

Peer Teaching Observations in CNS

Information for Faculty Observers

Peer observations strengthen teaching by providing vivid description and actionable feedback that help colleagues **continuously improve their teaching practice** and **showcase their growth**.

What They Are For

Used to:

- Help colleagues improve
- Capture concrete teaching evidence
- Show continuous progress

Not Used to:

- Summatively evaluate performance
- Rank instructors
- Give directives

Why They Matter

Peer observations **complement student surveys** by offering an expert view on course design, curriculum alignment with program goals and learning objectives, and content accuracy and rigor.

They **provide evidence** that student surveys cannot capture and **support a longitudinal view** of teaching growth over time.

How They Are Used

Promotion and tenure

At least three across two academic years required, emphasizing a long-term perspective.

Annual review

Submit reports with your FAR to document progress toward shared teaching goals within the department.

Tips for Observing

1

Align with *Their* Goals

Support the instructor's teaching goals, not your own. When departmental priorities apply, name them clearly.

2

Know Your Audience

You're writing for department colleagues *and* sometimes readers outside of CNS. Avoid jargon, explain acronyms, give context.

3

Stick to Evidence

Avoid unsubstantiated opinions. Describe what you see, not what you *feel*. Let the evidence tell the story.

4

Avoid Glazing

Vague praise damages credibility. Let specific examples and details show what's working. Having ideas is not the same as being critical.

5

Talk It Out

Discuss your feedback with the instructor and clarify that your goal is to help them grow. Ask plenty of followup questions.

6

Make It Longitudinal

Ask how you can connect your feedback to prior observations, CES data, teaching statements, or other types of data.

7

Ideas, Not Verdicts

Offer multiple actionable suggestions. Think "I have ideas," not "this needs improvement." Keep the tone curious and collaborative.

8

Holistic, Not Comprehensive

You can't cover everything. Look beyond the lecture itself, and focus on what matters most for this instructor or course.

For More Information

[Promotion and Tenure site](#)
[CNS Teaching Assessment Templates](#)
[Office of STEM Education Excellence](#)



The University of Texas at Austin
Office of STEM
Education Excellence
College of Natural Sciences

