

Nirma University
Academic Development and Research Cell

Peer Faculty Observation
Guidelines for observation

Preamble:

The Nirma University envisages the academic audit at three levels viz. at department level, at institute level and at university level. The first and most important stage is to monitor the activity carried out at classroom i.e. student – faculty interaction. The purpose of monitoring is to make the content delivery effective and learning be fruitful, by way of coaching novice teachers, shaping and sharpening faculty with a short teaching stint. Various teaching – learning experts indicate that a peer faculty observation, performed at department level, is one of the important tool to enhance classroom learning activities. The aim is not to replace other ways of evaluation, but moulding the teachers to be the mentors under the guidance of their experienced colleague.

According to UCLA's Guide to Evaluation of Instruction:

“Effective teaching can be defined as activities that promote student learning where student ratings, self-reviews, and peer evaluations are all used for evaluating different aspects of teaching,” explaining that important sources of data to measure teaching effectiveness fall into three main categories: student, peer, and instructor and they should be part of any comprehensive approach to evaluating teaching effectiveness.

Peer Observation:

Classroom observations – domain specific and pedagogy, is a formative process and an experience for those observed and observing. A senior colleague guides to better way of imparting knowledge to his junior counterpart, making a learning process smooth and meaningful for the students.

Classroom/laboratory teaching assessment:

A classroom/laboratory teaching assessment involves experienced colleague(s) from related department or elsewhere to sit in on your lectures to provide you with constructive feedback about one's teaching. The peer observation provides an alternative perspective on instructor's teaching.

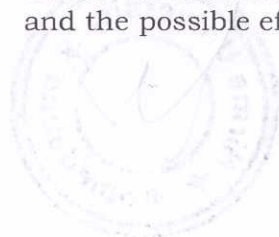
The goal of department level academic audit is to support all faculty in their progress toward excellence in teaching and learning through the use of in-class peer observations by faculty. Faculty members who have peer observations conducted will obtain a greater knowledge of specific ways to improve their classroom teaching skills. The review process is formative and to be considered only for individual's teaching abilities. The strengths and weakness of the individual shall be discussed behind the closed doors and suggestions be imparted to overcome the deficiencies emerged.

Key points about formative peer observation are as below:

- Observers and the observed instructor are aware of the institutional and departmental context for the importance of teaching.



- Preferably, an observation shall be of one complete session for lecture (class) and for a meaningful duration in a laboratory/tutorial.
- At the time of commencement of the class, observer(s) shall inform students about the process, the development undertaken and the role of observer(s) as a facilitator.
- Observer(s) and instructor to be observed must meet at least four days in advance. Observer(s) is (are) required to ensure that they understand the aspects to be observed in order to help them see what is happening in the classroom/laboratory/tutorial.
- The observer shall –
 - see that the students are informed about the course resources, e.g. website, blog, MOOCs available, teaching and examination scheme, various weightage, hand-outs etc.
 - see that the information about subsequent sessions are provided to students well in advance. The information shall contain the detailed lesson plan including topics to be covered in a particular session, the pre-read reference material, related books, case studies/videos (if any), blog etc. This shall enhance the learning activity as students can come prepared, classes can be interactive, faculty is well prepared as well and ideas can be deliberated / generated.
 - observe that course learning outcomes are intertwined during (many) teaching sessions.
 - check the level of faculty preparedness, class notes, application(s) / case studies / simulations / presentation / questions to be asked during the class progression / relevance of the topic to be covered, solution to the numerical to be discussed in class.
 - discuss about session learning outcomes (outcome per session possible, if any) and see that they are put forward per class and covered.
 - make a note on session plan, progress of the session, command over technical content, content delivery, content received by students, confidence in speech.
 - witness the eagerness created by instructor among the students, willingness to invite questions, one – to – many and one – to – one contacts, the role played as a facilitator – mentor.
 - notice classroom assessment technique used, class discipline, faculty – student interactions, types of questions asked and queries responded and the way students are engaged.
 - observe the overall environment created by the instructor, motivation and encouragement for learning; and innovation brought in the class.
 - observe the communication skills, fluency in technical English, lecture flow and usage of ICT tools in classroom.
 - notice classroom pedagogy, class time management, timeline adhered, activities done by students, gestures - posture and dress code decency of the instructor etc.
 - identify strength and weakness of the instructor (over many observations) and groom / improve / guide instructor.
- The observer must understand the peer faculty observation form before classroom visits.
- Observers must be aware that some classes are atypical so that they will devote enough time to secure typical data about instructor activity. Observers are aware of the content of the class, time of day, length of class and the possible effect of these factors on observation results.



- Each individual faculty observer meets face-to-face with the individual instructor being observed, remembering that some faculty have tremendous fears about being observed, and that the act of observation will affect the overall teaching/learning environment to some degree or another.
- A weekly brief meeting report (a consolidated summary) for instructor(s) with positive points and certain lacuna shall be prepared. The common deficiencies emerging out of such observations shall be discussed at HoD meeting and IQAC meeting at the institute. A strategy be devised at institute level to overcome the commonly observed issues. ADR cell be informed about the initiatives by the departments / institute for domain specific needs. ADR cell shall address the areas that need specific attention in pedagogical aspects and arrange training programmes.

Peer Faculty Observation Process:

1. Pre-observation discussion - The observer learns what the instructor's teaching methodology is, reviews the course outcomes, session outcomes (if any), relevance with programme outcomes, review of relevant material (if applicable) and faculty readiness for the class.

The observer shall define the scope of observation as it may vary according to different courses. The scope may be one and many of the listed criteria but not limited to e.g. concepts – theory development – analytical solutions – application / case / experiment outcome – discussion of idea - research domain – student activity.

The observer shall explore what can be expected during the class and discuss issues that may need special attention. Instructor may be guided by senior colleague to good reading material – core research papers, reference works and books, websites, simplified animations, etc. so as to have better content delivery and impressive classes.

2. In-class observation - The observer sits in the class and takes careful notes on various aspects as described earlier. The observer is **not** expected to participate in the in-class session, however, depending upon the type of class (e.g. collaborative teaching or cooperative teaching etc.) the observer may decide. It is also **not** preferred that observer take a direct oral feedback from students. It is preferable that observer(s) sit in last row so as to have a complete view of the class and student activities.
3. Post-observation meeting - The observer creates a concise summary for the instructor post class observation. This one – to – one meeting shall -
 - a. create a self – assessment environment for the instructor. Understand how the instructor him/herself feels about the class observed.
 - b. usually start with good notes and positive side of the observation by observer.
 - c. concentrate on the content delivered, gap between intended and covered topic, improvement and possible ways, suggestions on reading material for class preparation etc.



- d. have focus on the types of questions raised by intellectual students, how the queries could have been responded, the confrontation of ideas and wisdom, maturity of instructor etc.
- e. have a discussion on the classroom control, motivation level of students, students activities during the board work, presentation etc.
- f. the areas where instructor can improve. The observer should offer advice / share experience about techniques and processes that will help the instructor grow in those areas.
- g. suggest ways to lead students to higher order thinking.
- h. be a platform to share student expectations and reaction (as observed by the observer) and provide encouragement.

The observer shall put remark(s) on the observation form, with suggestions, indicating if follow up is required.

The process mentioned here (above) are generic and institute in consultation with its IQAC may request changes in guidelines to ADR cell core committee.

Programme Structure

- The HoD shall decide upon nomination of Professor / Sr. faculty / area chair as an observer/team of observers for the observation of classes/laboratory/tutorial in a specific domain/area. In case of limited no. of sr. faculty in department, services of external sr. faculty / retired faculty / industry expert can be taken in consultation with HoI.
- Domain specific teaching needs shall be identified from these observations and to be addressed by department(s) either by inviting external experts, by following pedagogical practices, by deputing faculty to industry for exposure to certain areas, peer consultations and/or by suggesting newly recruited instructors to attend the classes of experienced peer. Institutes can request for a common training on general technical topics e.g. research methodology, inculcating research, creativity and innovation, critical thinking, OBE, plagiarism; technical paper, patent and project writing etc. to ADR cell. A summary of activities carried out and faculty growth observed shall be sent to ADR cell on quarterly basis.
- Needs other than domain e.g. personality and communication skill development, classroom management, class control, pedagogy, promoting sense of belongingness, inter-personal skills, grooming - moulding into profession, motivation, team building – exposure, management expectations etc. may be highlighted and forwarded to ADR cell.
- ADR cell can have a periodic review of new faculty academic involvement and development to understand their developmental needs.

Participation:

One of the following be applied to each directly involved in teaching, shall strictly follow observation process and reports for the same be prepared as described.

1. Every faculty member having a teaching experience of two years or less and/or having consistent poor student feedback for a specific course, must



undergo one observation per week. For the classroom observation of novice-

- a. HoD/section head/area chair concerned shall make at least one observation per faculty once in a month
 - b. a Professor/Sr. faculty/faculty (or team) having total teaching & research experience of not less than five year shall be engaged for one observation per week per faculty
 - c. an external expert may be engaged for the process in case of shortage of sr. faculty member, meeting the requirements mentioned in (b).
2. Faculty members having teaching experience of more than two years but less than five years, must undergo one observation per month. The observer may be a full time sr. faculty / area chair / external expert of the domain as decided by HoD/HoI and as per 1(b) above.
 3. Every Sr. faculty having experience of five years and above may request one peer observation per year by Professor or equivalent (may or may not be of same domain). HoI may decide upon an observer / team of observers.

Administrative Process:

The peer classroom observations can be considered as one part of the larger picture with regard to evaluation of teaching effectiveness. The peer observation shall bring out the hidden talent in the faculty and point out deficiency. The instructor shall be encouraged to continue good practices and provided guidance to overcome deficiency.

The deficiencies, lacuna and limitations (observed repeatedly) shall be informed to the instructor (observed) in the closed door in presence of HoD/Sr. faculty/area chair. Recurring issues / deficiencies be communicated in written to faculty observed and a copy be marked for CR file. Instructor shall be advised by HoD/area chair in presence of HoI in case where no improvement is observed over a couple of months. The HoD/area chair will keep a periodic check (over six months) to see if the faculty have overcome the deficiency fully and report of the same shall be submitted to the HoI. Based on the report of HoD/area chair and considering formal feedback of students, concerned HoI shall decide to give time to faculty to improve or take action.

The process of the peer faculty observation be rigorously followed and a monthly consolidated report for all the instructors observed per department is required to be sent to the Director, ADR cell and the Director General, through HoD and HoI. The report shall contain the salient points emerging out of observations, remedial action taken and areas required special attention. Departments facing administrative problems may contact Director, ADR cell and Director General, NU and request consideration.

Observation Form:

Observers shall use a peer observation form as a general guideline, however, the institute in consultation with its IQAC may slightly modify the peer observation form to suit their needs / theme.





Nirma University
Academic Development and Research Cell
Peer Faculty Observation Form
Classroom Teaching Observation

Institute of _____

Instructor observed : Prof. _____
Instructor Designation : _____ Dept. : _____
Course Level : UG / PG (specialization) Sem.: _____
Course code / name : _____
Session caption/title : _____
Date of observation : _____ Duration of observation: _____
Pre – observation meeting Date and Time: _____

Salient points of Pre – observation meeting:

1. Scope of observation:
2. Material / content related points:
3. Session plan and topics to be covered:

Classroom Observation report (based on the Pre – observation meeting):

Observer to make notes on session progress/ General observations:

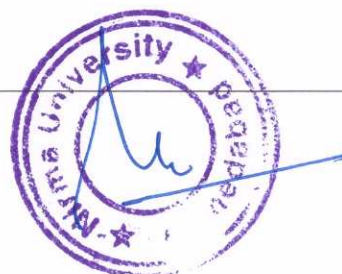
Domain specific content –

Brief note on Classroom Pedagogy:

Overall Remarks:

Strength(s):

Weakness(es):



Suggested Points for Observation

CONTENT and SESSION ORGANIZATION

1. Quality of content/ideas delivery
2. Clarity of thoughts, presentation and Explanation of key concepts
3. Ideas related to prior knowledge, previous and future classes
4. Student self-learning activity, student eagerness – interaction in class (based on pre-read material provided in advance and students are motivated)
5. Preparedness of the instructor / reference to recent works (at PG level)
6. Instruction relates applications/case study/views/process/purpose of topic
7. Student involvement / engagement in activity and / or collaborative activity
8. Classroom time management

CLASSROOM INTERACTION

9. Instructor questions to check session learning
10. Effectiveness of response to student questioning
11. Interaction level leading to higher order thinking skills (HOTS)
12. Students are encouraged to participate and think differently
13. Classroom discipline

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

14. Fluency and language command
15. Articulation, pronunciation, audibility and eye contact with students
16. Pace of content delivery
17. Confidence and enthusiasm

USE OF MEDIA

18. Clarity of VP based presentation / chalkboard content
19. Clarity of figures shown /drawn on board/ expressions derived
20. Relevance of MOOCs/Blog/ Videos shown

Brief description on the emerging positive aspects and limitations:

Post – observation meeting: Date and time: _____

Salient points of Post – observation meeting:

Observer – Name, Sign with date: _____

HoD/Section Head/area chair – Name, Sign with date: _____

