

Instructional Framework for SMC Faculty Observations¹

The following contextualizes the current [SMC Faculty Observation form](#) within a pedagogical framework for instructional reflection and advancement.

Instructional frameworks recognize the multiple facets of effective teaching: planning, building relationships, content delivery and assessment, and reflection, and that, while these components exist in all disciplines, they can look different in every classroom. The benefits of instruction frameworks include:²

- **Consistency** - everyone has the same understanding of what effective instruction looks like and demands
- **Transparency** - expectations are clear for everyone
- **Building pedagogical capacity** - frameworks use language from current educational research and outline general principles of effective college instruction

How to Use

This document is designed to be a collaborative teaching tool for the faculty observer and observee. The following is a suggested process for how to integrate the instructional framework below within the peer-observation process.

1. **Before the observation.** Share this framework with your colleague to communicate expectations and provide examples of best practices. Consider asking if they have specific areas of their instruction they'd like feedback on (e.g., implementation of a new pedagogical technique).
2. **During the class observation.**
 - a. Take notes that detail specific examples of what the instructor and students say and do throughout the class period (e.g., student spoke 6 times versus "one student dominated"). Focusing on the observable and documentable provides the instructor with an additional set of eyes.
 - b. As much as possible, avoid using judgmental or vague language. The goal is to provide a 'mirror' for your colleague on their instruction.
3. **After the observation**
 - a. Revisit notes in the context of the instructional framework.
 - i. *Inclusive, student-centered learning environment:* For example, how did the instructor promote a sense of belonging among students? What pedagogical practices did they utilize? Connect specific examples that qualify your overall observations and assessment.
 - ii. *Effective course design.* These elements are often less visible during 'live' classroom observations. Consult the syllabus and/or Canvas shell to qualify your observations and assessment.
 - b. Complete the [SMC Faculty Observation form](#). The numbers in brackets [] on the framework below correspond to the question numbers on the form.
 - i. NOTE: Consider giving the instructor a narrative write-up of your observations (a part from Faculty Observation form). A separate write-up can provide important situational as well as big-picture context for your observation.
4. **Debrief with the observed instructor.** Meet with your colleague to discuss your observations. Consider asking them to start with sharing their reactions to and questions about your feedback. This can serve to help clarify any misunderstandings and spark a more generative conversation.

¹ The instructional framework below was created through multiple cross-disciplinary discussions within the Academic Senate. The process included an analysis of best practices and frameworks from other higher education institutions and is intended to make the current faculty observation process more transparent, useful, and generative.

² Shawn R. Simonson, Brittnee Earl & Megan Frary (2022) "Establishing a Framework for Assessing Teaching Effectiveness", *College Teaching*, 70:2, 164-180, DOI: [10.1080/87567555.2021.1909528](https://doi.org/10.1080/87567555.2021.1909528)

INCLUSIVE, STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

CLASSROOM CLIMATE:

Classroom climate promotes a sense of belonging, encourages and values diverse viewpoints, and respects individual differences, paying special attention to our disproportionately-impacted student subpopulations. Climate also encourages active cooperation and engagement [1, 5].

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES:

- Instructor may know students by name, and students may show their comfort by asking questions during class or talking to the instructor before or after class.
- Instructor may know something about the students' lives or education goals.
- Instructor uses inclusive language in syllabus and other written materials, including Canvas course shells and ppts as well as inclusive images that reflect the students in the room.
- Instructor may apply [differentiated instruction](#)
- Students may choose topics or assignments

POSSIBLE ONLINE-SPECIFIC EXAMPLES:

- Instructor includes a "Get to Know You" post early in an online class.
- Instructor uses Weekly Check-In posts to connect to students in an online class.

PEDAGOGICAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE & STUDENT MOTIVATION:

Instructors use [evidence-based teaching practices](#), and students are actively engaged with the course content, the instructor, and each other during most of class. Materials for class, including lectures and lessons, are intentionally student-centered while following the COR [2, 3, 4, 6].]

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES:

- Instructor may build explicitly on students' prior knowledge.
- Instructor explicitly states classroom policies and expectations.
- Instructor uses explicit and thorough assignment instructions or explains and /or models discipline-specific language on Canvas and in class.
- Instructor may provide materials, lessons, activities, and/or assessments built on students' interests or involve student choice.
- Students may work in small groups [or pairs] to discuss material;
- Students might produce artifacts that exhibit understanding, or students may collaborate more briefly and often to learn course content/skills.
- Instructor may organize debate.
- Instructor may practice/model annotation.
- Instructor may create activities that work on skills development: synthesis activities/matrix; reading response journals; Socratic seminar; close reading activities with group or class sharing; student-led discussions; group presentations (see [link to practices](#) for more suggestions)

POSSIBLE ONLINE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES:

- Students may regularly engage in online discussions to foster engagement and community in an online class.
- Course content online is structured in a clear and intuitive way.

EFFECTIVE COURSE DESIGN

CURRICULUM AND CURRICULAR ALIGNMENT:

Course materials, content, and objectives align with the COR. Instructor knows and considers student needs while preparing and presenting course content both in person and online in course shells. Instructor chooses materials which reflect the interests and educational goals of students in the room [10, 11, 12, 13, 14.]

No examples needed—description is sufficient and not discipline-specific.

PLANNED DELIVERY OF INSTRUCTION:

Students will be actively engaged with the course content, the instructor, and each other during most of class. [7, 8, 9]

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES:

- Instructor checks for understanding and re-teaches as necessary.
- Students have many opportunities to ask questions.
- Instructor uses multiple avenues (Pronto; Zoom office hours; Q & A discussion posts) to elicit student questions online.
- A variety of instructional strategies are used (independent, small group, lecture) to engage with class material.
- For labs, instructor provides adequate support for successful completion

FEEDBACK AND ASSESSMENT:

Instructor checks for student understanding and student learning by using a variety of frequent low-stakes assessments (*formative*), *monitoring* student learning to help the instructor clarify lessons for re-teaching opportunities. Instructor also uses high-stakes evaluative assessment of student learning at the end of the instructional unit [15].

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES:

- *Formative*: thesis draft for feedback; concept map; research paper proposal; annotated bibliographies; reading journal; low-stake quizzes; in-class presentations; demonstration of skills; analysis, application, and reflection of course concepts in lived experience; practice problems; labs;
- *Summative*: essay final draft; midterm and final exam (includes but is not limited to questions representative of homework and practice questions); final research paper, final presentation; demonstration of skills

SMC Faculty Observation Form Questions

1. Establishes a student-instructor relationship conducive to learning
2. Communicates ideas clearly and effectively
3. Stimulates students' interest and desire to learn
4. Promotes active involvement of students in learning activities
5. Demonstrates sensitivity in working with students from diverse backgrounds and with different needs
6. Employs appropriate pedagogy
7. Begins class promptly and ends at time designated on schedule of classes
8. Uses class time efficiently
9. Maintains an appropriate pace during class session
10. Provides students with a syllabus which includes a written explanation of the evaluation process, expectations and requirements, assignments, course content, relevant dates, and other information
11. Teaches course content that is consistent with the official course outline of record
12. Uses materials pertinent to the course content
13. Teaches at a level appropriate to the course content
14. Has appropriate command of the subject matter to be able to respond to students' needs
15. Assesses students' progress regularly