

New York City College of Technology

Online Learning Advisory Council

Online Course Observation

Effective beginning Spring 2018

Conducting Observations of Hybrid and Online Courses

Observation procedures are part of our terms and conditions of employment, and thus are part of our contract (see Article 18). A Labor-Management Committee is currently working to formulate additional contract language that will govern the ways these observations are done. Until then, the Online Learning Advisory Council (OLAC) has agreed to set forth a description of what some observers and observees have done since these observations began at City Tech. These are not meant as requirements of observees or observers, and it is understood that they also provide no contractual protection for observees.

Most Chairs assign observers who have experience teaching online. In classes using the Blackboard course management system, some instructors have chosen to add the observer to the course as a Teaching Assistant (TA), or as a Student, or to meet with the observer for a face-to-face presentation of the course. In hybrid courses, some instructors have also requested that the observer observe a face-to-face class meeting.

Other instructors have asked the department of Instructional Technology & the Technology Enhancement Centers (iTEC) to add the observer to a Blackboard course as a Teaching Assistant. iTEC needs two days to add and remove an observer to a course as a TA or student (weekdays only). Instructors/observees and observers have mutually decided how long the observer would be in the course in TA or student status. The observers have completed the Faculty Class Observation Report Form for Observations of Hybrid and Online Courses.

Some course instructors and observers have agreed on a mutually convenient time and place to review the hybrid or online course together. For hybrid courses, instructors have occasionally also scheduled a time for the observer to observe a face-to-face class meeting. Observers have evaluated these sites and classes according to the criteria in the Faculty Class Observation Report Form for Observations of Hybrid and Online Courses.

Instructors who use OpenLab or other course management platforms have added and removed observers themselves, since the platforms have that capability.

Of available course platforms, only BlackBoard offers a certification process for verifying an enrolled student is actually the one taking the course. Fully online courses need to use

Blackboard since student identification is tied to other identifying information, such as EMPLID and Social Security number. Platforms other than Blackboard must include a method of certifying that the enrolled student is actually the one taking the course before they can be used for fully online instruction.

Following the observation and completion of the observation report, observees and observers have met as usual for a post-observation conference. Memos of these conferences have been filed along with the completed observation reports, as with face-to-face classes. Since this part of the procedure is prescribed by Article 18 of the contract, nothing has changed, although on some other campuses some observers of completely online classes have conducted the post-observation conference by telephone. At City Tech the observation report and post-observation conference memo must be signed. In the case of remote conferences, the observer has left printed versions of the document in the observee's mailbox to sign.

This describes current practice. It will be replaced by contract language when the university and the union agree on procedures.