

## Class Visit Suggestions, Fall 2020

### **PREAMBLE**

The class visit is one element in an array that, as a whole, creates a picture of the evaluatee as a teacher. Class visits offer a snapshot of the classroom dynamic as it unfolds. Together, these pieces give a holistic view of the teaching - each element of the file is best interpreted in the context of the other elements. Class visits provide an opportunity to receive both summative and formative feedback, and for faculty to continue their development as instructors.

The faculty handbook provides the following guidance for class visits: *(3) (i) Before each visit, the visitor will arrange the date for the visit with the evaluatee, and will discuss the purpose and scope of the course, texts, special procedures or techniques, and the relationship between the class visited and the whole course. (j) During the class visit, the visitor should remain throughout the entire seminar, class, studio, or laboratory, unless a shorter time is agreed upon beforehand. (k) The visitor will discuss the class that was visited with the evaluatee, with the aims of assisting the latter in improving his or her teaching. The visitor will make a written report of his or her observations on the conduct of the class, no later than two weeks after the class visit.*

Class visits may be unusual this fall, as some will be completed for remotely (synchronous or asynchronous) or hybrid. We offer suggestions on how to make visit reports consistent, robust, and useful for the evaluatee's development as an instructor across multiple class formats.

The **pre-class conversation**, coupled with a review of the syllabus, allows the instructor and visitor to discuss the scope of the course and how the class session fits into the semester's arc. This conversation can cover logistics (e.g., class size, format [seminar, lecture, remote, in-person]) and student characteristics (e.g., major, year, background) that inform pedagogical choices. This conversation is an important moment for instructors to articulate their goals for the class as a whole and the specific class session, and to reflect on how their pedagogy helps them achieve those goals.

**Class visit** reports typically offer a chronological overview of the session, with visitors' impressions, evaluations, and suggestions for improvement offered throughout and in a summary paragraph. Common descriptive themes in class visit reports – and thus elements to attend to during the visit – include instructors' content knowledge, class organization, choice of content, pedagogical choices and activities, student engagement, class atmosphere, and clarity and efficacy of presentation. Appended to this document is a list of elements that visitors may wish to consider. This list is merely meant to provide inspiration and should not be considered prescriptive.

**Post-class conversations** provide an opportunity for mutual assessment of the session. Instructors can reflect on how the class session met their learning goals, describe reasons for their pedagogical choices, provide any other information to contextualize the class, and consider what might remain and what might change in future class sessions. Visitors can offer feedback and ask follow up questions.

### Considerations for visits to remote or hybrid-learning classes

1. The pre- and post-class conversations are essential for understanding alignment of learning goals with pedagogical choices and assessment activities.
2. Remember that the instructor has little control over much of the availability and functioning of the technology. Consider how the instructor has compensated for technological challenges, and is communicating to students.
3. Visitors might review the learning management system (e.g., Google Classroom, Moodle) to get a sense of the way that students engage with the course, and with each other.
4. In circumstances in which class is being taught through a variety of modes, visitors might engage in activities beyond the formal “class visit” to get a sense of the student learning experience for the relevant lesson (e.g. view assignments, activities, and assessments in asynchronous classes).
5. Many of the teaching elements in the Appendix can be observed in remote and/ or hybrid settings.

### **Appendix: Elements that might be considered in a class visit report**

#### Organization

- The instructor states the relation of the class to the previous one.
- The instructor knows how to use the educational technology needed for the class.
- The instructor posts class goals or objectives on the board or a slide.
- The instructor gives specific instructional outcomes for the course.
- The instructor provides an outline of the organization of the class.
- The instructor conveys the purpose of each class activity.
- The instructor summarizes periodically and at the end of class or has the students do so.
- The instructor revisits objectives at the end of class.
- Students are made aware what preparation (readings or other assignments) they should complete prior to the next class.

#### Materials

- If used, videos, websites and other resource materials have a clear purpose.
- Handouts or digital resources are appropriate in number and subject.
- The instructor gives assistance or insight into reading or using assigned texts.

### Instructional Strategies

- The instructor's choice of teaching techniques is appropriate for the goals.
- During discussion, the instructor pauses after asking questions.
- The instructor acknowledges student contributions to discussion, helping students extend their responses.
- The instructor keeps discussion on track or facilitates small group discussion.
- The instructor mediates conflict or differences of opinion, and encourages students to do the same.
- The instructor demonstrates active learning techniques.
- The instructor provides explicit directions for active learning tasks.
- The instructor allows enough time to complete active learning tasks, such as collaborative work.
- The instructor specifies how active learning tasks will be evaluated.
- The timing of classroom activities considers attention spans.
- The instructor relates class to course goals, students' personal goals, or societal concerns.
- The instructor offers "real world" application.
- The instructor helps students apply theory to solve problems.

### Content Knowledge

- The instructor's statements are accurate according to the standards of the field.
- The instructor incorporates current research in the field.
- The instructor identifies sources, perspectives, and authorities in the field.
- The instructor communicates the reasoning process behind operations or concepts.
- The instructor corrects bias in assigned materials.

### Presentation

- The instructor can be seen and heard.
- The instructor avoids extended reading from notes or texts.
- The instructor varies lecturing with active learning techniques.
- The instructor speaks at a pace that allows students to comprehend what is said.
- The instructor uses appropriate examples, metaphors and analogies.
- The instructor uses humour appropriately.
- The instructor is enthusiastic about the subject matter.

### Class Environment

- The instructor addresses students by name, as possible.
- Delivery is paced to students' needs.
- The instructor provides feedback at given intervals.
- The instructor uses positive reinforcement.
- The instructor incorporates student ideas into the class.
- The instructor encourages students to build on each other's comments and ideas.

- The atmosphere of the classroom is participative.
- The instructor is available before or after class.
- The instructor pays attention to cues of boredom and confusion.
- The instructor provides students opportunity to mention problems/concerns with the class, either verbally or in writing.
- The instructor models good listening habits.
- The instructor demonstrates flexibility in responding to student concerns or interests.
- The instructor is sensitive to individual interests and abilities.

#### Instruction in laboratories, studios, or field settings

- Experiments/exercises are well chosen and well organized.
- Procedures/techniques are clearly explained/ demonstrated.
- The instructor is thoroughly familiar with experiments/exercises.
- The instructor is thoroughly familiar with equipment/ tools used.
- Assistance is always available during experiments/ exercises.
- Experiments/exercises are important supplements to the course.
- Experiments/exercises develop important skills.
- Experiments/exercises are of appropriate length.
- Experiments/exercises are of appropriate level of difficulty.
- Experiments/exercises help to develop confidence in the subject area.
- The instructor provides aid with interpretation of data.
- The instructor's emphasis on safety is evident.
- Criticism of procedures/techniques is constructive.
- The instructor works well with student and other parties in the setting.
- Clinical or field experiences are realistic.

#### Impact on learning

- The instructor helps develop critical thinking skills and problem-solving ability.
- The instructor broadens student views.
- The instructor encourages the development of students' analytic ability.
- The instructor fosters respect for diverse points of view.
- The instructor helps students develop awareness of the process used to gain new knowledge.
- The instructor stimulates independent thinking.

#### Inclusivity

- Instructor creates an equitable and inclusive classroom that respects differences along varied dimensions (e.g., gender, gender identity, race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status).
- Instructor conveys the belief that all students can learn and succeed.
- Instructor conveys openness and warmth and encourages students to interact with others the same way.
- Instructor provides text, resources and learning materials in the classroom that reflects diversity background and experience.
- Instructor uses resources that present both local and global images and perspectives.
- Instructor uses technology to provide additional visual, oral, aural and/or physical supports for students who need them.
- Instructor uses a variety of assessments.