

## Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is a formative assessment we engage in to improve teaching and learning. It is a non-threatening process that should provide useful feedback to the instructor about his or her teaching.

The Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching and Learning (CEITL) team adopted Chickering and Gamson's *Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Teaching* as the basis for its definition of good teaching. To align assessment practices with our beliefs about good teaching, and to help the classroom observer, we have listed below sample instructor behaviors that can demonstrate each of the seven principles of good practice. **Please note that each area might not be observed in a given class session; the examples are simply provided to help focus the observer's attention.**

The process of classroom observation involves three steps:

1. A pre-observation conference in which the instructor provides the observer with some context for the observation
2. The observation itself
3. A final debriefing in which the observer provides written comments—structured around the seven principles—about the class session. This debriefing should occur within one week of the observation.

Observers should look for:

**Student-faculty contact:** acknowledges students by name; asks students questions; invites students to ask questions; moves throughout the classroom and interacts with students

**Cooperation among students:** makes use of small-group activities; assigns in-class group presentations; encourages debate; has students engage in peer assessment

**Active learning:** pauses in lectures to allow students to compare notes; utilizes surveys or questionnaires; asks students to do self-assessments; intersperses lectures with discussions

**Prompt feedback:** returns coursework as soon as possible; gives detailed feedback, including strengths and weaknesses; designs exercises and problems to be completed and evaluated during the class period; uses peer- and self-assessment

**Time on task:** arrives and starts on time; emphasizes deadlines; explains penalties for late work; uses “warm-ups” at the beginning of class for a participation grade that can't be made up; assigns timed, guided activities of varying lengths to be completed in class; praises students for effective use of time

**High expectations:** uses rubrics; relates employer expectations to the classroom; shows exemplary work from previous students; models professional behavior

**Respecting diverse talents:** points out the application of content to students' lives; presents open-ended problems; creates heterogeneous groups; uses a variety of question types; uses interactive games and activities