class session.
 - In such cases, the observation shall be conducted according to the applicable procedures above.
- If fewer than 50% of the class sessions are conducted in a traditional face-to-face classroom setting, the observation shall be conducted according to the procedures for a fully online course.

⁴ The chair may decide that an instructor teaching a hybrid course who has been observed under this provision may have his or her next observation conducted in the other modality used for the course.

General Considerations for Online Teaching Observations

The following considerations apply generally to all peer observations of online teaching with variations noted.

- Limited Access – The observer must never be given “instructor” or “administrator” access to the online teaching platform.
- One Week Observation “Window” – The observer shall not review online activity (nor shall the post-observation memorandum refer to any course activities) that occurred more than seven calendar days prior to the 48-hour period of access to the course platform. For observations of a synchronous online course, the observation period is the “live” classroom period as scheduled.
- Post-observation Conference – For a fully online course, the post-observation conference may be held, at the request of the instructor, in person, by telephone, or by video conference.

What if my teaching is in another department or program?

Faculty who are assigned to teach a majority of their classes in any given semester in a department or program other than the one to which they are appointed may be observed by a member of the other department or program, if requested by the chairperson of the department to which the faculty member to be observed is appointed.

Following such request, if the faculty member to be observed does the majority of their teaching in another academic department, the chairperson of that department shall select the observer from that department’s panel of observers.

If the faculty member to be observed does the majority of his/her teaching in a program, the observer will be designated by the chairperson of the faculty member’s appointing department, in consultation with the director of the program.

The observer must be a teaching member of the instructional staff.