Components of Teaching

A Resource Document for the Peer Observation of Teaching Assessment

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Domains of Teaching: Instruction*

Component 1: Communicating Clearly and Accurately
Elements to consider:
● Instructor’s directions and procedures
● Instructor’s oral language
● Instructor’s written language

Component 2: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques
Elements to consider:
● Quality of questions
● Discussion techniques
● Student participation in discussion

Component 3: Engaging Students in Learning
Elements to consider:
● Representation of content -- its appropriateness for the level of the class, the use of examples and analogies, the “fit” with students’ knowledge and experience
● Activities and assignments – suitability to learning objectives, extent to which they engage students in achieving learning objectives
● Grouping of students
● Instructional materials and resources
● Structure and pacing of the lesson -- coherence of lesson, appropriateness of pacing within each component

Component 4: Providing Feedback to Students
Elements to consider:
● Amount of feedback
● Quality of feedback – how accurate, constructive, and specific
● Timeliness of feedback

Component 5: Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness
Elements to consider:
● Adjustment of lesson to improve learning
● Responsiveness to students’ questions or interests
● Persistence in helping students achieve learning objectives—use of appropriate strategies, maintenance of positive, encouraging attitude toward all students, including those having difficulties
Domains of Teaching: The Classroom Environment*

**Component 1: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport**
*Elements to consider:*
- Instructor’s interactions [with students and TAs in the class]—appropriateness, frequency, distinguishing characteristics, e.g., caring, respectful, empathic
- Student-student and student-instructor interactions—distinguishing characteristics, e.g., polite, respectful

**Component 2: Establishing a Culture for Learning**
*Elements to consider:*
- Instructor’s conveyance of the importance, both within and beyond the classroom context, of the content and skills learned in the course
- Students’ pride in their work
- Instructor’s expectations for student learning and achievement

**Component 3: Managing Classroom Procedures**
*Elements to consider:*
- Management of instructional groups [pairs, cooperative learning groups, and teams, with short-term, random membership or selected and of longer duration]
- Management of transitions between components/activities of lesson
- Management of materials and supplies—e.g., routines for collection and distribution of materials
- Performance of non-instructional duties, e.g., making announcements, taking attendance, etc.
- Supervision of teaching assistants who have responsibilities during the lesson, e.g., monitoring group work, assisting with instruction, operating equipment

**Component 4: Managing Student Behavior**
*Elements to consider:*
- Establishment of standards of conduct, i.e., clear rules/norms for behavior of all students in the course, including laboratory and field trip sessions
- Monitoring of student behavior—awareness of student behavior in all areas of classroom, strategies employed to avoid misbehavior
- Response to student misbehavior—appropriateness, fairness, effectiveness, sensitivity to students’ individual needs
Component 5: Organizing Physical Space

Elements to consider:
● Safety of furniture and equipment
● Arrangement of furniture according to lesson goals and activities
● Accessibility to learning for all students
● Use of physical resources, e.g., chalkboard or whiteboard, flip charts, overhead projectors, VCR, computer, etc. to enhance instruction and learning


Danielson’s Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching is an outstanding resource for those who are interested in developing a holistic understanding of teaching. The reader will learn how to utilize the framework for teaching as a tool for the following purposes: reflection upon and assessment of one’s own teaching; mentoring and induction of novice instructors or those unfamiliar with the empirical and theoretical research on how to promote improved student learning through teaching; peer coaching, [e.g., L.A.S. Teaching Academy’s Peer Observation for Teaching Assessment, or POTA model]; and supervision and evaluation.

Danielson’s framework for teaching contains 22 components, clustered into four domains: Instruction, Classroom Environment (both outlined above), Planning and Preparation and Professional Responsibilities (see below):

Domains of Teaching: Planning and Preparation
Components: demonstrating knowledge of content and pedagogy [both general and discipline-specific]; demonstrating knowledge of students; selecting instructional goals; demonstrating knowledge of resources; designing coherent instruction; and assessing student learning.

Domains of Teaching: Professional Responsibilities
Components: reflecting on teaching; maintaining accurate records; communicating with families [or students, in higher education]; contributing to school and district [or in higher education, contributing to one’s department, college, and university]; and showing professionalism.
Prompts in Specific Areas of Instruction (Taken from Chism’s information on Narrative Prompt Forms**)

After taking descriptive notes while observing a colleague’s classroom teaching, the observer analyzes the notes and then comments on the agreed-upon targeted areas. Narrative prompt comments include description and judgment, the latter of which is not included in LASTA’s POTA model. However, the prompts in specific areas of instruction may be helpful in organizing an observer’s or an instructor’s thoughts about a particular teaching performance.

- *Teacher organization*—instructor’s making the lesson plan explicit to the class, following plan, having needed materials, having content prepared, etc.

- *Variety of instructional strategies and pacing of instruction*—instructor’s employment of a variety of instructional strategies and pacing of instruction for interest and accomplishment of goals

- *Content knowledge*—importance, currency and accuracy

- *Presentation skills*—instructor’s voice, tone, fluency, eye contact, rate of speech, gestures, use of space

- *Instructor-student rapport*—verbal interaction; [facial expressions and body language]; initiation, encouragement and appreciation of student discussion; openness to class suggestions; and interpersonal skills

- *Clarity*—instructor’s use of examples, explanations, answers to student questions, definitions of new terms or concepts

Categories for Low-Inference Items on Teaching Checklist Forms

Some low-inference items for teaching checklist forms can be measured descriptively, in terms of the presence or absence of an item, while others can be measured in terms of frequency, e.g., “always, often, sometimes, or never.” Chism suggests the following lower inference categories for a teaching checklist form, which may be helpful in organizing one’s thoughts about a particular teaching performance:

*Instructor organization; variety and pacing of instruction; content knowledge; presentation skills; rapport with students; and clarity.*
Categories for Higher Inference Items on Scaled Rating Forms for Teaching (see Chism, pp. 90-94)

Scaled rating forms usually have a 5-point scale with anchor words, e.g., “Strongly Agree -- Strongly Disagree” or “Excellent – Poor.” [Note: Some scaled rating forms include descriptors for all choices and may include an N/A choice.] LASTA’s POTA model is formative rather than summative (evaluative), and therefore does not make use of any sort of rating forms. However, the categories and the items included within each teaching category in Chism’s sample form can help observers and instructors to reflect upon an instructor’s strengths during a particular teaching performance and focus on aspects of teaching to be considered for professional growth. Many items in the form examine an instructor’s efforts to ensure that students will acquire the knowledge and skills specified in the learning objectives. Because of its value as an aid to reflection on teaching and learning, both of which are discussed in LASTA’s POTA post-observation conference, the entire form has been included below.

Teacher organization
● The instructor is well prepared for class.
● The objectives of the class are clearly stated.
● The instructor uses class time efficiently.
● The learning activities are well organized.
● The class remains focused on its objectives.

Instructional Strategies
● The instructor’s choice of teaching techniques is appropriate for the goals.
● The instructor has good questioning skills.
● The instructor raises stimulating and challenging questions.
● The instructor mediates discussion well.
● The class schedule proceeds at an appropriate pace.
● The instructor uses multimedia effectively.
● Board work is legible and organized.
● Course handouts are used effectively.
● The instructor provides clear directions for group work or other forms of active learning.
● The instructor facilitates group work well.
● The instructor helps students to learn from each other.
Instructional strategies (continued)
● The instructor helps students apply theory to solve problems.
● The instructor effectively holds class attention.
● The instructor provides an effective range of challenges.

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 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 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 students and other parties in the setting.
● Clinical or field experiences are realistic.

Content knowledge
● The instructor is knowledgeable about the subject matter.
● The instructor is confident in explaining the subject matter.
● The instructor pitches instruction at the appropriate level.
● The instructor uses a variety of illustrations to explain content.
● The instructor provides for sufficient content detail.
● The instructor focuses on important content in the field.
● The instructor demonstrates intellectual curiosity toward new ideas or perspectives.
● The instructor incorporates views of women and minorities.
● The instructor corrects racist or sexist bias in assigned materials.
**Presentation skills**

- The instructor is an effective speaker.
- The instructor employs an appropriate rate of speech.
- The instructor uses classroom space well.
- The instructor is enthusiastic about the subject matter.
- The instructor makes the subject matter interesting.
- The instructor’s command of English is adequate.

**Rapport with students**

- The instructor welcomes student participation.
- The instructor models good listening habits.
- The instructor motivates students.
- The instructor stimulates interest in the course subject(s).
- The instructor responds well to student differences.
- The instructor demonstrates a sense of humor.
- The instructor uses effective classroom management techniques.
- The instructor demonstrates flexibility in responding to student concerns or interests.
- The instructor welcomes multiple perspectives.
- The instructor anticipates student problems.
- The instructor treats students impartially.
- The instructor respects constructive criticism.
- The instructor does not express sexist or racist attitudes.
- The instructor is able to help many kinds of students.
- The instructor is sensitive to individual interests and abilities.

**Clarity**

- The instructor responds to questions clearly.
- The instructor emphasizes major points in the delivery of the subject matter.
- The instructor explains the subject matter clearly.
- The instructor relates course material to practical situations.
Impact on learning

● The instructor helps develop rational thinking.
● The instructor helps develop problem-solving ability.
● The instructor helps develop skills/techniques/views needed in the field.
● The instructor broadens student views.
● The instructor encourages the development of students’ analytic ability.
● The instructor provides a healthy challenge to former attitudes.
● The instructor helps develop students’ creative capacity.
● The instructor fosters respect for diverse points of view.
● The instructor sensitizes students to views or feelings of others.
● The instructor helps develop students’ decision-making abilities.
● The instructor develops students’ appreciation of intellectual activity.
● The instructor develops students’ cultural awareness.
● The instructor helps students develop awareness of the process used to gain new knowledge.
● The instructor stimulates independent thinking.

Overall

● The overall teaching ability of the instructor is high.

Material on pp. 4 – 8 of this resource document is taken from the following source:


Chism’s Peer Review of Teaching will help the reader understand the “nuts and bolts” of teaching and learning in higher education and the components and processes of peer review. To make peer review effective, Chism argues the necessity of “an attitude of professionalism that respects both the individual colleague and the profession of college teaching itself” (1999, p. 124). She asserts that quality peer review requires guiding principles in order to achieve maximum benefits to the individual instructor and the institution. These include making the necessary time commitment, establishing a shared mission of teaching improvement between observer and instructor, and accepting the fact that making peer review a part of the institutional culture will require patience over time, as all parties adjust to the ideas and processes and gain the necessary skills. The reference section will prove invaluable to the reader who wants to learn more about peer review and other methods to improve teaching and learning.