

# CIDR Teaching and Learning Bulletin

Information for People who Teach at the University of Washington

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## Classroom Observation

Classroom observation is a collaborative process. Both the person being observed and the observer have important roles before, during, and after the observation. Collaborating at each stage of the process can help put both participants at ease so that each benefits from the experience. For more information on planning and conducting class observations, see CIDR's web site:

<http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/resources/observationtools.html>

If you are being **Observed**:

### Before

Be prepared to discuss with the observer:

- Goals for the class
- What you plan to do in class that day
- What you want the observer to pay attention to

Tell the observer

- Where you'd like the observer to sit
- If you'd like the observer to take part in class
- Where the class meets, and when

### During

Introduce the observer to the class.

Explain the purpose of the observation.

Explain the observer's role to the students.

Soon after class, write down your reflections on the class so that you will be prepared to discuss it with the observer.

### After

With the observer, reconstruct what happened in class

Think about goals for the class and the specific class session that was observed. Be prepared to describe:

- What you felt went well
- What you would change
- What was typical or atypical about the class

Ask for specific descriptions and constructive suggestions.

If you are the **Observer**:

### Before

Clarify the purpose of the observation:

- For reappointment, promotion, tenure?
- For individual teaching development?

Meet with your colleague or TA to discuss:

- What will happen in class that day
- What to pay attention to

Describe what you'll be doing during the observation. Schedule a meeting to discuss the observation.

### During

Record observations:

- What is the instructor doing / saying?
- What are students doing / saying?

Record your impressions and questions; for example:

- "Is there another way to present that concept?"
- "Seems clear, but students look confused. Why?"

Participate in the class only if invited to do so.

### After

With the instructor, reconstruct what happened in class.

Ask your colleague or TA to describe:

- What he/she felt went well
- What he/she would change
- What was typical or atypical about the class

Listen to your colleague or TA

Describe rather than evaluate what you saw  
Finally, offer constructive suggestions.

## How can CIDR help?

CIDR can offer a variety of services that can help you when you are preparing for an observation. For example:

- Consultation with a CIDR consultant to discuss and develop observation goals, criteria, or procedures
- Workshops to help people in your department prepare for and conduct observations
- References and resources on conducting observations: <http://depts.washington.edu/cidrweb/resources/observationtools.html>

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