

## Frederick Community College Peer Observation in Online Courses

### Questions and Answers for the Peer Observer

1. How do I "visit" an online course?

**ANSWER:** the course is located at <http://frederick.Blackboard.com>. After the instructor has given you access to the course, you log in with your own user ID and password.

2. How do I "visit the classroom" for a set period of time if the course is online and asynchronous?

**ANSWER:** You select with the instructor a Learning Unit or a course period of (for example) two weeks during which you visit the course website repeatedly to observe instructor-student, student-student, and student-content interaction.

3. What should I look at to prepare myself for the observation?

**ANSWER:** You should familiarize yourself with the information in Instructor Worksheet and explore all the questions with the instructor in the pre-observation meeting. You should familiarize yourself thoroughly with the organization of the website and the list of questions that you are asked to address in your narrative.

4. How can I evaluate in an online course what in an on-campus course is the instructor's classroom presence?

**ANSWER:** What is the instructor's classroom presence in an on-campus course translates into student-student, student-instructor, and student-content interaction. You observe for a selected period of time how the instructor organizes, manages and guides that interaction.

5. How can I ascertain the quality of a class discussion and whether the instructor is taking enough of a part?

**ANSWER:** Your primary purpose in this exercise is not to ascertain or judge quality by some abstract standard, but observe and narrate what happened in the discussion so that the instructor can reflect on your observations. As does the instructor, you have the advantage of looking at a written record of the discussion. Whether the instructor's participation was sufficient or too dominating in a particular segment of the discussion is a judgment that may or may not emerge from the post-observation conference.

6. Should I expect that the online instructor uses more multimedia than a classroom instructor?

**ANSWER:** Remember, in the present set-up of online classes (pre- streaming video) the instructor cannot “lecture” in person. To post the written content of the lecture online gives the student more to read but does not provide the student with the engaging experience. Instructors usually create or welcome activities other than reading to engage the student with the material. Such activities are typically multimedia.

7. Can I observe an instructor in an online course if I've never taught online, myself?

**ANSWER:** no, you should not. You should have some experience with teaching an online or hybrid class as a basis for the training you will receive as peer observer.

8. How do I know the difference between evaluating the course design and observing instructor performance in an online course?

**ANSWER:** Obviously, there is overlap between the two. You will know from the information on the Instructor worksheet whether the instructor is or is not the designer of the course. The best advice is to base your observations on the assumption that the instructor role and designer role are two separate functions. You will be given the opportunity to divide your observations into two sets directing one set to the instructor and the other to the designer. If the same person happens to fill both roles, he or she will take both into their own reflection; if the designer is a different person or team of persons the second set of observations will be addressed and forwarded to them.

9. Will I have the opportunity to comment on the peer observation protocol and the instructional issues selected for observation?

**ANSWER:** Not only will you have the opportunity but you will be asked to contribute comments and suggestions for improvement of the peer observation protocol by completing the Exit Questionnaire.

Revision 01/12/2005

## Frederick Community College Peer Observation in Online Courses

### Instructor Worksheet

(This worksheet is to be filled out prior to the Peer Observation and is designed to provide the basis for the pre-observation meeting with the peer observer. This worksheet is retained as part of the record of the observation.)

1. Instructor Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Course Name and Number: \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many times have taught this course online? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Date of last QM Peer Review of this course: \_\_\_\_\_ (Information is available in the Office for Distance Learning)
5. Nature and date of the most recent review of this course: \_\_\_\_\_ (Self, Peer, Other?)
6. Who is the primary designer of this online course \_\_\_\_\_ (Instructor, other?)  
Information is available in the Office for Distance Learning)
7. Does the course use audio/visual components? If so, which? Are additional access codes required? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Does the course use support materials (other than audio/visual) provided by the textbook publisher? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Does the course use synchronous instructor/student interaction?  Yes  No
10. Does the course use asynchronous instructor/student interaction such as a discussion page or BB?  Yes  No
11. Are course information and all instructional materials (except the text of tests) incorporated in the course website or available in email interaction? Are those accessible to the peer observer?  Yes  No
12. How is the Learning Unit organized so that students will achieve the learning objectives formulated for this unit? Are there any particular strategies or activities you use?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Notes for the pre-observation meeting)
13. What are the theoretical and methodological foundations of the discipline in which you teach. What matters most to you about the teaching of your discipline?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Notes for the pre-observation meeting)
14. What characterizes your teaching role or style in an online course in general and in this particular Learning Unit (selected for observation) in particular?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Notes for the pre-observation meeting)
15. What do you hope students will get out of this particular Learning Unit?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Notes for the pre-observation meeting)
16. What is the place of this Learning Unit in the context of the whole course?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Notes for the pre-observation meeting)
17. How will you, the instructor, decide whether or not you have been successful in helping students achieve those goals? How will you evaluate your assessment tools?  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Notes for the pre-observation meeting)
18. Is there anything in particular on which the peer observer should focus in this particular Learning Unit? \_\_\_\_\_ (Notes for the pre-observation meeting)
19. Is there a student with a disability in this course for whom special accommodations have been arranged?  Yes  No

## Frederick Community College Peer Observation in Online Courses

### Peer Observer Narrative

Peer Observer:

Instructor Name:

Course Name and Number:

1. Navigational instructions make the organization of the learning unit easy to understand.

**Observation Narrative:**

2. Netiquette expectations with regard to discussions and email communication are clarified.

**Observation Narrative:**

3. Students are requested to introduce themselves to the class.

**Observation Narrative:**

4. Instructions to students on how to meet the objectives of the learning unit are adequate and easy to understand.

**Observation Narrative:**

5. The objectives of the learning unit are clearly stated, measurable and understandable to the learner.

**Observation Narrative:**

6. The types of assessments selected for the learning unit measure the achievement of stated objectives and learning outcomes.

**Observation Narrative:**

7. Assessment and measurement strategies are designed to provide feedback to the learner.

**Observation Narrative:**

8. "Self-check" or practice types of assignments are provided for quick learner feedback.

**Observation Narrative:**

9. The instructional function of particular elements (such as watching a video or PPT) is evident.

**Observation Narrative:**

10. Clear standards are set for instructor response and availability (turn-around time for email, grades posted etc.)

**Observation Narrative:**

11. The instructor uses class discussion as a teaching tool.

**Observation Narrative:**

12. The selection and use of media supports the objectives of the learning unit and is integrated with texts and lesson assignments.

**Observation Narrative:**

13. The instructor encourages learner interactivity and guides the student to become a more active learner.

**Observation Narrative:**

14. Instructions on how to access resources at a distance are sufficient and easy to understand.

**Observation Narrative:**

Other topics relevant to the observation may be added by the observer or copied from the Instructor Worksheet. For example:

15. Instructor posted useful Focus Questions for video content.

**Observation Narrative:**

General Comments

Peer Observer Signature:

Date:

12/14/2003

Frederick Community College  
Peer Observation in Online Courses

Exit Questionnaire

(Responses to the following questions will be used to improve the peer observation process)

1. Was the information included in the instructor worksheet helpful? Something missing? Something you did not need?

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2. Were the instructions for the observation clear and complete? Any suggestions?

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3. Keeping in mind that the observation protocol is designed to cover different types of courses, are there instructional issues listed that were unclear? If so, which ones? Any suggestions

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4. Are there instructional issues that the Observation Protocol should, but presently does not cover? Which ones?

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5. Are improvements indicated in the way communication between observer and faculty member is structured? Any suggestions?

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6. Did this observation protocol give you the opportunity to provide the instructor with or receive from the observer professional and meaningful feedback with regard to the learning unit observed? Rate and circle on a scale of 1-10 from worst to best :

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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7. General Comment

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8. Are there other questions that you think should be included in this exit interview with future teams?

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