March 2018

Peer Observation of Teaching Guidelines

A Sourcebook for the International Liberal Arts Context

Yale NUS College

CENTRE FOR TEACHING & LEARNING

Prepared by:

Nancy W. Gleason, PhD

Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Senior Lecturer, Social Science Division

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

Catherine S. Sanger, PhD

Deputy Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning

Lecturer, Social Science Division

Yale-NUS College, Singapore

March 2018

Front Cover and Formatting: Lily Seah, Joanna Lee

For further resources or a soft copy of this document please visit
teaching.yale-nus.edu.sg

teaching.yale-nus.edu.sg

Foreword

The guidelines enclosed here outline the practices for formative and summative observations of teaching at Yale-NUS College. These guidelines have been developed by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) after receiving a mandate to do so from the Teaching, Learning, and Advising (TLA) Committee and the Academic Committee. The process of documenting and evidencing good teaching will help the community develop a commonly understood framework for describing effective teaching in its many forms.

Many members of our community have worked to ensure that the peer observation of teaching process at Yale-NUS College is based on evidence-based best practice and is sensitive to our distinctive educational environment. The evolution of the process that brings us to this point comes from four years of effort and discussion about the best way to evidence teaching. In 2014, in the College's first operational year, the Academic Policy Committee, chaired by Professor Mira Seo, developed the Faculty Teaching Assessment Guideline Document. This generated much discussion about best practice in peer observation. A further document was then developed by the newly created TLA Committee, chaired first by Marty Weissman and subsequently by Bryan Penprase, titled "Principles of Peer Observation of Teaching 2016." Following this, in December 2016, Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs Tan Tai Yong created a Task Force on Peer Observation of Teaching. The Task Force, co-chaired by Professor Mira Seo and Professor Michael Maniates, was charged with collecting information and feedback across the faculty. With extensive faculty input, a report was produced in April 2017. The TLA then took the recommendations of the Task Force and created the policy for peer observation of teaching at Yale-NUS College. That document, titled "Peer Observation of Teaching at Yale-NUS College: Principles and Guidelines" was released by the TLA Chair Kristi Lemm in June 2017, and is reproduced in the Annex B of this sourcebook. It is important to understand this inclusive and drawn-out process.

The process articulated here will be reviewed in the medium term. Feedback will be sought from faculty on what is working well and what needs adjustment. This is an exciting opportunity for our community to evidence reflective teaching practices over time and to enable us to more systematically learn from each other. Thank you in advance for the time you are putting into strengthening our teaching and learning community.

Thank you,

Nancy Gleason

Director, The Centre for Teaching and Learning

Table of Contents

I. Why We Observe: Introducing Peer Observation at Yale-NUS

From its founding, excellence and innovation in undergraduate teaching have been central to the Yale-NUS College mission. Additionally, collaboration in curriculum designs and in teaching are hallmarks of the Yale-NUS experience. Team and cross-disciplinary teaching, the integration of lectures and seminars in the common curriculum, and the celebration of diverse pedagogies across our many majors are all signature characteristics of our learning environment. Developing and maintaining a culture of teaching excellence at Yale-NUS College therefore involves the frequent visiting of each other's classrooms in both formal and informal contexts in order to make our teaching visible and valued. Yale-NUS's inaugural faculty handbook accordingly called for peer observation to be a part of the teaching practice and review process.[1]

The goal of peer observation is to document, learn from, and share ideas about teaching and learning. It is hoped that peer observation will become a routine, productive, and collegial part of life at the College to the equal benefit of observing and observed faculty. This process was developed to help good teachers become even better, more confident teachers. Ours is a reciprocal, collaborative, and developmental peer observation process befitting an innovative 'community of learning.'

Peer observation is beneficial to our culture of teaching excellence in several ways. First, peer observation helps all instructors develop best practice in teaching. Second, peer observation enables us to collaborate with and learn from colleagues. Third, the peer observation process helps to ensure that good teaching is recognised both in the collegiate culture and more specifically in tenure and promotion decisions. To achieve these inter-related ends, Yale-NUS College promotes two similar but distinct types of teaching observation – one formative, and one summative. They are detailed below.

These guidelines are designed to help observers and faculty members who are being observed get the most value from the process. The guidelines make both the formative and summative observation process transparent and clear to all faculty and to provide information on best practice in peer observation of teaching as mandated by the Yale-NUS Faculty Handbook, the Academic Committee, and the Teaching Learning and Advising Committee. This document also outlines a process with several mechanisms to choose from or combine, which should be adopted when summative observations are being conducted for inclusion in annual review and tenure/promotion files.

---

[1] Early work to develop our peer observation process included the following: "Faculty Peer Observation" 2014, prepared by the Academic Policy Committee (Mira Seo, Chair); "Principles of Peer Observation of Teaching" 2016, prepared by the Teaching, Learning, and Advising Committee (Bryan Penprase, Chair); "Task Force on Peer Observation Report" 2016/2017, prepared by Michael Maniates and Mira Seo; "Peer Observation of Teaching at Yale-NUS College: Principles and Guidelines" June 2017, prepared by the Teaching, Learning, and Advising Committee (Kristi Lemm, Chair). Notable contributions have also been made by Marty Weissman, Shaffique Adam, Philip Johns, and Dave Smith.

Formative and Summative Observation

Formative Peer Observations

Every person teaching a course (module) at Yale-NUS College, whether they are a tenured faculty member, tenure track, educator track, practice track or postdoctoral fellow, is required to visit one classroom and have their classroom visited once a year for the purpose of formative feedback and general sharing of teaching practices. Faculty are welcome to do this exercise as many times as they feel is helpful to their practice both as junior, senior or visiting faculty (though they need to ask their colleagues before visiting their classes).

Formative observations are primarily designed to provide both the observer and the faculty member with new ideas and insights into their teaching practice. Formative teaching observations give the professors being observed constructive feedback on how to evolve their teaching and to share effective practice and signature pedagogies in each other's classrooms. The observer, the faculty member being observed, or both can initiate formative observations. A formative observation *can* be as informal as a quick email inviting someone to visit your class, followed by a quick and casual debrief over coffee. This can result in reflection and feedback transmitted in verbal or written form, both, or neither. While no post-observation conversation or letter is required, we strongly encourage observers to take the time to offer reflections of some kind to the faculty member being observed.

There is no form or required training associated with this process. However, this document provides procedures and strategies on how to make the most of the process. Faculty who wish to maximise gains from formative observations will conduct them as one would a summative observation. The College recommends all faculty participate in the Centre for Teaching and Learning's (CTL's) peer observation training or similar training programmes to make formative observations as useful as possible to both observers and faculty members being observed.

Summative Peer Observations

As part of the annual review process, a faculty member is required to meet with their division director. During this discussion, the faculty member and division director will together identify at least one appropriate person to provide a summative peer observation (hereafter called "Observer"). In cases where there is no appropriate faculty member available at Yale-NUS, colleagues at NUS could be considered. The peer observation should then be done before the next annual review. If the first contacted observer is unable to conduct the observation during this time period for any reason, then the faculty member will contact the next agreed-upon observer. The instructor and observer will arrange in advance the appropriate dates and number of classes to be observed, and schedule pre- and post-observation meetings. The faculty member may choose which classes to have observed.

To ensure consistency and fairness, all summative observers should receive training by the Centre for Teaching and Learning and make use of criteria to guide their observations. (See below under "Good Practices in Undergraduate Teaching.") The observer should meet with the faculty member and share their report no more than two weeks after the observation.

A copy of the report must be made available to the faculty member. The faculty member should then upload this document to their file during their annual or third-year review process, and include it in any tenure and promotion dossiers. The faculty member can choose to provide a written response or reflection that will be included, along with the original summative letter, in their file. In extreme cases only, if a faculty member feels that a letter is unprofessional or unfair, they may ask the Dean of

Faculty to omit the letter from their file. In such extreme cases, the professor should meet with their division director to determine another observer to conduct an additional observation.[2]

Summative observations function are much like, and have the benefits of, formative observations with an additional outcome of generating written, evaluative feedback for inclusion in the observed faculty member's third-year review and tenure/promotion files. For this reason, the process of conducting and writing a summative observation should be done thoughtfully and deliberately. The faculty member to be observed typically initiates summative observations.

Importantly, summative peer observation provides data that is quite different from the more traditional method of teaching assessment: student evaluations. Student evaluations provide important insight into students' perceptions of their own learning experiences and are valuable to individual faculty and to the College. However, student evaluations can also be incomplete, imprecise, and subject to bias. Faculty peers are also teaching practitioners who understand the opportunities and challenges involved in teaching at Yale-NUS. Summative peer observation therefore provides significant and complementary information for faculty self-improvement and the formal review process.

Terminology and Scope

Observer vs. Faculty Member: Although all peer observation participants are faculty members, in these guidelines we refer to "observers" for faculty doing the observing and "faculty member" or "professor" for faculty being observed.

Course vs. Class: For the purposes of this document, "course" refers to a semester-long unit of instruction that typically focuses on a particular subject. "Courses" at Yale-NUS are also sometimes called "modules." "Class" refers to a specific meeting within that course. For example, one could perform an observation of the Tuesday October 4th "class" of the Academic Year 2017-18, Semester 1 Quantitative Reasoning "course."

Peer Observation of Teaching vs. Course Design: This document is designed to facilitate peer review of *teaching*. This is different from a review of *course design*. Teaching observations emphasise the goals, techniques, and activities designed to promote student learning in a particular class. Course design, by contrast, pertains to an entire course, including syllabus, assignments and assessments, readings, and both in-class and take-home learning activities. A faculty member may, in conversation with the observer, opt to take a broad approach and seek feedback on their entire course design during either a formative or summative course observation. However the observer's core job is not to review an entire course; it is to offer description, analysis, and where applicable suggest ideas relevant to a faculty member's pedagogical practice as observed over one or more classroom visits.

---

[2] Our process is inspired and adapted from content developed by the University of Virginia Center for Teaching Excellence, "Peer Observation of Teaching," accessed February 26, 2018, from http://cte.virginia.edu/resources/peer-observation-of-teaching/; Northeastern University Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning Through Research, "Faculty Peer Observation and Feedback," accessed February 26, 2018, from https://www.northeastern.edu/learningresearch/teaching-support/improving-and-documenting-teaching-effectiveness/faculty-peer-observation-feedback/.

Distinguishing Formative and Summative Observation

	Formative	Summative
Observer Gains	Learn new strategies, consider new ideas, and contribute to peer's professional development.	
Faculty Member Gains	Greater self-awareness, intentionality, insight into achievement of student learning goals and of generally relevant good practices in education. Opportunity to demonstrate reflective practice and self-assess improvement in teaching over time.	Evidence of development as an educator, commitment to teaching excellence, and teaching effectiveness. Complement to student evaluations. Evidence of reflective practice and improvement which can be referenced in teaching statements.
Format	Observer or faculty member can initiate request. Up to participants – can be very informal or more structured following summative observation protocol.	Faculty member initiates request for summative observation, consulting with divisional director to select appropriate observer. Pre-observation conversation → One or more classroom visits→ Post-observation conversation → Formal written report shared with faculty member and submitted to file.
Timing & Number of Observations	Annually – Every faculty member, including visiting and tenured faculty, should conduct and receive a formative observation every year they are teaching at the College. Faculty can request additional formative observations from colleagues if desired.	Annually – Every faculty member except those who already attained the highest rank in their appointment should receive summative observation every year they teach at the College. Under normal circumstances, a faculty member should have at least 2 letters by third year review, and 5 letters by tenure and promotion review. There are short-term contingencies for current faculty explained in Annex B report from the TLA Committee. Faculty should generally only request one summative observation each year given the amount of time it takes from colleagues to conduct a summative observation. Faculty are not required to offer summative observations to their colleagues.
Training	Recommended, Not Required	Strongly Recommended – this is important for fairness, to mitigate implicit bias, and promote evaluative consistency across the faculty.
What to Observe	1. Faculty member's own teaching goals and techniques. 2. Indicators of achievement of faculty member's teaching goals. 3. Areas for improvement or innovation in achievement of those teaching goals and execution of teaching strategies. 4. Evidence of teaching excellence consistent with indicators of good practice in undergraduate teaching. 5. Areas for improvement to better align with good practice in undergraduate teaching.	
How to	Can be very informal data	Strongly encouraged to use some structured note-

Observe	collection and reflection-in-the-moment. Encouraged to use more structured data collection tools – see Observation Organisers below.	taking method to focus and record observation. See below for some suggested Observation Organisers.
Reporting & Deliverables	All faculty will be prompted in their annual review to provide the names and dates of observations they have performed and received. No formal letter or report is required. Individual observers may want to provide some written feedback to the faculty member they observed. Reflective writing about the experience in the annual review by both observer and faculty being observed is recommended, though not required, to consolidate and communicate professional development from the experience.	All summative observations should conclude with a letter provided by the observer to the faculty member. Faculty will then be prompted in their annual review, third year review, and tenure/promotion processes to upload/ attach summative letters written about their teaching with other teaching portfolio materials. Faculty will have the opportunity to include a reflection or response to each summative letter when they upload it to their file. This is an opportunity to offer any context they feel should be highlighted or may be missing in the letter.

II. What we Observe

In a peer observation of teaching, we seek to identify characteristics of the classroom experience that promote student learning. The observation is on the teaching and should not be a critique of course content, but rather how the given content is taught and at what pitch for the given level of course and students.

In both a formative and summative context, the observer's purpose is three-fold: 1) to identify and assess the observed faculty member's achievement of their own teaching goals; 2) to assess the observed faculty member's achievement of broadly conceived "good practice in undergraduate education" (Chickering and Gamson, 1987); and 3) to gain new ideas and be inspired by the faculty member's practices.

During an observation, the observer will *look for evidence of alignment between the faculty member's goals and student learning*. Observers should be looking for indicators and processes of student learning and engagement (e.g. questions and comments, note-taking, energy of small group discussions, volume and quality of student participation, student-to-student and student-teacher interaction). In focusing their attention during a classroom visit, and especially during a summative visit, observers should concentrate on the faculty member's priority areas or concerns. Ask yourself: Is the faculty member achieving their priority learning outcomes? Are class dynamics conducive to successful learning environment as the professor has defined it? Is the professor's persona and tone what they aspire to project? In this sense, the observer's role is not to give advice or teach colleagues about a particular approach to teaching. Instead, the observer's primary aim is to understand, observe, and help colleagues articulate their own pedagogical goals and then to consider how they are achieving those goals. Note that professors teaching in common curriculum lectures and seminars may be trying to achieve learning goals developed by other faculty, which is different from implementing your own learning aims. Teaching in the common curriculum also sometimes entails executing someone else's learning activities, rather than designing your own. Common curriculum teaching should be observed as such.

Second, whether conducting a formative or summative observation, the *observer should focus on indicators of "good practice in undergraduate education."[3]* Instructors who are employing such "good practices" would exhibit these elements as relevant to their own pedagogical priorities and the Yale-NUS College context. Criteria for this approach are offered below under "Good Practices in Undergraduate Education" and we have suggested three different but complementary Observation Organisers to help structure note-taking during the observation itself. Do keep in mind that no single teacher or class will exhibit all 'good practices,' as some may be more appropriate to certain disciplines, pedagogical styles, and formats (lecture, seminar discussion, lab, etc.).

Given these goals, in both formative and summative observations, *take some time to consider the following dimensions of good teaching and what evidence you can look for* during the class visit to assess these elements of teaching and learning. The following indicators of student learning should be observed, described, and when appropriate evaluated. Be mindful that there are many different styles of teaching, each with strengths and possible drawbacks. For that reason, *the*

---

[3] Chickering, Arthur W., and Zelda F. Gamson, "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education," *American Association for Higher Education Bulletin*, March 1987. Many have offered evidence-based research on what makes effective teaching and learning. See Glassick, Charles E., Mary T. Huber, and Gene I. Maeroff, *Scholarship assessed: evaluation of the professoriate* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997); Felton, Peter. "Principles of Good Practice in SoTL," *Teaching & Learning Inquiry* 1, no. 1 (2013): 121–125; and Holmgren Rick, and Bryan Penprase, "A Class Visit Model," 2002. In addition to identifying good practices in teaching, peer observations should foster a "scholarly approach" to self-reflection and assessment of other's teaching (as outlined by Glassick, Huber, and Maeroff).

emphasis should be on how well the professor is achieving their learning goals, not the goals the observer applies to their own teaching practice.[4]

Good Practices in Undergraduate Teaching

The following are traits of effective undergraduate teaching that promote student learning. This list is expansive, but not compressive. Moreover, **no single class, lecture, lab, or other teaching encounter will showcase all of these qualities equally or simultaneously**. Different professors will prioritise and excel at different elements of good practice or choose to elevate some practices over others across different kinds of courses. For example, some practices are more vital in an introductory course than in an advanced course, or more relevant in a seminar than in a lecture. **Observers should be looking for evidence of these practices, but they should not expect to see all of them in any given class visit**.

Clarity, Structure, and Format
- Clearly articulated goals and expectations for student learning.
- Different elements of the class fit together in discernible ways and the class is organised appropriately given stated goals.
- Time allocation across different learning activities aligns with stated learning objectives.
- Professor helps students transition to new topics and tasks
- Professor summarises key points and core take-away lessons.
- Professor has adequately prepared relevant materials and activities (e.g. if slides are used they are generally concise; students visibly attentive).

Student Engagement & Participation
- Students seem to be excited and engaged by the professor, whether during lecture or briefer periods of instruction. This can be inferred from note taking, eye contact, alertness, laughter, and other subtle cues.
- Describe the volume, quality, and evidence of student engagement and attention. Describe (even quantify) the frequency and depth of students contributing to each other's learning, indicators of listening, and productive responses.
- Students are having an engaging and interactive experience in the classroom.
- Students appear prepared for learning. They have relevant materials with them in class and seem to have done preparatory reading or other forms of preparation.
- The professor facilitates active learning (as opposed to passive information transfer).
- High quality and volume of interaction between students and faculty.
- High quality and volume of interaction, and collaboration, among students.
- Student contributions push the conversation forward. Student contributions indicate excitement and engagement with course material.
- Class furthers/ builds upon learners' existing knowledge and skill. High expectations for learning are communicated and met.
- The professor encourages learners to share relevant information and experiences with the class.

---

[4] Learning goals refer to the education and growth which a professor intends for students in a particular lesson or course. This can be specific content that would be learned and understood as well as skills which would be developed such as close reading or methodology. Learning outcomes refers to the actual learning (as opposed to intended learning) which students gain from a course and is typically established through some sort of measurement or assessment technique such as in-take and out-take assessment comparisons, exams, essays, focus groups, or student questionnaires.

- What number of students participate verbally during class, are actively taking class notes, or instead seem distracted or uninterested (e.g. checking social media, nodding off). Of those who do not contribute verbally, what are indicators that might explain this behaviour?
- Faculty member allows for silence.
- The professor encourages learners to share what they have learned.
- The professor engages the whole class. If the professor has certain 'blind spots' describe them and perhaps draw a picture to present during the post-observation conversation.

Accessibility and Responsiveness to Student Learning Needs
- Learning activities and instructional techniques address a range of learner levels and needs. The faculty member responds to diverse talents and ways of learning (e.g. integrating verbal instruction and visual aids).
- Students given different kinds of opportunities and vehicles for expression, asking questions, and trying out new ideas. (E.g. are they invited to speak, to graph on the board, to share written analysis with peers, etc.)
- The professor encourages learners to voice uncertainty and ask questions.
- The professor checks on student learning in real time and adjusts as needed (e.g. polls, asking if questions, using clickers, quick writing exercises)? The professor solicits learner feedback during or outside of class.

Inclusivity and Responsiveness to Diverse Cultural Contexts
- Attention should be paid to atmosphere, gender balance, and nationality. Do you observe patterns indicating a relationship between students' engagement and their race, gender, ethnicity, cohort, or other identities?
- The professor acknowledges and responds to different cultural approaches to class participation. Describe student-student dynamics – do students use each other's names, reference each other's past comments, both contribute and let others contribute?

Teaching Strategies and Instructional Techniques
- The professor demonstrates the importance of the topic(s) being covered; enthusiasm for topic through voice, eye contact, energy, movement and/or body language.
- The professor demonstrates command of the subject matter (e.g. cites the literature, refers to overarching subject area, draws upon personal experiences, speaks to advances or current controversies in the field, and/or provides informative answers to questions).
- Describe the classroom activities and assess how well they line-up with the faculty member's stated learning goals. What kind of learning do these activities promote? Content memorisation? Critical inquiry/ active learning? Problem-based learning? If there are student presentations or discussions and how do they fit into learning goals? Has the professor selected appropriate teaching methods relative to teaching goals?[5]
- Describe verbal, visual, and experiential teaching techniques.
- How does the professor communicate information to the class? Are instructional activities primarily unidirectional, e.g. lecture-based, or more interactive, e.g. collaborative discussion. Does that align with the professor's own learning aims?
- How is technology incorporated and is it effective?
- Learning aids/ materials (handouts/slides/recordings) amplify and promote desired learning. Audio and/ or visual aids reinforce the content effectively.

---

[5] Learning goals refer to the education and growth that a professor intends for students in a particular lesson or course. This can be specific content, factual knowledge, or literature, which would be learned and understood. Learning goals can also include skills that would be developed such as close reading, group problem-solving, or methodological tools.

- For discussion-based courses, the professor promotes discussion and probes learner's thought process.
- For problem-solving courses, the professor encourages individual and team-based problem solving.

Professor's Accessibility and Interpersonal Style
- The professor gets to know students and identifies their interests and needs. The professor uses student names, seems responsive, notices when hands are raised.
- The professor demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching and the subject matter.
- The professor models the kind of engagement and participation they want from students.
- The professor is in command of the space, format, and learning activities.
- The professor is audible and easy to understand.
- What is the faculty member's physical presence – facing students or with back to students, stationary or very active, sitting or standing, privileging a particular space or part of the room?
- The professor member effectively responds to questions, disagreements, or critiques.

Achievement of Broad Yale-NUS Learning Goals
- Is there evidence of cooperative and collaborative learning?
- Are students engaged in sophisticated analysis, articulation, and dialogue? Is the rigor of discussion appropriate to the course level?
- Does the professor challenge learner's assumptions and push them to explore their own reasoning?
- Does the professor foster active learning, e.g. by asking open-ended, analytic, or evaluative questions?
- Are students developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills?
- Are students learning about the world and people around them with nuance and sensitivity?
- Are students making connections across disciplines and approaches?
- Does the professor refer to and expect students to be aware of both lecture and seminar content? Do the students show evidence of integrating lecture and seminar learning?
- Are students developing the capacity to do independent and rigorous research?
- Are students considering ethical dimensions of the class subject matter?
- Is there careful consideration of student diversity and intellectual inclusion? To what extent does this class embody our goals for productive and respectful intercultural engagement?

Overall Successes and Areas for Improvement or Experimentation
- Review the faculty member's stated learning goals for the course and for this specific class. Is there evidence of this learning based on students' verbal and non-verbal communication, in their behaviour, or based on your own learning in the class?
- Referencing "good practices" in undergraduate teaching, and the professor's own stated goals for student learning, what was most effective and least effective about the class? Which of the faculty member's learning aims are being achieved most robustly and which appear to be less successful?

Managing Implicit Bias

The Problem of Implicit Bias in Faculty Assessment

"Implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that unconsciously affect our understanding, actions, and decisions. These biases include both favourable and unfavourable assessments, and are activated without one's awareness or intentional control. Individuals therefore do not consciously hide these biases, and they also do not necessarily

align with our declared beliefs. Instead, implicit biases are inaccessible to one's conscious mind. Early life experiences and the media are common origins of implicit associations."[6]

We call attention to implicit bias in this document not to suggest that faculty would intentionally observe each other or write about each other's teaching in a biased way. The term *implicit* bias is powerful because it highlights the fact that we are all vulnerable to unconsciously held ways of thinking and interpreting each other's behaviours. Having unconsciously held attitudes, heuristics, and even stereotypes does not make us bad people – it makes us people. But despite these ingrained tendencies, we have the capacity to bring more nuanced thinking to the fore when we need to. No one enters into a peer observation process intending to act from bias. But it can happen if we do not take the time to reflect on possible biases we hold and check in with ourselves during the peer observation process to make sure we are not describing or judging our colleague's teaching through a biased lens.

One of the reasons to add peer observations into our review and promotion process is to complement student teaching evaluations, which are frequently tainted by implicit bias. For example, in an experiment in which female assistant instructors in an online class each operated under two different gender identities, students consistently gave perceived male instructors higher ratings.[7] Other studies conducted in the US showed that racial minority faculty members receive lower teaching evaluations than do majority instructors, and non-native English speakers receive substantially lower ratings than do native English speakers. This is not a US-specific problem. Here in Singapore, there are concerns that local students continue to hold favourable attitudes towards white professors due more to their race than teaching skill.[8]

Implicit bias is not just a problem in student evaluations. ***Faculty can also act from implicit bias in their evaluations of each other***. This is documented in research on academic hiring and promotion practices, showing in particular that women and racial minorities can be subject to misperceptions that they are less competent.[9] For example, one study found that external reviewers and research committee members displayed an unconscious gender bias when reviewing curricula vitae to hire job applicants. Notably, in this study both men and women were more likely to vote to hire a male job applicant than a female job applicant with an identical record. Readers of both sexes reported that the male job applicant had adequate teaching, research, and service experience, whereas the female job

---

[6] Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, *2015–2016 Biennial Report* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2017).

[7] MacNell, Lillian, Adam Driscoll, and Andrea N. Hun, "What's in a Name: Exposing Gender Bias in Student Ratings of Teaching," *Innovative Higher Education* 40, no.4 (2015): 291–303; Boring, Anne, "Gender Biases In Student Evaluations Of Teaching," *Journal of Public Economics* 145, (2017): 27–41; Wagner, Natascha, Matthias Rieger, and Katherine Voorvelt, "Gender, Ethnicity and Teaching Evaluations: Evidence From Mixed Teaching Teams," *Economics of Education Review* 54, (2016): 79–94.

[8] "Research suggests students are biased against female lecturers," *The Economist,* September 21, 2017, accessed February 26, 2018, from https://www.economist.com/news/science-and-technology/21729426-how-long-does-prejudice-last-research-suggests-students-are-biased-against; Hamermesh, Daniel S., and Amy Parker, "Beauty in the classroom: instructors' pulchritude and putative pedagogical productivity," *Economics of Education Review* 24, no. 4 (2005): 369–376; Lim, Linda, "Asian Students Still Idolize Western Professors," *Wall Street Journal*, July 27, 2017.

[9] For a review of research on gendered bias in academia, from hiring trends to treatment by colleagues to promotion – including how bias impacts recommendation letters, how we read cover letters and curriculum vitae, and how we assess teaching, research, and service – see Chenoweth, Erica, Page Fortna, Sara Mitchell, Burcu Savun, Jessica Weeks, and Kathleen Cunningham, "How to Get Tenure (If You're a Woman)," *Foreign Policy,* April 18, 2016, accessed February 26, 2018, from www.foreignpolicy.com/2016/04/19/how-to-get-tenure-if-youre-a-woman-academia-stephen-walt/; Trix, Frances, and Carolyn Psenka, "Exploring the color of glass: letters of recommendation for female and male medical faculty," *Discourse & Society* 14, no. 2 (2003): 191–220; Phelan, Julie E., Corinne A. Moss-Racusin, and Laurie A. Rudman, "Competent yet out in the cold: shifting criteria for hiring reflect backlash towards agentic women," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (2008): 406–413; Maliniak, Daniel, Ryan Powers, and Barbara F. Walter, "The Gender Citation Gap in International Relations," *International Organization* 67, no. 4 (2013): 889–922; Shaw, Claire, "Stories of sexism in science: 'sorry about all the women in this laboratory'," *The Guardian,* June 12, 2015, accessed February 26, 2018, from https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2015/jun/12/stories-of-sexism-in-science-sorry-about-all-the-women-in-this-laboratory.

applicant with an identical record received less favourable assessment in these areas.[10] In another piece of refereed research, evaluators perceived competent women in clear leadership roles as less likeable, and colleagues were less likely to recommend them for hiring or promotion.[11] Another analysis, conducted on over 300 letters of recommendation for medical school faculty, "found that letters about women tend to be shorter and focus on personality traits. Letters about men typically feature superlatives about their aptitudes and abilities, and letters for men contained more standout adjectives, such as *superb, outstanding*, and *remarkable.*"[12] Another study has shown that while men are tenured at roughly the same rate regardless of whether they co-author or solo-author, women become less likely to receive tenure the more they co-author.[13]

While these examples have focused on biased evaluation of female faculty, faculty from traditionally marginalised ethnic groups as well as gender non-conforming, overweight, and less able-bodied faculty may be the subject of biased evaluation. Ageism, which can lead to biased assessments of younger and older faculty alike, is also something to guard against. Importantly, research shows that faculty often act from bias even when evaluating peers within their same identity groups (e.g. an Asian female observing an Asian female colleague can still interpret behaviour through biased gendered and racial frames.)

Put differently, we all need to confront and manage our implicit biases when conducting peer observations, and any other professional responsibility.

Minimizing Implicit Bias in Peer Observation

Though implicit biases are powerful and difficult to overcome, there are steps you can take to gain greater awareness of your own implicit biases and mitigate their effects. With effort, you can grow more aware of your own implicit biases and work to dismantle them.

First, before conducting an observation, ***take some time to reflect*** upon possible implicit biases, especially ones that will surface when observing this particular peer.
   a. Ask yourself difficult questions about the judgements you make about others. Do you find yourself more comfortable with some groups of people over others? What are you assuming about a person or group of people? Are those judgements based on stereotypes?
   b. Ask people you trust if they have noticed any particular biases. Have an open conversation about your patterns of behaviour with respect to different gender, racial, socio-economic, and other identities.

---

[10] Steinpreis, Rhea E., Katie A. Anders, and Dawn Ritzke, "The Impact of Gender on the Review of the Curricula Vitae of Job Applicants and Tenure Candidates: A National Empirical Study," *Sex Roles* 41, no. 7–8 (1999): 509–528.

[11] Eagly, A. H., and S. J. Karau. "Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders," *Psychological Review* 109, no. 3 (2002): 573–598; Ridgeway, Cecilia L., "Gender, Status, and Leadership," *Journal of Social Issues* 57, no. 4 (2001): 637–655; Heilman, Madeline E., "The impact of situational factors on personnel decisions concerning women: Varying the se composition of the applicant pool," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 26, no. 3 (1980): 386–395; Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences, "Implicit Bias," accessed February 26, 2018, from https://www.philosophy.rutgers.edu/graduate-program/climate/133-graduate/climate/529-climate-of-women-implicit-bias.

[12] Trix and Psenka, "Exploring the color of glass." See similar results in an even larger study by Madera, J. M., M. R. Hebl, and R. C. Martin, "Gender and Letters of Recommendation for Academia: Agentic and Communal Differences," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94, no. 6 (2009): 1591–1599.

[13] While an additional publication is correlated with a roughly 4 percentage point increase in tenure probability for both men and women, women are consistently 17 percentage points less likely to receive tenure than men conditional on having written the same number of papers of similar quality. See Sarsons, Heather, "Recognition for Group Work," *American Economic Review* 107, no. 5 (2017): 141–145.

c. Take the Implicit Association Test, which measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unaware they hold. There are several different tests to choose from. (https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/education.html)

Second, think about past actions and *how your biases may have hindered opportunity for others,* even if unintentionally*.* Acknowledging the impact of your biases on others can motivate you to be more self-aware and to control your biases in the future.

Third, *check in with yourself* while conducting an observation. Every so often ask, "Would I interpret this the same way if the professor represented another gender identity, race, age, language group, etc.?"

Note that *bias shows up not only in negative observations, but also positive ones*. In writing summative observation letters, avoid references to how hard a colleague works, inclusion of irrelevant personal information, and ambiguous praise.*[14]* For example, someone might observe an impressive female faculty member and write "Her effort and dedication is all the more impressive when you consider she has kids at home!" This may seem like praise, but ask yourself if you would write the same thing if the colleague was a male professor? Similarly, in observing faculty whose primary language is not the language of instruction, one might make a comment like "the professor goes to great lengths to be understood." This is meant to be positive, but has the impact of implying that the professor is difficult to understand. A more useful approach would be to acknowledge openly that this faculty's primary language is not English, but offer specific details on how the faculty member has developed strategies to ensure students understand what is being taught despite their accent (e.g. noting the complementary use of white boards, slides, handouts, etc.) or if appropriate note that this is an area which may need some improvement.

Lastly, **be specific, and be consistent in standards you apply** across the peers you observe. Minimizing the impact of implicit bias is one reason to use a standardised, criteria-based approach in all observations. *The Criteria Organiser available at the end of this document can help you evaluate specifically identified criteria and curb implicit bias.*

---

[14] "A study of over 300 recommendation letters for medical faculty hired by a large U.S. medical school found that letters for female applicants differed systematically from those for males. Letters written for women were shorter, provided "minimal assurance" rather than solid recommendation, raised more doubts, portrayed women as students and teachers while portraying men as researchers and professionals, and more frequently mentioned women's personal lives." Quoted from Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences, "Implicit Bias."

III. Who and When We Observe

Who Receives Observations

Formative observation is required of all faculty at all ranks, including visiting faculty. All faculty will be expected to have their own teaching observed, and to observe another faculty member's teaching, at least once per year in which they are teaching at least one course. Faculty teaching in the common curriculum are having their teaching observed by peers quite frequently and can request their common curriculum colleagues to conduct formative observations for them as well.

Summative observation is required for all faculty who will participate in third year review and undergo tenure and promotion review. Faculty who have attained the highest rank in their appointment (e.g. professors with a tenure track appointment, professors with a non-tenured practice appointment and associate professors with an educator track appointment) do not need to undergo summative observation. Ideally, all relevant faculty should have one summative observation letter in their file for every year they teach at Yale-NUS. Therefore, most faculty up for third year review should have at least 2 letters and faculty up for tenure and promotion should have at least 5 letters. Faculty with leaves under special circumstances should consult the Associate Dean of Faculty Development to determine the appropriate number of summative letters for their files.

Who Conducts Observations

Any faculty member can perform formative or summative teaching observation. Importantly, **faculty should not feel bound to select observers from within their own field of expertise**. The focus of peer observation is student learning, not the disciplinary content being taught per se. Faculty may want to invite observation from someone within their field for one class, and from a different field for another class. In fact, it may be more productive to be observed by someone from a different discipline who will not get distracted by subject matter and instead will focus on documenting and analysing teaching effectiveness. **Cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, and cross-generational observations may allow for more creative and transformative exchange**, as a chemist could suggest a pedagogical technique with which an anthropologist would not previously be familiar, and vice versa.

Faculty serving on third year review and tenure/promotion committees should generally abstain from conducting summative observations for colleagues they will be reviewing that year. Many Yale-NUS faculty members do team teaching and we encourage team members to solicit feedback from each other if they feel comfortable doing so. However, we also encourage faculty to ask colleagues who are not in their teaching team to perform summative observations. Team-members may be too close to the material or may have a harder time giving critical feedback for fear of disrupting team dynamics. We may therefore get more useful and honest feedback from someone with whom we are not currently co-teaching.

In both processes, the **faculty member to be observed has considerable autonomy in selecting their observer**. For formative observations, both observer and faculty member can request the observation. In summative, the faculty member will first consult with their division director during the Annual Review process the year before to identify a list of appropriate observers. The CTL will then pair up a given faculty member with one of their observers from their preferred list.

All faculty, and especially **those conducting summative observations, should participate in the Centre for Teaching and Learning's "Peer Observation Training," or equivalent** professional development training, prior to conducting an observation. However, faculty are not formally required to have received this training to do an observation.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning also offers formative and summative teaching observations. Please contact Nancy.Gleason@yale-nus.edu.sg or Catherine.Sanger@yale-nus.edu.sg, or email teaching@yale-nus.edu.sg, to schedule an observation. We are also available to help faculty adapt to and implement the feedback they receive from observations by other faculty, into their annual teaching statements, their third-year review, or their tenure and promotion dossier.

Guidance on the Timing of Observations

It is the responsibility of the observed faculty member to arrange the observation. The observer and faculty member should arrive at a mutually conducive date together. Surprise observations are not appropriate. The middle of the semester is generally the ideal time to perform peer observations. During the first few weeks of a new term, faculty are still learning their students' needs and establishing class dynamics. Additionally, the first few weeks are often focused on laying the groundwork and therefore may not showcase professors' most effective or innovative teaching strategies. In the end of term, class time is often consumed with student presentations or in-class assessments, which may not be very illuminating if the goal is to observe faculty teaching. Of course, there may be specific cases where a faculty member requests to be observed early or late in the semester in order to get feedback on a particular teaching technique. For example, a professor who is having a particularly difficult time or doubting their approach may want to be observed very early in the semester to solicit corrective advice from a peer. Faculty members should choose a day which best represents how they engage learners in the classroom. Therefore exams, field trips, and student presentations are generally not appropriate for this process unless there is a specific reason to observe this in a formal summative manner.

The observer should also plan to come a bit early and stay a bit late so they can observe the way learning is structured as students enter and leave the class. If conducting summative observation, observers may want to visit more than one class session in order to get a fuller picture.

IV. Suggested Process for Formative Observation

A formative observation *can* be as informal as an email inviting someone to visit your class, followed by a quick and casual debrief over coffee. There is no required written feedback. The reporting protocol is quite simple: both observer and faculty member will be prompted to record the basic details of the observation (date, faculty member observed, course title) in their online annual review.

However, if time were not a constraint, formative and summative observations would *ideally* follow roughly the same process. This would give both observer and faculty member richer insights and make the formative experience more effective practice for summative observations. Therefore, though mindful of time constraints, we encourage colleagues conducting formative observations to consult the process we outline below under "Suggested Process for Summative Observation" and consider including some elements of the summative process into their formative observation exercise.

V. Suggested Process for Summative Observation

Summative observations should follow a four-part process: **pre-observation conversation, classroom observation(s), post-observation conversation, reflection and feedback**.

1. **Pre-Observation Conversation**: Meet to discuss pre-observation questions, establish ground-rules and clarify expectations. Observer should review the course syllabus and other course materials to learn how the class to be observed fits into the larger course design. (One week prior to classroom observation.)
2. **Classroom Observation**: Observer attends class and quietly observes, taking notes on teaching strategies and evidence of student learning.
3. **Post-Observation Conversation**: Observer and faculty member meet, faculty member shares own experience and self-assessment. Observer shares observations and feedback verbally and/or in writing, and invites faculty member to share concerns and points of clarification. (Two/three days after observation.)
4. **Feedback**: Observer writes a formal letter based on classroom observations and pre- and post-observation conversations. This letter should include an overall assessment of the teaching observed. Observer sends a summative letter to the faculty member, who then uploads the letter to their review and/or tenure and promotion file, along with his or her own reflections and elaborations if they so choose. (Please see sample summative letter format below.)[15]

Step 1: Pre-Observation Conversation

To avoid mapping their own goals unproductively on their peers, observers need to understand their colleague's own teaching aims. The goal of the pre-observation conversation is for the observer to learn the faculty member's overarching goals for student learning, for the class(es) being observed, and the strategies they use to achieve those objectives. *We also recommend that the syllabus is shared and the broader context of the course is made clear to the observer.* Reviewing the syllabus will help the observer situate the specific class to be observed within a broader learning trajectory. Sharing the syllabus will also enable the observer to offer feedback on teaching effectiveness which is sensitive to their colleague's course design.

The pre-observation conversation is also an opportunity for the observer to learn about areas of particular pride or concern to the faculty member, so they can be sure to concentrate, document, and if appropriate offer suggestions in these areas.

In clarifying expectations prior to the observation, the faculty member should explain whether they are inviting the observer to perform a formative or summative observation. While the process is likely to be relatively similar, the outcome is different. And while ideally a formative observation would be done with the same care as a summative, given time constraints it is possible that observers will be more thorough when performing a summative observation. For that reason, it is important to clarify early on what the end result will be. A formative class visit should not retroactively be turned into a summative letter.

---

[15] While it is fresh in their mind, the observer may also want to write a short reflection on the experience and what they learned. This may be useful later when developing their own teaching portfolio.

This conversation should be given time and attention. It should not be held five minutes before class when both parties will be rushed and distracted. Instead, this conversation should be scheduled a few days to a week before the class to-be observed, giving both observer and faculty member time to process and prepare. The observer might want to share some of their own answers to the following questions as well to establish some trust and reciprocity during the process.

Suggested Pre-Observation Conversation Questions

Context of The Course Being Observed
1. Is this your first time teaching this course and class subject?
2. What level is this course? Are there pre-requisites or expectations of prior knowledge?
3. What will be the format for the class being observed? What are the learning activities and assignments for this class – reading, writing, group projects, etc.?
4. In the syllabus, what came immediately before and comes after the class being observed?
5. How would you describe this group of students?
6. Is this your first time teaching this course? If you have taught this course before, are you doing anything different this semester than previous times taught?
7. Are there ways you run this course differently than others (more introductory, more advanced, etc.)?
8. How much autonomy do you have in designing and executing this course (e.g. personal elective vs. common curriculum section).

Professor's Broad Goals
9. What are your goals as a teacher *in general*?
10. What are your overall learning goals *for this course*?
11. What are your goals *at this point in the term*?
12. What are your goals and desired learning outcomes *specific to this class/ session*?
13. Are there materials I can look at ahead of time that will help me understand what I will be watching when I come to observe? (You may want to ask for access to the Canvas course site, discussion boards or course blog posts, assignments, and of course the syllabus.)

Professor's Teaching Strategy and Learning Expectations
14. What is your role as a teacher in this course? What is your persona, or desired persona, in the classroom? Transmitter of knowledge, facilitator of discussion? Is yours more of a lead from the front or lead from behind approach, or a combination?
15. How do you envision readings, lectures, and discussion interacting to produce learning? How do you conceive of the role each dimension plays?
16. Have you integrated your research into your teaching, and if so how?
17. What are your hopes and expectations regarding student participation and involvement?
18. What does a good day look like for you? What in your mind are the indicators or observables of the kind of student learning you aspire to create?

Directing Observer's Attention
19. Is there anything specific you would like me to focus on?
20. Are there areas of pride I should be attentive to and document?
21. Are there areas of concern for this class or difficult elements you have been facing?
22. Are there any specific classroom dynamics you are working on?
23. Are there things you'll be trying for the first time in this session where you would like feedback?

Observation Expectations and Logistics
24. How can this peer observation exercise be most useful for you?
25. Is there anything about my visit that makes you nervous? How can we mitigate those issues?
26. How will you introduce me and my reason for being there?
27. Where should I sit in the room to be most out-of-view and least disruptive?

28. Do you have a preference in terms of my taking notes with a computer or by hand?
29. What are our expectations of each other in terms of interacting during the observation?

Recommendations to Observed Faculty

It is ***normal to be nervous*** about being observed, especially if you are new to this process. Try to pinpoint what is making you nervous and talk to your observer beforehand about those issues.

Alert your students before the classroom visit so that they will not be surprised or behave strangely. Students, especially those giving presentations, should be assured that the observer is not assessing them. The faculty member may want to explain in advance that these visits are a part of the faculty's on-going goal to learn from each other's practices and experience each other's teaching styles.

Step 2: Teaching Observation(s)

Following the pre-observation conversation, the observer will then visit the class on a pre-determined date or dates that the faculty member chooses. See above under "What We Observe" for specific guidance on what to focus on and look for during an observation.

What to Do as an Observer

Most importantly, ***observers should be documenting evidence of student learning***.

Additionally, during the observation, the observer should:

1. ***Record what is happening*** as well as any notable successes, innovations, or concerns.

2. ***Describe the student experience*** of the class, e.g. did it start on time; what is the tone; is material presented visually, orally, both; what seem to be the expectations and customs around participation; use of technology, etc.

3. ***Pay attention to student behaviour*** and responses to the faculty member's teaching, not just what the faculty member is doing.

4. ***Record questions*** to ask later at the post-observation conversation.

For formative observation, the observation itself can consist of informal data collection and distillation or adhere to a more structured process as one would in a summative observation.[16] For summative observations, we strongly recommend using some type of structured note-taking approach to ensure a thorough observation.

---

[16] Some material here is adapted from Yale-NUS College, "Faculty Peer Teaching Assessment for Summative Purposes," accessed February 26, 2018, from https://teaching.yale-nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2016/10/Facultyteachingassessment.2014.pdf.

What _not to do_ as an Observer

1. The observer **should not participate** in classroom discussion or activities.[17]

2. In general, the observer should **avoid focusing on the content** and instead look for evidence of overall instructional experience and the quality of student learning.[18] When observing a class outside their discipline, for example, observers might learn very little but should be looking for indicators and processes of _student_ engagement (e.g. questions and comments, note-taking, energy of small group discussions).

3. The observer should **not ask students about the class** or treat their visit as an interview or focus group. Student feedback is collected separately through end-of-semester student evaluations.

4. Observers should **avoid mapping their own teaching style and cultural expectations** onto the faculty member being observed. Instead of looking for your own teaching style, assess how well the faculty member is achieving _their own_ teaching goals as articulated in the pre-observation conversation.

See below for "Observation Organisers" to further help focus and systematise observations and note taking. These will also help structure your feedback and letter writing process after the observation.

Step 3: Post-Observation Conversation

A post-observation conversation is required for summative observations and is optional but highly encouraged for formative observations. Whether the ultimate outcome of the observation is for formative or for summative purposes, the post-observation conversation should ideally be framed as **a collegial exchange of ideas on teaching practices, learning outcomes, and classroom management**.

The post-observation conversation is **an opportunity for the observer to share their thoughts, but also for the faculty member to reflect and articulate their experience**. The observer shares their observations and collaborates with the faculty member in brainstorming or troubleshooting. The post-observation conversation is also an opportunity for the faculty member to share their concerns and to describe steps they will take in subsequent classes to address problem areas. While the majority of the conversation is likely to focus on the faculty member rather than the observer's teaching, both parties will get more out of the experience if they treat it as a mutual exchange of experience and ideas.

This meeting should occur within a week of the classroom visit, and ideally a day or two following the visit. We discourage faculty from meeting immediately following the classroom observation, as both parties should have time to process their experience and the observer should review notes and organise feedback before sharing with the faculty member. For summative observations, the observer then will prepare a formal letter for submission to the faculty member's file.

---

[17] If there is lab work or small group activities, the observer may want to move around the classroom to get a better vantage of what is happening, but should do so as unobtrusively as possible.
[18] Adapted from Northeastern University Center for Advanced Teaching and Learning Through Research, "Faculty Peer Observation and Feedback."

For a summative observation, the faculty member may ask the observer to attend another class in the future, so they can observe their implementation of correctives to these problem areas.

Note: Not all topics or details discussed in the post-observation conversation need to go into the summative letter. In fact, much of the *conversation* may be spent brainstorming new techniques to try in the future, while the *letter* will focus on what the observer saw in the specific class they visited.

What to do in a Post-Observation Conversation

1. Observer **asks about faculty member's own experience** of and reflections about the class.
   - Would you say this was a typical or unusual class?
   - What went particularly well in your mind?
   - Was there anything that you were disappointed with or wish you had done differently?
   - What was it like having me in the room? Is there anything you wish I had done differently to be less disruptive or distracting?

2. Observer **shares observations of what happened** during the class – format, learning activities, flow. Share observations of student participation and indicators of student engagement, student-teacher and student-to-student dynamics, instructional techniques used and classroom environment. Share any perceived gaps between the faculty member's self-perception and your perception of their own priorities and teaching strategies.

3. Observer **describes indicators of successful learning**. What were the notable achievements? What new ideas did you take away which you may apply in your own teaching practice? The observer should highlight areas where the faculty member appears to be achieving their learning aims, and the successes consistent with generally good practices in undergraduate education (see above under "What We Observe"). Observers may want to ask how faculty members achieved particularly successful outcomes, e.g. "I noticed the student presentation was particularly clear and easy to follow both in verbal and visual communication. Is that something you coached them on and how?" When possible, observers should offer specific evidence or indicators for their observations.

4. Observer **describes any concerns or areas that could be improved** and **asks about teaching techniques** or student behaviours they found puzzling. You may want to start with critical feedback on areas that the faculty member themselves expressed concern or uncertainty about in the pre-observation conversation. Share observations about areas where they may not be achieving their own learning goals, or where student learning seems to be generally compromised. (E.g. this group was very engaged but the group on the right was not talking to each other at all.)

5. Observer and faculty member collaborate to **identify possible solutions or new techniques** to try in trouble-areas. What new approaches or techniques could they experiment with to achieve even greater success in their teaching and student learning? Ask the faculty member to think about how they could do things differently in the future.

What <u>not to do</u> in a Post-Observation Conversation

1. Observer immediately lists what you would have done differently.

2. Observer focuses exclusively on problems and ignores/downplays strengths. Try to find something good they can further develop even if you have concerns about their teaching in general.

3. Observer focuses exclusively on flattery and praise. Try to give the faculty member something to consider or work on even if you think they are already excellent.

4. Observer compares faculty to specific other colleagues, either positively or negatively.

5. Observer points out weaknesses without suggesting any strategies for improvement. This will leave the faculty member frustrated and discouraged.[19]

Guidance to Observers on Giving Constructive Critical Feedback

First, the more **open-ended and non-judgemental** your observations, the more likely the faculty member is to integrate your feedback into their future teaching. Instead of "you should give students more opportunities to ask questions" you could instead say "I noticed students were never explicitly invited to ask questions. Was that an intentional choice?" Second, in conveying critical feedback, you may also want to **focus on one or two** of the most important areas for improvement and experimentation, rather than offering a laundry list of concerns. It is most important to highlight areas where the faculty member is not achieving their own core learning goals. Lastly, we recommend that **your post-observation conversation happen prior to sending a formal write-up** to the observed faculty member. This gives the faculty member an opportunity to understand, respond to, and even challenge the observer's feedback. Sending written notes before discussing the observation in-person risks misunderstanding or defensiveness on the part of the faculty member. However, the right approach will depend on the relationship and personalities of the participants.

Step 4: Reflection and Reporting

Reporting Formative Observations

All faculty will be invited to list the classes they visited (faculty name, course title, date) in the annual review online process. They will also be asked to list their experiences of being formatively observed (name of the observing faculty, class title, and date). They will also be able to select "No observation Completed" with space to explain why – e.g. medical leave.

Observers may also want to write a summary for the faculty member they observed, highlighting important descriptions, successes, and ideas for innovation and improvement. One can even think of the formative observation as practice and preparation for summative observations for both observers and faculty being observed. However, to maintain trust and collegiality, when conducting a formative observation any feedback provided to the faculty member, even if in writing, should not be submitted as part of third-year review or tenure and promotion dossier. The faculty member being observed will be responsible for uploading summative observation letters as part of their separate formal review process.[20]

---

[19] Newman, Lori R., David H. Roberts, and Richard M. Schwartzstein, *Peer Observation of Teaching Handbook* (Boston: Carl J. Shapiro Institute for Education and Research, 2012), accessed February 26, 2018, from https://hms.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/assets/Sites/Academy/files/MedEdPortalPeer%20observation%20handbook.pdf.

[20] Recommended but note required – *Faculty Member Reflection:* Though this is not required, we recommend that the faculty member who was observed do a quick write up of what they learned from the experience about their own teaching philosophy, their priorities as an educator, their pedagogy, successes, strengths, and areas for future experimentation and improvement. The act of writing this down will help consolidate the experience and lessons learned and be a useful point of reference when writing teaching portfolio materials for review and promotion purposes. *Observer Reflection:* Similarly, we encourage observers to write a quick reflection on the experience of observing their colleague, what they learned about their own practice, and strategies they want to experiment with and possibly incorporate into their own teaching as a result. Writing this down will help consolidate the experience and be a useful point of reference when writing teaching portfolio materials for review and promotion purposes.

What to Include in a Summative Letter

A summative observation letter should be a no more than of 1-2 pages in length, it should address good teaching criteria, relevant to the teaching context including but not exclusive to: (1) Learning Environment, (2) Learning Engagement; (3) Session Management; and (4) Teaching Method(s) observed.[21] Evidence that can be used to assess these criteria is listed in the sample "Criteria Organiser" below.

In writing their summative letter, the observer should consider information and evidence gathered during the pre-observation meeting, the actual in-class observation, and the post-observation meeting. Faculty may decide to also review the classroom materials provided by the faculty member (syllabus, hand-outs, slides etc.) though those are secondary to the actual classroom visit.

The faculty member who was observed is responsible for uploading their summative letters into their own electronic file for annual and third year review and including in any hard-copy tenure and promotion dossiers. Once you have drafted your letter you should share it with the faculty member so you can take their clarifications and reactions to your observation into account when finalizing the document. The faculty member can submit a response for their file, clarifying comments or offering context, but can also discuss how this summative experience will be integrated into the faculty member's teaching approach going forward. The Dean of Faculty will only consider not including a submitted summative letter in extreme cases.

Recommended Structure of Summative Letter for Review and Promotion Files

1. Basic Information
   - Name of Faculty Member, Observer, Course Title
   - Date of Pre-Observation Conversation
   - Date of Classroom Observation(s)
   - Date of Post-Observation Conversation
   - Number of students enrolled in the course
   - Is this the faculty members first time teaching the course?
   - Is this a Common Curriculum Course?

2. Description of Learning Goals and Teaching Strategies
   - Describe the class and relevant context (e.g. common curriculum v. advanced course, team or solo taught, first time teaching, etc.).
   - Summarise the instructor's stated goals for the class.
   - Describe the classroom activities (e.g. active learning approach, problem-based learning, student presentations, discussions with structure).

3. Briefly summarise the faculty member's self-assessment of the class (e.g. Was it a typical class? What worked? What didn't work?)

4. Describe Achievements of Faculty Member's Goals and Areas of Alignment with Good Practices in Undergraduate Education
   - In your own observation, what was most effective? Provide specific examples.
   - What evidence showed the professor is achieving their core learning objectives?
   - What evidence showed the professor is using good practices in undergraduate education?

---

[21] Newman, Roberts, and Schwartzstein, *Peer Observation of Teaching Handbook*.

5. Describe Less Successful Teaching Strategies and Any Concerns re: Learning Outcomes
   - What was less effective? Provide specific examples.
   - What evidence showed the professor is not achieving their core learning objectives as fully as possible?
   - What evidence showed the professor is not using good practices in undergraduate education as fully as possible?
   - Describe any areas for innovation or improvement that you discussed with the faculty member and which they are considering implementing in the future.

5. Conclusions and Overall Assessment

Note: A sample peer observation letter is available in the Appendix.

VI. How to Focus Your Classroom Observation

The forms included below offer guidance on how to focus your attention and organise your in-class notes. Using one or a combination of these forms will help inform your post-observation conversation and ultimately your summative letter. Observers' strategies will vary depending on their own note-taking style, the areas of interest emphasised in the pre-observation conversation, and the nature of the class being observed (e.g. if it is an in-the-field research lab an observer may not be able to take copious notes as they would in lecture hall).

However you choose to document your observations, to make the most of the experience, you will want to refer to your notes from the pre-observation conversation. Look for evidence of the faculty member's core learning goals being, or not being, achieved. As you observe the class, consider if there are missed opportunities for the faculty member to more fully achieve those goals.

The observer may want to bring a list of items to observe, which will help focus their attention. Such a list would not be used as a ranking tool, but instead a resource to assist in focusing and generating helpful observation. We recommend you consult the "Good Practice in Undergraduate Teaching" section from earlier in this document.

To keep your notes organised and avoid personal bias, you should use an observation organiser or rubric, especially if conducting a summative observation. This is also a useful format for those looking to do more structured formative observations. Three different formats of observation organiser are suggested here for individual faculty to adapt to their own needs and time constraints.

1. The ***Documentary Organiser*** is focused on documenting each section or activity that occurs during the class, and then providing space for the observer to comment on that activity and the learning they observe at that point in time.
2. The ***Thematic Organiser*** is focused on particular themes, ideally drawn from the faculty member's own stated learning aims and aforementioned "good practices."
3. The ***Criteria Organiser*** is focused on specific standards of good teaching drawn from literature on pedagogy and student learning.

You can combine multiple organiser formats as well.

Download e-copies or print hard copies of these Observation Organisers from the CTL web site: teaching.yale-nus.edu.sg

Gleason, Nancy W. and Sanger, Catherine S., "Guidelines for Peer Observation of Teaching: A Sourcebook for International Liberal Arts Learning" Centre for Teaching and Learning, Yale-NUS College, Singapore (September 2017)

Documentary Organiser

In this format, the observer takes notes according to what is happening sequentially during the class being observed and offers commentary on each activity as it occurs. The observer populates the left and right columns as the class unfolds. These notes can then form the basis of feedback discussions and formal letter writing content.

DOCUMENTARY ORGANISER SAMPLE – BLANK		
Yale-NUS College Peer Observation of Teaching Organiser		
Observed Faculty Member		
Observing Faculty Member		
Course Number and Title		
Type of Class		
Number of Students		
Date of Observation		
TIME	DOCUMENT *Describe class format/ teaching & learning activities/ what is happening.*	COMMENT *Analysis, evidence, interpretation – evidence of student learning and engagement, ideas for future experimentation and improvement.*

DOCUMENTARY ORGANISER SAMPLE – FILLED OUT		
Yale-NUS College Peer Observation of Teaching Organiser		
Observed Faculty Member	Prof. Young	
Observing Faculty Member	Prof. Tan	
Course Number and Title	YSS1234: Introduction to Sourcebook Writing	
Type of Class	Common curriculum seminar, first year students, 2 hrs.	
Number of Students	15	
Date of Observation	April 16, 2017	
TIME	**DOCUMENT:** *Describe class format/ teaching & learning activities/ what is happening.*	**COMMENT:** *Analysis, evidence, interpretation – evidence of student learning and engagement, ideas for future experimentation and improvement.*
2pm	Welcomes class, greets students. Opening slide with title for the day's material and goals	Learning objectives slide is very helpful, orients the day within the context of the last class and the overall course. Students respond with nodding heads and active note-taking, suggesting engagement and learning.
2:15	Prof.-led review of new material from the readings.	Of 15 students, 5 taking notes during mini-lecture, 5 listening seemingly attentively but not taking notes, 5 are doodling or checking social media on computer. Wonder what a no-computer rule would do for engagement?
2:45	Breaks into small groups to unpack readings.	Prof. walks around the room, engages students effectively. Of five small groups, 4 call professor over to clarify, suggests students comfortable revealing confusion to prof. and getting help. In one of five small groups conversation entirely dominated by one student. In other four groups, more equitable participation with students inviting new voices into the conversation. Has professor considered talking to more dominant student about making room for others to contribute?
3:15	Stops to ask if there are any questions, have groups report out on their progress	Long pause provided for students to collect their thoughts. Explains purpose of transition to next phase of class. Left side of the room look very puzzled but don't raise their hands to ask a question. Concern?
3:30	Exercise with students writing on the board in groups	Effort made to get everyone working and thinking. Some good conversations are lost as the instructor looks through notes - might be better to circulate the room during this learning moment. Students are problem solving well, debating and locating arguments in the text which was a key learning goal of prof.
3:55	Summary by Instructor, Ends on Time	Excellent to provide closure to the lesson and remind students of key takeaways. Notes upcoming due dates and the readings for the following week within this context.

Thematic Organiser

In this format the observer can pick which themes to highlight, document, and offer ideas for improvement. The observer populates both the left and right columns but may want to determine which themes to emphasise in advance of the scheduled observation based on their pre-observation conversation and review of "good practices" listed above.

THEMATIC SAMPLE – BLANK	
Yale-NUS College Peer Observation of Teaching Organiser	
Observed Faculty Member	
Observing Faculty Member	
Course Number and Title	
Type of Class	
Number of Students	
Date of Observation	
THEME *Elements of teaching and learning to be observed, documented, and analysed based on faculty member's stated learning goals and institutional values.*	**DESCRIPTION & COMMENTARY** *Analysis, evidence, interpretation – evidence of student learning and engagement, ideas for future experimentation and improvement.*

SAMPLE – FILLED OUT	
Yale-NUS College Peer Observation of Teaching Organiser	
Observed Faculty Member	Prof. Young
Observing Faculty Member	Prof. Tan
Course Number and Title	YSS1234: Introduction to Sourcebook Writing
Type of Class	Common curriculum seminar, first year students, 2 hrs.
Number of Students	15
Date of Observation	April 16, 2017
THEME *Elements of teaching and learning to be observed, documented, and analysed based on faculty member's stated learning goals and institutional values.*	**DESCRIPTION & COMMENTARY** *Analysis, evidence, interpretation – evidence of student learning and engagement, ideas for future experimentation and improvement.*
Inclusivity of different identities.	No patterns suggesting gender impacts student engagement or comfort. Female and transgender just as vocal as male students. Students from minority ethnic groups just as engaged in terms of body language and verbal participation as others. A lot of disciplinary jargon is used for a class without official pre-requisites. Would a sophomore student be able to follow this discussion if this is their first class in this major?
Accessible for verbal and visual learners/ communicators?	Lecture at beginning of the class integrates both verbal and visual representations of key themes from the readings. Student participation is limited to verbal contributions/ question and answer. Would it be helpful to encourage students to use the white-boards during the discussion as well?
Pace and Difficulty of Material	Though the class is fast-paced there are many points where the professor breaks and asks for questions. Creates long pauses to allow students to engage. Of the 15 students in the class, three look quite lost and perplexed – shaking their head, lowering their eyes and looking nervously at their papers. Other students seem very enthusiastic about the material and the sophistication of their comments suggests the difficulty level is challenging but not alienating for them. Wonder if reminding the more quieter three about office hours and peer tutoring programmes would help?

Criteria Organiser

In this format the left-side column is pre-populated with criteria of 'good teaching' drawn from the literature and, if amended to include it, the observer's own experience. While this organiser should not be used as a checklist, and observers will still need to describe and supply evidence for the different criteria, this organiser offers a bit more structure but less flexibility than the other formats. It may be particularly useful to someone doing their first peer observation or observing a class in a very different discipline or teaching style from their own.[22]

Note: You **should not expect each of these criteria to be demonstrated** in a given class. Some will be more visible than others depending on the professor's goals and the course context. Observers should be looking for evidence of these practices, but they should not expect to see all of them in any given class visit.

CRITERIA SAMPLE – BLANK	
Yale-NUS College Peer Observation of Teaching Organiser	
Observed Faculty Member	
Observing Faculty Member	
Course Number and Title	
Type of Class	
Number of Students	
Date of Observation	
CRITERIA	**OBSERVATIONS/ EVIDENCE**
Learner Environment	
Instructor gets to know the learners	
Identifies the learners' needs	
Demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching	
Builds on learners' knowledge and skill	
Encourages learners to voice uncertainty and ask questions	
Teaches to the range of learner levels	
Other	
Learner Engagement	
Fosters active learning by asking open-ended, analytic, or evaluative questions	
Encourages learners to share information and experiences	
Elicits learners' thought process	
Encourages learners to ask questions and discuss issues	

---

[22] Taken and lightly altered from Newman, Roberts, and Schwartzstein, *Peer Observation of Teaching Handbook*. Building on the structure offered by Newman et. al., specific criteria was added in recognition of the distinctive goals of Yale-NUS' curriculum as articulated in Garsten, Bryan, Patke Rajeev, Charles Bailyn, Jane M. Jacobs, Kang Hway Chuan, and Bryan Penprase, *Yale-NUS College: A New Community of Learning: A Report Submitted by the Inaugural Curriculum Committee of Yale-NUS College* (Singapore: Yale-NUS College, 2013), accessed February 26, 2018, from http://www.yale-nus.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Yale-NUS-College-Curriculum-Report.pdf.

Acknowledges different cultural approaches to class participation	
Encourages learners to pursue and critically appraise the literature	
Other	
Session Management	
Communicates clear goals and agenda for the session	
Modifies session plans in response to learners' needs	
Organises the session appropriately	
Uses white board, slides, tech effectively	
Keeps track of time	
Other	
Teaching Method	
Challenges learners' assumptions and explores their reasoning	
Highlights key teaching points or core concepts	
Discuss complex issues in concise and logical manner	
Models and encourages critical thinking	
Models and encourages articulate and respectful communication	
Cites examples from the homework/literature	
Concludes session with summary of key points	
Facilitates teamwork and student-to-student learning	
Other	
Intercultural Context	
Invites all identities/demographics into discussion (if applicable)	
Creates modes of engagement appropriate to diverse student backgrounds	
Creates encouraging environment for intercultural learning among students	
Course Context	
Is this the faculty member's first time teaching this course, or this subject?	
Is this a common curriculum course?	
Overall Comments	

CRITERIA SAMPLE – FILLED OUT	
Yale-NUS College Peer Observation of Teaching Organiser	
Observed Faculty Member	Prof. Young
Observing Faculty Member	Prof. Tan
Course Number and Title	YSS1234: Introduction to Sourcebook Writing
Type of Class	Common curriculum seminar, first year students, 2 hrs.
Number of Students	15
Date of Observation	April 16, 2017
CRITERIA	**OBSERVATIONS/ EVIDENCE**
Learner Environment	
Instructor gets to know the learners	When professor arrives before class and chats with students about their other classes, projects they are working on.
Identifies the learners' needs	In pre-observation conversation, made reference to specific students and their learning styles/ needs.
Demonstrates enthusiasm for teaching	
Builds on learners' knowledge and skill	In pre-observation convo talked about using the first day of class to learn more about students' prior education and experience with the course topic. Took an ungraded in-take assessment to gauge range of prior knowledge/ comfort with material.
Encourages learners to voice uncertainty and ask questions	When asked if there were questions half way through class and no one spoke, prof. reiterated that she expected there to be confusion and that it was natural to have questions or concerns because the text they were discussing were quite complex. After saying this, three students raised their hands and a productive conversation clarifying key terms ensued.
Teaches to the range of learner levels	
Other	
Learner Engagement	
Fosters active learning by asking open-ended, analytic or evaluative questions	
Encourages learners to share information and experiences	
Elicits learner's thought process	During the 'problem solving' exercise, she handed pens out to each group and encouraged them to sketch out possible arguments on the board as rough drafts before having to present their ideas to the entire class. Then prof. walked around the room to ask them about their graphs and how they had moved through different logical steps.
Encourages learners to ask questions and discuss issues	
Acknowledges different cultural approaches to class participation	Does an in-class writing activity at the start of the class to allow students who process more in writing than verbally to collect and express their thoughts. Then in the discussion offered that students could read from what they wrote if they preferred, or to speak more extemporaneously as well.
Encourages learners to pursue and	

critically appraise the literature	
Other	
Session Management	
Communicates clear goals and agenda for the session	This was missing – if I had not talked to the prof. before class I would not have known what the main goals of this class session were and where the class was going. Each activity popped up a bit out-of-the-blue and I sensed from their whispers to each other and confused expressions that the students were a bit lost and could use more context and explanation.
Modifies session plans in response to learners' needs	
Organises the session appropriately	
Uses white board, slides, tech effectively	Students are encouraged to use the board, but the professor does not integrate many visual components.
Keeps track of time	Ended on time but felt rushed at the end.
Other	
Teaching Method	
Challenges learners' assumptions and explores their reasoning	
Highlights key teaching points or core concepts	The end-of-class hand-out was a nice way to highlight key points and give the students a sense of closure to this section of the course.
Discuss complex issues in concise and logical manner	
Models and encourages critical thinking	Acts as devils' advocate when all the students who are speaking tend to agree with one point of view. This then emboldens other students to push back on majority view points as well.
Models and encourages articulate and respectful communication	
Cites examples from the homework/literature	
Concludes session with summary of key points	
Facilitates teamwork and student-to-student learning	The structured group work seems to energise the students during the mid-class dip and they had very robust conversations within the small groups from what I could gather, going deep into the assigned texts and connecting themes from this week's reading to previous weeks.
Other	
Intercultural Context	
Invites all identities/demographics into discussion (if applicable)	The class seems to be made up of 7 men, 6 women, and 2 a-gender/genderqueer students. I observed no patterns in participation or the professor calling on students to suggest any particular gender group feels uncomfortable or silenced. It was interesting to me that the three students who appeared to be South Asian sat together and spoke quite a bit more (8-10 times each) than the other students of Chinese, SE Asian, and European descent (who typically joined in 3-4 times each). I wonder if this is typically the case in the course or just occurred in this session. As the professor is South Asian

	and references their heritage during class, this might be something to consider how that is impacting classroom dynamics.
Creates modes of engagement appropriate to diverse student backgrounds	
Creates encouraging environment for intercultural learning among students	
Course Context	
Is this the faculty member's first time teaching this course, or this subject?	Yes
Is this a common curriculum course?	Yes
Overall Comments	

Appendix A: Sample Summative Peer Observation Letter

Summative Observation of Jin Schmin's Understanding Pies and Tarts Course

Observation Participant: Jin Schmin   **Date(s) of Observation:** 7 March 2017
Observer: Adita Bobita   **Class Title**: PS206: Pies and Tarts

I observed a three-hour Pies and Tarts course taught by Jin Schmin on 7 March 2017. Prior to the observation I met with Jin to learn about his goals for the course, for this specific session, and aims regarding student learning outcomes and in-class participation. I also met with him after the observation to discuss his reflections on how the session unfolded.

Overall Learning Goals for This Course

Disciplinary Content: Pies and Tarts is a required theory course for the Pastry and Desserts major. In Jin's own framing, it is a modernised 'great pies' course with additional critiques and expansions of the established literature that intentionally seeks to create conversation and synthesis across diverse authors and theoretical perspectives. A core goal for the course is for students to learn key works within the pastry literature, to understand how those works relate to their historical and national context, and also to be able to critique these highly established theories. Jin aims for students to progress from understanding to critique to original argumentation. In this sense his approach generates both content and skills-based learning.

Research, Writing, and Analytical Skills: Additionally, Jin has carefully designed the course to set students up for success in the capstone. One way he does this is by providing students with the theoretical landscape needed to situate their capstone research relative to established authors and debates. His writing assignments require students to put theoretical works into conversation with each other in preparation for the capstone literature review. Second, by emphasizing critique and letting students determine the topics covered during class, Jin equips students to create their own arguments and define their own research questions.

Intellectual Independence: High participation and active student learning are key to Jin's teaching. He aims for students to have ownership – to set the agenda, push the conversation forward, and inject their own creativity into the discussion. He sees this as key both to motivating them to learn the course material and to developing analytical skills. The payoff from this student-centred approach was very evident in the quality and volume of student participation during class.

Course Format

Setup and Introduction: Jin began class by rearranging the desks to make sure all students were sitting in a circle where they could see each other and have a conversation among the group. Jin then led with a roughly five-minute overview of the class, situating it within the larger syllabus and outlining key themes from that section of the course, and reminding the students of the day's format.

Student Presentation: There was an hour-long presentation led by three students. Jin uses these presentations to develop presentation skills and to bring additional context to the class. The student presenters are asked to do additional research beyond the required readings required, which makes them surrogate experts on the topic for the week. It was clear from their body language, note-taking, and subsequent questions that all students paid close attention to the presentation, suggesting that Jin's goal of developing a culture of active listening and engagement was quite ingrained.

Discussion: When they returned from break, Jin began the discussion by posing an initial question about the arguments employed by the day's assigned authors. In keeping with the emphasis on student-led discussion, there were long periods (5-10 minutes on average) where Jin did not speak at all and the conversation flowed on its own. If the discussion got too off-topic or stuck in minutia Jin would redirect or remind students of the big-picture agenda topics.

Conclusion and Wrap Up: The last five minutes of class allowed Jin to foreshadow next week's reading and assignments, connect the day's readings with upcoming literature, and remind students to take advantage of his office hours.

Achievements of Core Learning Aims

Jin is achieving all of his core learning goals and deep student learning is quite evident.

In keeping with Jin's goal of <u>inducting students into the Pastry literature</u>, the student-led presentation and subsequent discussion made it clear that the students are learning the key arguments in this literature and how they fit together. For example, the presentation on Martha Stewart explicitly put her work in conversation with Michael Fields. These students could go on to graduate work or pastry-studies related jobs and be well versed in key approaches to pastry sciences.

I also saw considerable evidence that Jin's goal of students learning to <u>analyse and critique</u> is being achieved. The questions students asked of the presenters made it clear that they are learning to probe, analyse, and identify underlying assumptions in assigned readings and each other's interpretations. This was also evident in the questions students posed to each other during the free-flowing discussion. They suggested questions and pushed each other to be precise in issues of method and to what extent different authors disagreed with each other.

Students are also developing the <u>communication and creative thinking skills</u> Jin has prioritised by giving students so much autonomy over class discussion. Whereas in other classes, students often listen and respond to their professor, I was particularly impressed by how well the students had learned to listen to each other, and to constructively build off-of and even disagree with each other's contributions. Another rare quality of this class, and significant strength, was students' willingness to disagree with each other, marshalling specific text, logics, and unpacking each other's underlying assumptions. They identify limits in the assigned work and even suggest improvements or extensions. These are key indicators of the professors' success in using the course to prepare students for successful capstones.

Lastly, in addition to analytical and communication skills, students are also developing <u>research skills</u> in this class. Students had clearly done the readings and had learned to distinguish the most important points. Students' knowledge of the readings was very clear from their ability to cite the authors' primary claims, reference appropriate details and evidence, and connect different works to each other. Students routinely referenced and engaged directly with the text, citing specific pages, and connecting one author to another.

Additional Achievements

Through his syllabus design and classroom management, Jin has achieved his core learning goals. There are additional strengths which he brings to the class that I want to briefly mention.

First, Jin is <u>dedicated and highly adaptable</u> and attentive to students' changing needs. In our post-observation conversation, Jin explored a number of possible new exercises he could integrate in order to boost participation even further and bring even more voices into the conversation.

Second, Jin has created <u>a space of inclusive intellectual community</u>. He always names students contribution – e.g. 'as Teo said' or 'would you agree with Sara that…'. Proportionally to the class composition, female students and students representing minority or traditionally marginalised ethnic or racial groups participated as often and energetically as male students and those from more privileged identities. Local and international students also participated equally. Jin allows for long quiet periods after questions which gives students time to consider their thoughts. No one student dominated the discussion and those who were prone to speaking more often would often defer to those who were entering conversation for the first time.

Areas for Improvement and Experimentation

Student Presentations: One area where Jin did not seem to be fully achieving his own learning goals is in the student presentation. Jin had explained that for this upper level course he wanted to minimise lecturing in favour of structured discussion and student-led inquiry. However, by encouraging or allowing student presentations to follow lecture format, he has not removed lecture so much as out-sourced it to the designated student presenters. In our post-observation conversation Jin and I

discussed the pros and cons of having students lecture versus lead discussion as part of their presentations. In future courses Jin plans to experiment with the instructions he gives to student presenters, perhaps requiring them to have some form of interactive exercise or discussion.

Tone: Jin is self-aware and knows that he has a very informal and collegial persona vis-à-vis students. This creates some risk that his authority may be compromised and students will not be as attentive to his assignments and deadlines. He therefore goes to lengths to reiterate penalties for not completing relevant assignments. Nonetheless, he has noticed that students continue to miss deadlines across the semester. We discussed whether this was a problem vis-à-vis his learning goals and steps he could take to improve course discipline.

Student Participation: In our pre-observation discussion Jin alerted me to the fact that one of his struggles this semester has been to coax two or three students who are persistently silent to contribute to class discussion. He has experimented with techniques during class, such as allowing longer silences to give those students room to enter that conversation. Jin has also proactively reached out to these students outside of class to talk through the impediments they may experience to participation. He also reiterated several times, and in a clearly genuine way, that he was available for additional consultation during office hours. But despite these efforts, a small number of students continued to abstain from participating. During the first 45 minutes of the discussion part of class, 8 out of 12 students did not talk once. During the last 45 minutes five of those eight students started talking (but three of those only spoke once).

In our post-observation conversation, we discussed how Jin may want to experiment with some new tactics to invite even more even participation from these students, such as starting with short writing exercises, or creating smaller circles within the main conversation circle and having students rotate in-and-out of that smaller circle. Jin was responsive to these ideas and seems excited to experiment with new techniques in his more introductory-level course next semester.

Concluding Thoughts

Jin is very thoughtful and intentional in his goals for student learning, and his in-class practices align very deliberately and effectively with those priorities. He is a dedicated and innovative educator who elevates students to the next level in their analytical thinking and communication skills. Perhaps most significantly, this course is both firmly a Pastry major course and a Liberal Arts course. As an advanced course in the major, this course inducts students into the literature and helps them prepare for the capstone. In addition, and very much by design, this course contributes significantly to students' broader, liberal arts learning by integrating training exercises in reading, writing, communication, and analysis. In this sense, Jin's course design and pedagogical approach achieves the aims we have for our students both in terms of the depth we hope they get in the major, and the breadth achieved from a liberal education.

Appendix B: Additional Resources on Peer Observation

Ambrose, Susan A., Michael W. Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha C. Lovett, and Marle K. Norman. *How Learning Works: Seven Research-Based Principles for Smart Teaching.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Bell, Maureen. *Peer observation partnerships in higher education.* Hammondville: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, 2012.

Brinko, Kathleen T. "The practice of giving feedback to improve teaching: What is effective?" *Journal of Higher Education* 64, no. 5 (1993): 574–593.

Hammersley-Fletcher, Linda, and Paul Orsmond. "Reflecting on reflective practices within peer observation." *Studies in Higher Education* 30, no. 2 (2005): 213–224.

Lomas, Laurie, and Gill Nicholls. "Enhancing teaching quality through peer review of teaching." *Quality in Higher Education* 11, no. 2 (2005): 137–149.

Newman, Lori R., David H. Roberts, and Richard M. Schwartzstein. *Peer Observation of Teaching Handbook,* Boston: C. J. Shapiro Institute for Education and Research, 2012.

Akerlind, Gerlese S., and Malcom G. Pettigrove. *Peer Review and Self-Evaluation: A Tooklit Resource Booklet for Improvement of Teaching and Learning.* Canberra: Australian National University, 1996.

Chism, Nancy Van N. *Peer Review of Teaching.* Bolton: Anker Publishing, 1999.

Arreola Raoul A. *Developing a Comprehensive Faculty Evaluation System.* Bolton: Anker Publishing, 2000.

Centra John A. *Reflective Faculty Evaluation: Evaluating Teaching and Determining Faculty Effectiveness.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993.

Sachs, Judyth, and Mitch Parsell, eds. *Peer Review of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education: International Perspectives.* Heidelberg: Springer, 2014.

Appendix C: Peer Observation of Teaching at Yale-NUS: Principles and Guidelines 2017

Prepared by the Teaching, Learning, and Advising committee (TLA):
Shaffique Adam, Scott Cook, Nancy Gleason, Philip Johns, Lee Chee Keng, Kristi Lemm (Chair), Ronald Milne, Catherine Sanger, and Jenifer Raver (Secretariat)

Overview and History

The Yale-NUS College Faculty Handbook notes that dossiers for tenure and promotion should include "reports from classroom visits by faculty colleagues, mentors or the divisional director" but the number and nature of these reports is unspecified. Various models for peer observation of teaching have been proposed at Yale-NUS College in the past and have received mixed support from the faculty. In December 2016, Executive Vice-President for Academic Affairs Tan Tai Yong created a Task Force on Peer Observation of Teaching. The Task Force was charged with collecting information from a broad swath of the faculty through surveys, focus groups, and a forum. The Task Force produced a report in April 2017 with a number of recommendations based on extensive faculty input. The current document outlines a mechanism for peer observation that can be used for annual reviews, tenure, and promotion. The document is heavily influenced by the recommendations in the Task Force report. It also incorporates elements from previously proposed peer observation mechanisms at Yale-NUS College and existing peer observation schemes at peer institutions. Development of this document was driven by the primary goal of fostering a shared culture of teaching excellence at Yale-NUS College; the procedure was also designed to ensure that faculty being reviewed for tenure and promotion would have the needed documentation of teaching observation to include in their files. The procedures outlined in this document should be reviewed by the TLA after three years to ensure that they are effectively meeting these goals.

Peer Observation of Teaching

The current proposal recommends that peer evaluation of teaching include both formative and summative components. The programme of formative observation and feedback of teaching is designed to help faculty improve their teaching and their students' learning as part of on-going professional development. Frequent, relatively informal observations of teaching can be the best way to share ideas about how to teach, to get insights from colleagues that can improve one's own teaching and foster a culture of teaching. Observing the teaching of other faculty provides a valuable learning opportunity for the observer as well as for the faculty member being observed. Summative observation should occur less frequently, after faculty have had opportunities for formative observations and feedback, following a separate process that provides information required for tenure and promotion. Summative observations should occur under conditions that allow for fair evaluation of teaching with substantive faculty autonomy in the process, including an opportunity to view and respond to evaluations.

Procedures for Formative Observation

- All faculty at all ranks, including visiting faculty, will be expected to have their own teaching observed by a fellow faculty member a minimum of once per year in which they are teaching at least one course, and to observe another faculty member's teaching at least once per year in which they are teaching at least one course. Faculty may choose to participate in formative observation more frequently, if desired. Participation beyond the minimum provides evidence of higher commitment to participating in the culture of excellent teaching and focusing on improving one's teaching.

- Observation pairings will not be assigned. Faculty members will invite other faculty members to observe their teaching and will request to observe other faculty members' teaching. Observation does not need to be reciprocal.

- Participation in formative observation will be noted in faculty files for annual review, tenure and promotion. Faculty will indicate which of their class(es) have been observed by another, and which class(es) they have observed.

- No official reports will be generated on the basis of formative observations. Any informal notes generated by an observer may be provided to the observed faculty member if desired, or may be destroyed.

- Evaluations based on formative observation cannot be used for summative purposes. Faculty members who require summative observation of their teaching must arrange for summative observations following the procedures outlined in the following section.

- Formative evaluation may be provided by and for faculty members at any rank (i.e., it is acceptable for an untenured or non-tenure track faculty member to observe or be observed by a senior faculty member). Observation may occur within or across divisions.

- No formal training is required to participate in formative observation. Guidelines for conducting formative observation are available on the CTL website. These guidelines are informed by pedagogical research and make recommendations for best practices in peer observation. At a minimum, peer observers should plan to attend at least one class session and meet afterwards to discuss the class; additional observations and meetings (pre- or post-observation), review of syllabi and assignments, etc. may be conducted if desired.

Procedures for Summative Observation

- As specified in the faculty handbook, summative observation is a component of the teaching dossier for all faculty and lecturers teaching courses at Yale-NUS College, with the exception of those who have attained the highest rank in their appointment and will not be coming up for promotion (e.g. professors with a tenure track appointment, professors with a non-tenured practice appointment and associate professors with an educator track appointment).

- As part of the annual review process, a faculty member is required to meet with his or her division director. During this discussion, the faculty member and division director will together identify at least one appropriate person to provide a summative peer observation (hereafter called "Observer"). In cases where there is no appropriate faculty member available at Yale-NUS, people at NUS could be considered. The peer observation should be done within a year from the initial discussion (i.e. before the next annual review). If the first contacted observer is unable to conduct the observation during this time period for any reason, then the faculty member will contact the next agreed-upon observer.

- The instructor and observer will arrange in advance the appropriate dates and number of classes to be observed, and schedule a meeting both before and after the classroom observations. The instructor may choose which classes to have observed.

- Summative peer observers should receive training by the Yale-NUS College Centre for Teaching and Learning. Formal, specific procedures for training summative peer observers will need to be developed by the CTL and are beyond the scope of this document.

- To ensure consistency and fairness, all observers should make use of criteria to guide the observations. The CTL should provide access to a number of high-quality guidelines and tools that take into account the diversity of teaching styles and practices at Yale-NUS College.

- The observer should meet with the faculty member and share the report no more than two weeks after the observation.

- A copy of the report should be made available to the faculty member, who can choose to provide a written response or reflection that will be included along with the original report in the faculty member's file. In extreme cases, if faculty members feel that a report is unprofessional or unfair, they may ask the Dean of Faculty to omit the report from their faculty file. The faculty member should meet with their Division Director to determine another observer to conduct an additional observation.

Short-term contingency

In the long run, each faculty member following these procedures would accumulate one summative peer evaluation each year. So, for example, a typical faculty member coming up for promotion and tenure would have 5 peer observation letters in his or her file. However, since this policy is commencing in the 5th year of the College, a short-term contingency plan is needed to generate letters for those faculty coming up for tenure in the next academic year. The above mentioned policy will only generate one letter by the end of AY2018, two letters by the end of AY2019, etc., but to meet the short-term needs of the College, additional letters may be required. Faculty should plan to include at least one summative peer observation in their file for a 3rd year review and at least three observations when being reviewed for tenure and/or promotion. It is recommended that for cases of promotion and tenure for which the candidate has fewer than 3 letters on file, the remaining letters will be obtained as follows:

1. The College creates a panel of 6 faculty members comprising 3 senior faculty members (one from each division), together with the Division Directors from each division.

2. The faculty member should inform the committee that he or she would need letters no fewer than 6 months prior to the due date of the tenure file.

3. The panel will assign 3 of its members (or fewer, if fewer letters are required) to observe the faculty member, following the guidelines of the main policy, including receiving training from the CTL prior to beginning observations.