General Guidelines for Instructor Conducting Observation

1. **Meet with the instructor of the class to be observed at least a day before the scheduled class meeting.** The discussion should create a context for the class to be observed. You should take time to look at the instructor’s course syllabus and any other relevant materials before and/or during this meeting. You might want to ask the following questions about the class meeting you will be observing:

   - How does this class fit into the course plans, overall?
   - What are the specific goals of this class meeting? How does this class meet one or more of the course objectives?
   - What happened in the previous class meeting?
   - What have the students done to prepare for this class?
   - What will students do in this class meeting? What will YOU do in this class meeting?
   - What would you like for me to focus on when I visit?
   - What kind of data (transcription, checklist, etc.) will be most useful to you?

2. **Visit the class.**
   Arrive early and take a seat in an inconspicuous part of the room. Bring a watch and a note pad as well. The most important thing to remember about the class visit is that your primary goal is to observe and record accurately what you see and hear. Consider it your job to write an “ethnography” rather than an evaluation. Take the point of view of a student in the class, and try to make observations that reflect his/her experience as a learner.

3. **Reflect on your experience as an observer.**
   Before you meet with the instructor you observed, reread your notes and identify several items that you can discuss with him/her. Plan your conversation as an exploration of what happened, and why, not an evaluation.

4. **Meet with the observed instructor.**
   - Start by asking the instructor how he/she felt about the class. Was it a typical class? Were the objectives reached? What went well? What would he/she have liked to go differently?
   - Keep in mind that an important goal of the observation is to give the instructor a snapshot of his/her class—free of judgment. Offer to read sections of your notes where interesting, particularly good, or problematic things occurred. Your ability to recapture the class in detail helps your credibility as an observer. The transcript will also give you something concrete to use if you wish to demonstrate an important point about a moment of the class.
   - Make sure that you indicate to the observed instructor the things that worked. Then limit your suggestions or recommendations to just a few. Too many suggestions may leave the instructor less confident as a teacher and uncertain about what to change.
General Guidelines for Instructor Being Observed

1. **Inform your students that there will be a visitor observing the class before the day of the observation.**
   You want the day of an observation to be as “normal” as possible, so you want your students to be prepared for the presence of the observer and not feel uncomfortable. Explain to your students that YOU have asked a colleague to come to your class to learn about what you’re doing in your teaching.

2. **Meet with the observer at least a day before the scheduled class meeting.**
   The purpose of this meeting is for you to let your observer know as much as possible about your intentions for this class meeting and to identify your objectives. The discussion should create a context for the class to be observed and give you the opportunity to share any special information that your observer may need to understand what will be happening in class on the day of the observation. If the observer has not already seen it, bring a copy of your course syllabus and any other relevant materials to discuss during this meeting. Here are some questions you might want to be prepared to answer during this meeting:

   - How does this class fit into the course plans, overall?
   - What are the specific goals of this class meeting? How does this class meet one or more of the course objectives?
   - What happened in the previous class meeting?
   - What have the students done to prepare for this class?
   - What will students do in this class meeting? What will YOU do in this class meeting?
   - What would you like for me to focus on when I visit?
   - What kind of data (transcription, checklist, etc.) will be most useful to you?

3. **Reflect on the class meeting.**
   Before you meet with your observer, take some time to think about your sense of how the class went. Ask yourself some questions:

   - What went well?
   - Where did your students seem to respond positively to what you were doing?
   - Where do you see evidence that you met your objectives for the class meeting?
   - What do you wish had worked better?

4. **Meet with the observer.**
   After you have been observed, make sure to take time to meet with the observer to discuss both of your perceptions of the class. Considering the reflective questions in #3 will help you prepare for this meeting. Feel free to ask your observer questions about his/her perceptions of how students were responding to particular activities.