

# “Peer Observation Training Workshop”



Larry Lesser, CETaL

(including information from several others:

Harry Meeuwsen, Tine Reimers, Elena Izquierdo, Steve Varela,  
UT-Austin Center for Teaching Effectiveness)

[cetal.utep.edu/index.php/peer-observation](http://cetal.utep.edu/index.php/peer-observation)



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WEDNESDAY, 07 SEPTEMBER 2016

## PEER OBSERVATION

### CONTEXT:

[CLICK HERE](#) for link to Nov. 19, 2013 Memo from Faculty Senate Teaching Effectiveness and Development Committee

[CLICK HERE](#) for link to policy proposal passed at UTEP Faculty Senate on Nov. 26, 2013

### INSTRUMENTS:

2014 Peer observation form developed by AT(Varela) and CETaL(Lesser) for an online course:  
(<http://at.utep.edu/peerevaluation/index.php/evaluation>)

2013 Meeuwssen/Lesser observation form



[Meeuwssen/Lesser observation form PDF](#)



[Meeuwssen/Lesser observation form Word](#)

CETaL 2006 peer observation booklet (<http://academics.utep.edu/LinkClick.aspx?link=UTEP+Peer+Observation+Booklet.pdf&tabid=58396&mid=129801>)

### PROCESS:

Remember that the peer observation process is more than just observing a single class meeting. It includes a pre-

## RESOURCES

SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING

SOTL PROPOSAL AWARD

**PEER OBSERVATION**

FACULTY FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

MENTORING

UT REGENTS' OTA RESOURCES

WORKSHOP MATERIALS

TEACHING PERIODICALS

SCIENCE OF LEARNING

TEACHING RESOURCES

TECHNOLOGY

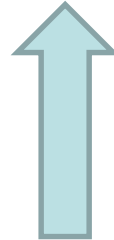
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# Potential **BENEFITS** of peer observation

- Continuous personal, department, or program improvement
- Develop supporting network of mentors and peers; get ideas
- Peers understand content area (challenges, objectives, methods) and academic unit goals
- Makes faculty teaching role more visible
- Source of dossier documentation for evaluation (e.g., P&T), awards (ROTA), etc.

# Potential **PITFALLS** of peer observation

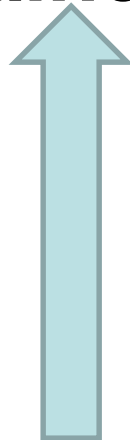
- Possible bias from reputation of instructor, peer pressure/relationships, or observer's pedagogical preference
- “We’re all above average” effect
- Time intensive
- Peers historically not trained to observe



# UTEP Faculty Senate proposal

(passed Nov. 26, 2013; posted on CETaL's P.O. page)

- each College/School will ensure that its academic units develop and implement a Peer Observation process
- academic units "should ensure that observers are **trained to perform their task well**"



# *ACTIVE AGENDA!*

- Quick Background **Quiz**
- **Discuss** considerations for a peer observation plan
- Process/cycle of a peer observation, including pre-conversation **role-play** and **hands-on experience** with an instrument
- **Discuss** hybrid or online courses

# Quick Background Quiz

10 statements about peer observation at UTEP

TRUE = thumbs up;

FALSE = thumbs down



# True or False

1.) Peer observation is optional.



# True or False

Peer observation is optional.

**FALSE** – Mandated by a proposal passed Nov. 2013 by UTEP Faculty Senate (with the process to be in place by fall 2014), guided by work of the UT System's Task Force on Faculty Peer Observations of Teaching

# True or False

2.) Peer observation helps  
only new instructors of lower rank.

# True or False

Peer observation helps  
only new instructors of lower rank.

**FALSE** – even experienced or high-ranking  
instructors benefit from giving or receiving  
constructive feedback



Sept. 7, 2016 David Gooblar

“You’re never too old to observe or be observed”

<https://chroniclevitae.com/news/1536-you-re-never-too-old-to-observe-or-be-observed>

“What seemed straightforward – the way you call on students, perhaps – is now revealed to be a pedagogical choice....If someone else can do things differently, so can you.....You get to peek into someone else’s bag of tricks to see how their magic is made.....change of perspective can be helpful to your teaching. What’s your class like for the student at the back of the room?”

# True or False

3.) All UTEP academic units  
(colleges/schools, departments)  
must follow the same peer observation plan.

# True or False

All UTEP academic units must follow the same peer observation plan.

**FALSE** – each academic unit may tailor the plan to fit its needs and context.

# True or False

4.) Peer observation can be used for formative or summative purposes.

# True or False

Peer observation can be used for formative or summative purposes.

**TRUE** – Just be clear each time which purpose it is.



# FORMATIVE vs. SUMMATIVE



- Story
- Like giving students HW for practice
- Feedback for ongoing **improvement** of teaching
- Frequent, informal, less public

- Snapshot
- Like giving students a common final exam
- **Evaluation** of teaching (against colleagues or external criteria) for P&T purposes, etc.
- Regular (but not frequent), formal
- Hopefully multifaceted, given the higher stakes

# Purposes are separate, but complementary

- Summative with no preceding formative is like students' opening assessment being the final exam!
- Formative with no subsequent summative never gives you a chance for solid confirmation that you are indeed improving or meeting standards.

# True or False

5.) Peer observation is just observing a peer's class.

# True or False

Peer observation is just observing a peer's class.

**FALSE** – there should also be communication before and after (as we'll discuss)

also, peer observation can be just one component of a more complete peer evaluation of teaching effectiveness



(then TEDC-chair Elena Izquierdo 11/19/2013 memo to UTEP Faculty Senate)

## Peer observation can include elements related to:

- Preparing to teach (course design, lesson plans, instructional materials, assessment strategies and techniques)
- **Performance in the classroom**
- Evaluation of the impact of teaching strategies on student learning outcomes
- Revision to ensure continuous improvement of the course

# True or False

6.) The peer observation process is discussed only between the observer and observed.

# True or False

The peer observation process is discussed only between the observer and observed.

**FALSE** – Each department/program must annually discuss the process as part of program learning outcomes assessment and identify issues that need attention.

# True or False

7.) Only full-time faculty may be observed.



# True or False

Only full-time faculty may be observed.

**FALSE** – Teaching assistants, graduate student instructors, and part-time faculty making a significant teaching contribution may also be observed, at department's discretion

# True or False

8.) CETaL's instruments/process must be used.

# True or False

CETaL's instruments/process must be used.

**FALSE** – Academic units may use/adapt CETaL options or develop its own.

# True or False

9.) The most recent CETaL material on peer observation is the 68-page booklet Bill Roberson compiled in 2006.

**PEER OBSERVATION  
AND ASSESSMENT  
OF TEACHING**  
a resource book  
for faculty, administrators, and students who teach



produced by  
CETaL and ISS

# True or False

The most recent CETaL material on peer observation is the 68-page booklet Bill Roberson compiled in 2006.

**FALSE** – In 2013-14 (after the Faculty Senate proposal), CETaL created a resource webpage that includes new instruments, etc.

# True or False

10.) There are peer observation resources that apply to an online course.

# True or False

There are peer observation resources that apply to an online course.

**TRUE** – CETaL and AT developed an instrument specifically for online courses (and we'll discuss it today).

How'd you do on the quiz?



again, a *disclaimer* before we share ideas or best practices informed by the literature, other teaching centers, etc.

- There is no one UTEP-endorsed instrument or process; it is understood that things will vary across (or even within) disciplines, so consult your academic unit accordingly.


(example of national discipline-based resource is 2013 NSF/AAAS report: <http://ccliconference.org/files/2013/11/Measuring-STEM-Teaching-Practices.pdf>)

- CETaL resource is a point of departure; your unit may adopt, adapt, or disregard.

# Refining an Academic Unit's Plan

# Units might discuss:

(<http://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/UTPeerReviewofTeachingWhitePaper-72414.pdf>)

- **Process:** What structures will comprise this unit's system for peer review of teaching?
- **Personnel:** Who will facilitate developing and sustaining this process, who will participate, and in what way? 
- **Documentation:** How will we document our work, what reports will we require, and who will have access to them?
- **Frequency:** How often and when will peer observations take place?
- **Scope:** How will we address different formats and methods (labs, field placements, classrooms, online, etc.)?
- **Preparation:** What do observers and instructors need to know, and how might we develop the necessary knowledge and skills?
- **Resources:** What is needed to support this design and its implementation?
- **Assessment:** How might we periodically review and revise this process to meet our needs?

# “Who is a peer?”

(<http://facultyinnovate.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/UTPeerReviewofTeachingWhitePaper-72414.pdf>)

Is a peer anyone who teaches in a department?

Is a peer only those with the same rank as the instructor being observed?

What is the value of a less experienced teaching peer observing a more seasoned teacher?

Does a peer observer require content expertise in relation to the class being observed?

Does the peer observer need to be recognized as a good teacher? As a teaching award winner?

Should there be variety in observers over time to provide different perspectives and feedback?

Does a peer need to have expertise in the teaching methodology and techniques being observed?

Should different people serve as peer observers for different venues (e.g., labs, field placements, classroom, online)?

# some possible considerations for academic units refining Peer Observation Plans

- output: instrument/form, reflective summary, etc.
- input: what elements beyond classroom observation?
- everyone observes vs. designated observer(s)
- scheduled vs. random; half/whole class; UG vs G?  
observer announced to class?
- can **peer** be: higher/lower rank?  
inside/outside dept./discipline?
- one observation/observer or more than one?
- different process for summative vs. formative?
- frequency for S&F options by type of instructor

# some observers also consider:

- End-of-course student evaluations
- Student input from mid-course survey (e.g., something like CETaL's FFF tool)
- Student feedback focus groups (conducted by observer with instructor out of room for 15-20 minutes)
- Effectiveness in advising or mentoring

some units may also want to allow/encourage connections to **ROTA** categories such as:

- Using technology in the classroom
- Scholarship of teaching and learning
- Discipline-related interaction with students beyond the classroom [QEP high-impact practices?]
- Continuous personal prof. development
- Teaching philosophy
- Pedagogical innovations

# Observation Implementation


involves more steps (and hours!)  
than just watching a class...



# Peer Observation Process

- Step 1: Pre-conversation
- Step 2: Observation
- Step 3: Post-conversation
- Step 4: Reflective Summary

# Pre-conversation (Step 1) suggestions

- Do it within a week before observation
- Verify it won't be a test day, film, field trip
- Gather syllabus, assessments, context of goals/nature of the course and of the lesson to be observed
- Mutually ascertain particular challenges or constraints to be looked for or considered
- Agree/confirm what instrument will be used
- Instructor asks any questions about process
- First page of CETaL form covers this 



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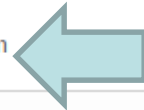
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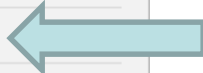
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Remember that the peer observation process is more than just observing a single class meeting. It includes a pre-

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## Pre-Observation Background Information

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA			
Teacher Name		Date	
Observer Name		Time of visit	Start: <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/> End: <input style="width: 50px;" type="text"/>
Course/Section		# Students Enrolled	
Room Location			

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE SESSION (FOCUSED ON FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE/COMPREHENSION) (NO NEED TO COMPLETE IF LESSON PLAN IS AVAILABLE; PLEASE ATTACH THE LESSON PLAN):**

1.
2.
3. Expand as needed

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES FOR THE SESSION (FOCUSED ON APPLICATION, ANALYSIS, EVALUATION, CREATIVE PROCESSES):**

1.
2.
3. Etc

**PLANNED ASSESSMENTS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE DURING THE LESSON:**

1.
2.
3. Etc

**PLANNED LEARNING ACTIVITIES FOR THE LESSON (MAY ALSO BE INFORMAL OR FORMAL ASSESSMENTS):**

- 
- 
- Etc

**LESSON ALIGNMENT WITH THE LEARNING OBJECTIVES IN THE COURSE SYLLABUS**

Does the lesson align with the learning objectives of course syllabus? Yes ; No ; Not sure ;  
 If No or Not Sure, please explain: [Click here to enter text.](#)

**INSTRUCTOR PERCEPTION OF PHYSICAL FACILITIES (ROOM LAYOUT AND SETUP, ACOUSTICS, LIGHTING, AMBIENT NOISE, SEATING, ETC)**

Room Layout

- Fixed auditorium seating
- Rows of moveable desk chairs
- Conference/seminar room with table(s) and chairs
- Classroom with tables and chairs
- **Other (please describe):**

Does instructor note any concerns with physical environment? Yes ; No

If Yes, record concerns: [Click here to enter text.](#)

# Pre-conversation: role-play!



- I'll play the peer observer
- Who volunteers to play the part of the observed faculty peer (for a current course of your choice)?

# Peer Observation Process

- Step 1: Pre-conversation
- Step 2: Observation
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# Step 2: Observation

## suggestions for observer

- watch students as well as instructor
- Don't intervene
- resist urge to compare with your style
- use instrument with structured AND open-ended parts to make sure you note all important things

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK\\_ZfY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGQmdoK_ZfY)

# Some considerations in picking and using an instrument

- Yes/no checklists don't say how effective something is
- Don't have too many things to rate in real time
- Every style has most and least effective traits
- Address classroom climate and communication
  
- Fill out background info in advance
- Be familiar with it BEFORE you observe





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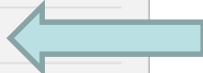
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1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
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- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- Etc

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Room Layout

- Fixed auditorium seating
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- Classroom with tables and chairs
- **Other (please describe):**

Does instructor note any concerns with physical environment? Yes ; No

If Yes, record concerns: [Click here to enter text.](#)

Please, estimate how the number of different students who spoke in class (i.e. students who asked a question; made a comment; were asked a question and answered) were distributed. Split the room in 4 quadrants and write your estimate in the appropriate quadrants below.

*FRONT OF THE ROOM*

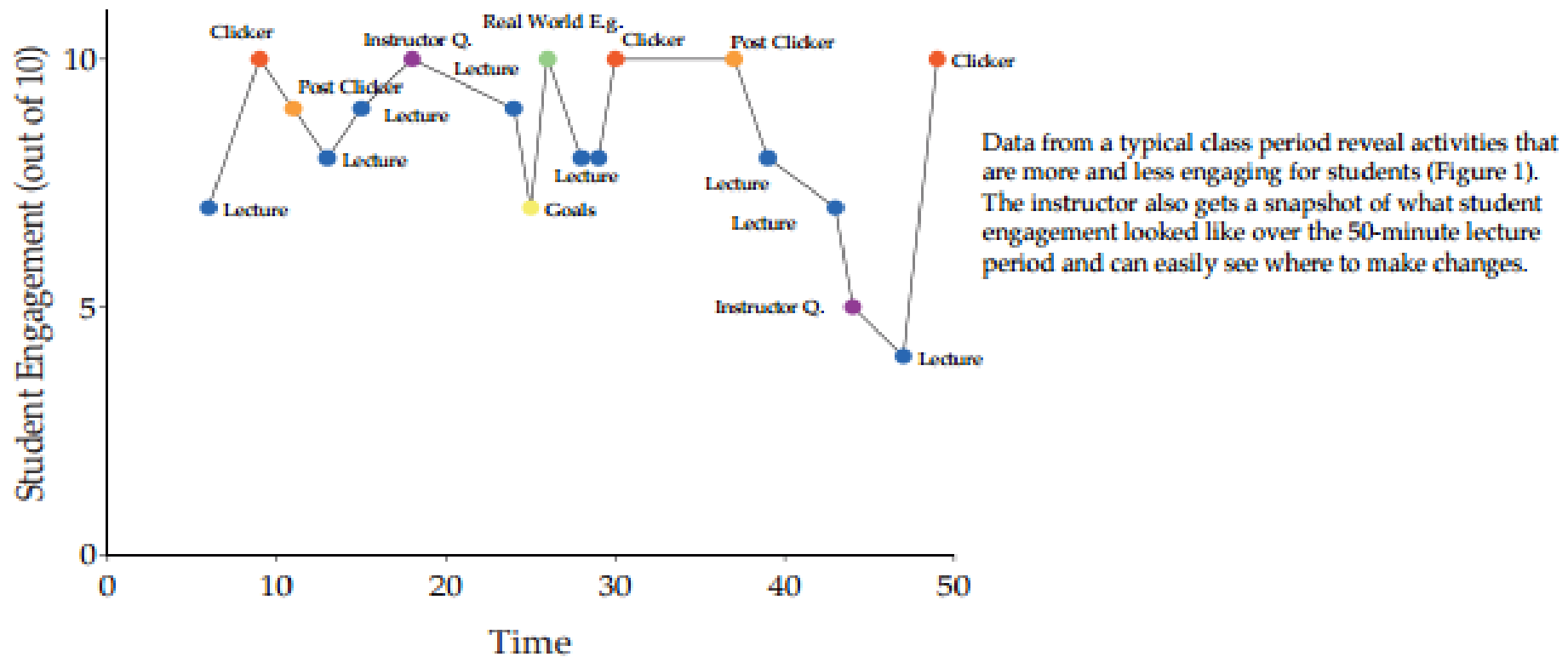

## **Time Log-Style (ethnographic) Teaching Observation Notes**

Have a clock within your view. Enter the time at which specific actions are taken by the teacher and/or the students. Feel free to expand the table or use separate pages. It is important to record actions/behavior by both the teacher and the students, especially how one influences the other. Following the session, complete the rest of the tool

<b>Time</b>	<b>What the teacher is doing</b>	<b>What students are doing</b>

# Lane & Harris (2015), *J. of College Science Teaching*

Figure 1: Student engagement over a lecture period based on teaching activities



### DISCOURSE PATTERNS (COMPLETE IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SESSION)

- When the instructor asked a question that resulted in no answers by students, what was the most common response by the instructor?
  - broke question down into simpler building-block questions
  - had students discuss the question in small groups
  - provided the answer him/herself     other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)
  
- When students answered a question, what was the most common response by the instructor?
  - moved on to the next point/topic
  - asked students to give their reasoning, elaborate, or provide examples     other: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: [Click here to enter text.](#)
  
- Please identify discourse pattern observed:
  - Silent** (students are silent, teacher talks almost all the time)
  - Controlled** (teacher controls interactions mostly by asking and answering questions;
  - Active** (the teacher facilitates while the students talk primarily to each other);
  - Mix of Silent and Controlled;
  - Mix of Controlled and Active;

NOTES

### CLASSROOM CLIMATE

Characteristic	Always	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	N/A
The instructor addressed students by name					
The instructor addressed and responded to students respectfully.					
The instructor looked at students in all parts of the room, turned in their direction and provided a sense of inclusion for all students					
The instructor walked throughout the entire room (assuming remote PPT clickers, microphone and other tools were available, and there was room to move between students)					
Student behavior suggested they were comfortable interacting with the instructor					
Instructor kindly and constructively provided goal-related feedback students could use to improve their learning and performance.					
If students disconnected from the learning process (side conversations, being disruptive, etc.), the instructor appropriately redirected their attention to the topics/task at hand					
Instructor demonstrated enthusiasm while teaching.					
Instructor asked questions beyond mere fact recall.					
			Yes	No	Uncertain
A noticeable number of students arrived and/or left early					
Did you hear disrespectful comments, questionable jokes, defensive or prejudiced remarks, rude behavior, put downs or complaints from the students?					
Did you hear disrespectful comments, questionable jokes, defensive or prejudiced remarks, rude behavior, put downs or complaints from the instructor?					

NOTES

**ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES COMPLETED BY STUDENTS TO SHOW UNDERSTANDING AND SKILL AND HOW THEY WERE USED BY THE INSTRUCTOR TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK**

Activity (One Minute Paper, Muddiest Point, assessment question, quiz, reflection, performance, defending a choice, etc)	Feedback to students
NOTES	

Please complete these four items if appropriate.

Balance of Use of Time (Teacher/Student Activity):

Highlights of most effective learning moments for students:

Highlights of least effective learning moments for students:

Additional Comments/Suggestions:

Let's have a (scaled-down) hands-on experience with the 2013 Lesser/Meeuwesen instrument

<https://vimeo.com/14018961>

- **Challenge:** finding public/authorized footage where instructor, students and visuals are all visible/audible, but viewers have no prior familiarity/bias

- **CONTEXT** for the excerpt we'll see:

First 12 minutes of a 2010 ESL teaching demonstration by Tamarah Cohen (Dept. of International Studies) at Doshisha Women's College of Liberal Arts (private college in Kyoto)

# Peer Observation Process

- Step 1: Pre-conversation
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# ideas for post-conversation (Step 3)

- Try to do within a week
- Discuss and interpret what happened
- Get additional context as needed  
(“I noticed that you.... Why did you choose that strategy and what do you think about the student response?” “Was this class typical?”)
- Encourage self-reflection rather than giving unsolicited direct advice
- Be constructive/supportive

## Step 3: post-conversation

- What do you think worked well in this class?
- What would you do differently next time?
- Did you do anything differently than you planned? Explain.
- What are your strengths and how can you build on them?
- When you said X, what did you notice about the reactions of the students?
- written record (feedback reference vs. evaluation documentation)

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# Step 4: Reflective Summary

(try to do soon after the post-conversation)

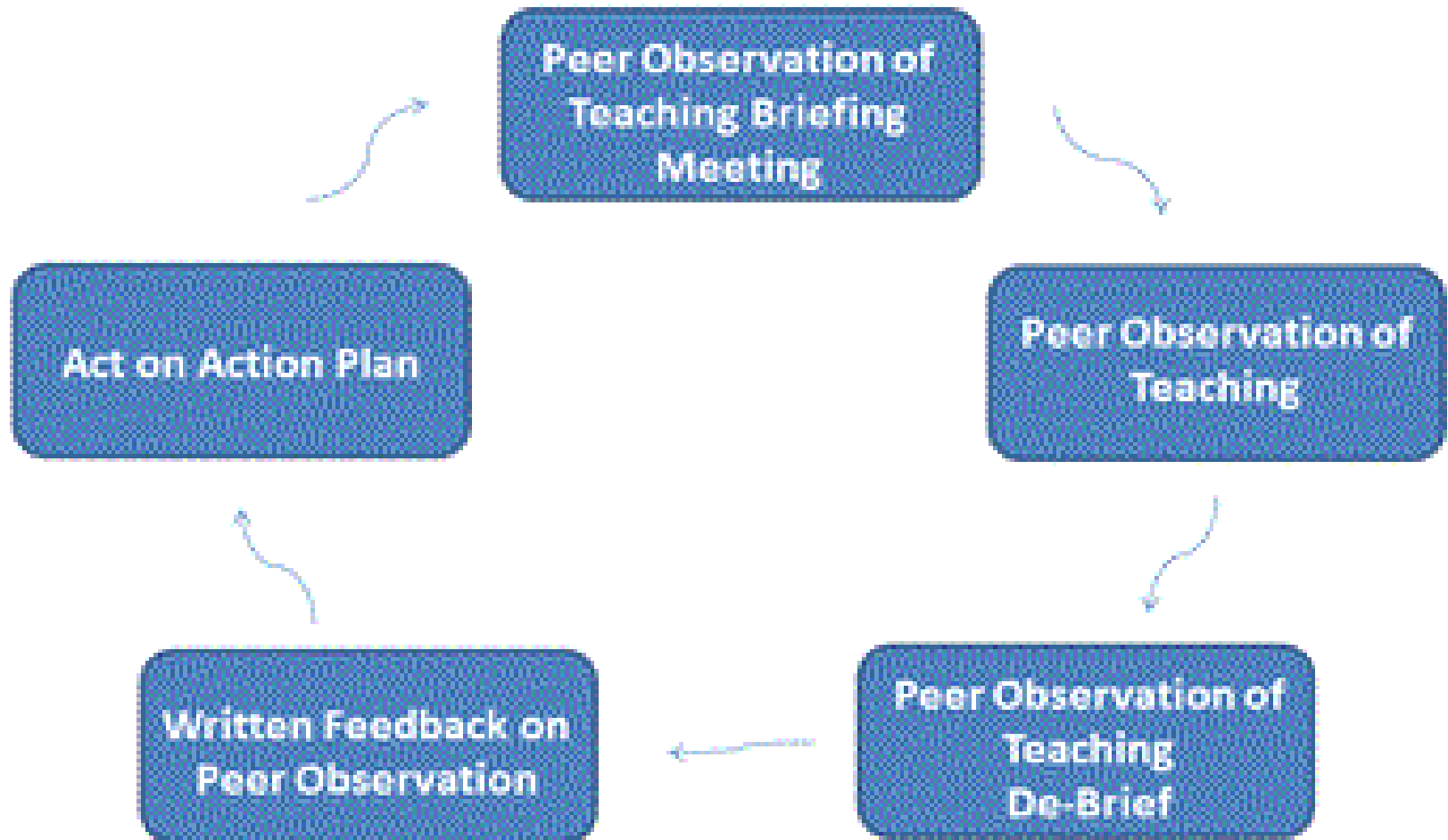
- Instructor reflects on observer feedback and on any student feedback collected
- Instructor reflects on what he/she learned about their teaching and him/herself
- Instructor plans how this will inform future teaching and professional development
- Reflective summary written by instructor (and possibly the peer observer)
- Observer writes up any needed letter

the **sequence** can be viewed as a **cycle!**

(and for greater depth/stakes, a second observation helps)

<http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/lli/developing-learning-and-teaching/enhance/peer-observation-of-teaching-1/peer-observation-of-teaching-process>

## Typical Peer Observation of Teaching Process



But what about a course  
that's mainly or only online?



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# let's explore the forms!

## Peer Evaluation of Teaching for an Online Course

Academic Technologies (AT) and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETaL) at UTEP have created this peer observation evaluation form for online teaching. Peer observation can significantly contribute to the improvement process above and beyond student evaluations of teaching because faculty peers are aware of the departmental teaching mission, the program learning outcomes, and the structure of the curriculum. This is inherently valuable in supporting teaching excellence, providing documentation in faculty promotion and tenure (and teaching award) dossiers, and implementing UTEP's policy for all academic departments and programs to have a plan for regular peer observation of teaching by faculty.

We hope to encourage:

- ❑ Collaboration among faculty members related to online teaching;
- ❑ Discussion and dissemination of best practices in online teaching and learning;
- ❑ Reflection and innovation related to online teaching and learning;
- ❑ Identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats related to online teaching and learning;
- ❑ Development of action plans to improve the quality of online teaching and learning.
- ❑ Exploration of how online teaching can yield ideas for improving assessment and interaction of technology-enhanced face-to-face teaching as well.

The self-assessment form below should be completed first by the faculty member seeking evaluation, saved as a .PDF file, and then sent to their identified peer evaluator.

The peer evaluator will then complete the assessment by completing the Peer Evaluation Form.

SELF EVALUATION

PEER EVALUATION



***Thanks for coming  
(and for your years of support!)  
What are your questions/suggestions?  
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