

Example Three: Peer Consultation Assignment Series

TPD Facilitator Context:

This assignment series revolves around a “peer observation and consultation” process, in which TA pairs will observe each other teaching and provide constructive feedback. TPD facilitators can allow TAs to form pairs themselves or pair TAs strategically. There are pros and cons to both approaches, and scheduling constraints are often problematic either way. It is best to get to forming pairs very early in the TPD experience, even if TAs will not observe one another for several weeks. In the meantime, that buys time for them to engage in the pre-observation reflection (see below).

This version of the peer consultation involves an open-ended and qualitative observation process, although it is scaffolded in a way that requires TAs to identify specific aspects of teaching for reflection, as both reviewer and reviewee. The peer consultation experience can also be grounded in quantitative classroom observation approaches, such as LOPUS [see Velasco et al. (2016.) *Journal of Chemical Education*, 93(7), 1191-1203.]. A benefit of using formal observation protocols is that it provides structure for reviewers, while simultaneously providing a tangible product for reviewees to reflect upon and use for the purposes of documenting their teaching (e.g., for a teaching portfolio). A downside of using formal observation protocols, however, is that TAs need to be trained in how to apply the protocols properly in order to obtain meaningful data, which adds an additional time investment.

As always, TPD facilitators are encouraged to reflect on their own context and the needs of their TAs and adapt the example instructions accordingly. One way to approach this is to provide a more open-ended process (such as the example included here) for TAs early on in their TPD, and then expanding on the process to include a formal observation protocol for TAs seeking advanced TPD experiences (e.g., to build on the earlier qualitative approach and provide quantitative observation data for their teaching portfolios). [An expanded, LOPUS-based version of the assignment is already in the works as another module for the TPD Catalyst.]

TA Assignment Instructions:

As a continuation of our professional development, you will complete a “peer observation” of one lab session this term. TAs will work in pairs to observe each other’s lab for [30 minutes]. This is an invaluable tool to step outside of your experience to see what your teaching looks like through someone else’s eyes. This type of self-reflection is crucial for identifying strengths and areas for improvement in your teaching.

This process intends to do the following: (1) create a community of instructional support; (2) provide an opportunity for each TA to engage in useful dialog with their peers to continually improve their teaching ability; (3) provide a system to ensure that each TA is observed and receives feedback on their teaching; and (4) encourage the use of evidence-based and inclusive teaching methods.

For this assignment, you are asked to:

1. **Complete a “Pre-Observation Reflection and Plan.”** You will meet with your partner prior to the peer observation to establish individual goals for the consultation and to plan the logistics. To do so:
 - a. Establish a time to meet with your partner (in-person or online) prior to the assignment deadline.
 - b. Discuss the following logistical questions with your partner:
 - i. *What week will each TA be observed?*
 - ii. *When will you meet for the follow-up meeting (after the peer observation)?*
 - c. After individually reflecting on the following questions, discuss them with your partner:
 - i. *What are your perceived strengths as a TA?*
 - ii. *What are your perceived areas for improvement?*
 - iii. *What else do you want feedback on? Are there any other aspects of your teaching you would like your partner to pay particular attention to while observing you?*
 - d. Submit a brief (<200 words) response to each of the prompts above (from “b” and “c”). Submit responses electronically (as text entry in the [LMS] assignment).
2. **Complete a peer observation.** We will dedicate time in [class] to discuss the value and process of peer consultations. At some point after your “pre-observation” meeting (at the agreed upon times), you will each observe your partner for a minimum of [30 minutes].

3. **Meet with your partner to debrief your peer observations and then submit a reflection about the “Follow-up Meeting” prompts.** You will meet with your partner to debrief both of your observations and provide insights about each other’s teaching. To do so:
 - a. Discuss the following questions about your teaching observations:
 - i. *What was your experience observing another TA teach? What was your experience being observed by another TA?*
 - ii. *What were specific teaching strategies/methods used? How did they work out (based on your own experience and the perceptions of your partner)?*
 - iii. *What did you identify (in your “Pre-Observation Reflection”) as both strengths and areas for improvement in your teaching?*
 - iv. *Does your partner have comments on those strengths? Are there other strengths that they noticed when watching you teach?*
 - v. *Does your partner have comments on those areas for improvements? Are there other possible areas for improvement that they noticed?*
 - vi. *What feedback do they have about the other input you requested in your pre-observation meeting (i.e. the last prompt from your “Pre-Observation Reflection”)?*
 - vii. *What did you learn from this process? How will it affect your teaching going forward?*
4. **Submit a “Post-Observation Reflection”** in which you will provide your individual responses to the prompts from the Follow-up Meeting (above) in written, audio, or video form.
 - a. Having discussed these prompts with your partner in private, take some time to reflect on that discussion, and then communicate your takeaways about each prompt to the instructor in either written or spoken form.
 - b. If choosing the latter (spoken responses), you may submit this as either video or audio.
 - c. While the conversation with your peer will go in both directions (i.e., feedback for both of you), your submission for this assignment should focus on the aspects of the discussion that involved *your peer’s feedback for your teaching*. That is, this reflection should focus on you.

See [LMS] for full assignment rubrics. Briefly, Peer Observation assignments will be evaluated in terms of:

- Quality and thoughtfulness of the “Pre-Observation Reflection and Plan” [15 pts; due no later than week N]
- Quality and thoughtfulness of the “Post-Observation Reflection” responses [25 pts; submit when done with follow-up meeting – due no later than week N]

[In this example, the assignment series is worth a total of 40 points in a 100-point course (40% of grade).]

Assignment Rubrics [adjust point values to your context]:

Pre-Observation Reflection [15 pts total in example]			
Criteria	Exceptional	Satisfactory	Cursory
Timeliness	Answers for the pre-reflection and planning meeting are submitted on time (or are excused). The plan is complete (it addresses all required prompts). [5 pt]	The plan is late and/or not complete (it does not address all required prompts). [3 pt]	Answers are not submitted on time. [0 pt]
Logistical Preparation	The TA has a clear and detailed plan for the peer observation. All aspects of the logistics are addressed, and will meet assignment deadlines. [5 pt]	The TA addresses some aspects of the logistics for the peer observation process; but some aspects are left incomplete, unclear, or will not meet assignment deadlines. [3 pt]	There is no clear plan for the logistics of the peer observation process. [0 pt]
Reflection Thoughtfulness	The TA provides a thoughtful reflection on their perceived	The TA discusses some aspects of the pre-reflection, but more	There is no pre-reflection: the TA does not address their perceived

	strengths, areas for improvement, and other aspects of their teaching on which they would like feedback. This demonstrates a genuine commitment to growing as a teacher from this process. [5 pt]	detail is needed. One or more aspects may have been left out, or discussed too briefly to be of instructional value to the TA in their efforts to grow as an instructor. [3 pt]	strengths, areas for improvement, or other aspects of their teaching on which they would like feedback. [0 pt]
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Post-Observation Reflection [25 pts total in example]			
Criteria	Exceptional	Satisfactory	Cursory
Timeliness and Completion	The reflection is completed on time, and falls within the time frame (no longer than 15 minutes). [5 pt]	The reflection submission is late, or runs too long. Conversely, the reflection is too short to result in a thorough assessment and reflection on the experience. [3 pt]	The assignment is not submitted. [0 pt]
Peer Consultation Experience	The TA describes their experience observing and being observed by a peer. They describe their thoughts going into the experience, how they felt during the process, and how they thought the observations went in the moment. This description is a genuine and objective reflection. [5 pt]	The TA describes some aspects of the peer consultation experience, but it could benefit from more context, or a more genuine reflection on the experience. [3 pt]	The TA does not describe the peer consultation experience, or it is too superficial to set the context for the reflection. [0 pt]
Teaching Strategies and Methods	The TA describes their teaching during the peer consultation. They discuss strategies/methods they used, how those seemed to work, and how their perceptions align with those of their observer. [5 pt]	The TA describes some aspect of their teaching, but it could benefit from more context, more detail as to what their teaching looked like, or more insights as to the perceptions of their observer. [3 pt]	The TA does not address specific teaching methods during their observation, or it is too superficial to set the context for the reflection. [0 pt]
Strengths and Areas for Improvement	The TA describes strengths and areas for improvement they identified in their pre-reflection, and specifically connects these to the perceptions of their observer. The TA discusses the feedback they received from their peer, and synthesizes these with their own views of their teaching. [5 pt]	The TA describes some aspects of their strengths and areas for improvement, but omits some key information. They may not reiterate the strengths and areas for improvement they identified in the pre-reflection, and/or integrate these with the views of their observer. [3 pt]	The TA does not discuss their perceived strengths and areas for improvement, or does not sufficiently integrate their perceptions with the views of their observer. [0 pt]
Synthesis	The TA summarizes what they learned from the peer consultation process. This demonstrates that they took the process seriously, and committed to it with the goal of continuing to improve their instruction. They discuss how this experience will impact their future teaching. [5 pt]	The TA discusses some aspects of what they learned from the experience, but this discussion could use more detail, and/or may have omitted a discussion of how this process will affect their future teaching. [3 pt]	The TA does not summarize what they learned from the experience, or does so in a way in which it is not clear how the experience will impact their future teaching. [0 pt]

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