

## **Trained Faculty Observer (TFO)**

### *Introduction*

TFO observation of teaching enables Gavilan Faculty educators to:

- connect with their colleagues to build collaborative working relationships,
- exhibit and obtain understanding on their instructional skills, and
- engage in peer interaction about best teaching practices.

Faculty observations occur on campus in a formal and/or an informal manner.

Observation may occur in an informal manner; faculty members observe each other teach and discuss what happened during a single teaching encounter. This happens within various professional agreements (Mentoring, GOT training or peers working together on similar projects). Colleagues will discuss the observation and suggest what changes could be introduced to improve instruction and done by a mutual understanding. In the GCFA contract article also states the following,

### ***“19.7 PART-TIME FACULTY***

*Part-time faculty shall be evaluated one (1) time in their first semester teaching at Gavilan College by the area Dean, thereafter, every third semester that the faculty member teaches, the faculty member will select a Trained Faculty Observer (TFO) to conduct their observations. Additional evaluations can be scheduled at the discretion of the District.” (See attached GCFA Article 19.7)*

TFO trained faculty observations occur as a structured activity in which faculty, with training, are invited to observe a colleague’s teaching session. The observer will use teaching observation form to guide the observation; however, there is always a discussion afterwards to share feedback and exchange ideas about educational strategies, learner engagement, group dynamics, and time management. These completed forms will be forwarded to the faculty’s dean used for the evaluation process.

This handbook explains the steps a Trained Faculty Observer (TFO) should follow, based on our experience and review of the process, to effectively observe a peer teach and to provide meaningful feedback. We consider the goals of any peer observation of teaching experience, whether formal or informal, are the exchange of instructional visions, dialogue of pedagogical methods, and the advancement of collaborative teaching relationships. Much of this process is based upon Dr. John Lawton Heal and Denee Pescarmona work during the following years.

### **Selection of TFO:**

Any faculty member who is scheduled to be observed may have the option to coordinate with the vice president of Academic Affairs, Area Dean, Department Chair and division assistants to choose their TFO. A list of Trained Faculty Observers will be provided to all faculty members at the beginning of each semester. It is important to remember for all who are involved that “Cold Calling” a TFO is difficult. All faculty involved in this process should be welcoming, supportive and compassionate when being approached to be selected as a TFO. If there is need for support the TFO should reach out to the area Dean to discuss acceptance or denial of selection. It is important to respond to requests to the asking faculty as they can start to plan the observation or seek another.

### **Step 1: Clarify expectations:**

- **Setting the tone**

Observations can be a stressful event in all our teaching careers. Putting someone at ease and establishing a friendly and supportive relationship will allow communication and feedback to flow much easier. This can be accomplished by connecting and discussing about their teaching career, what classes they have taught or how their experience has been at Gavilan College.

- **Educating about Observations**

Faculty Observations can vary from campus to campus. Many of us have not been observed on a regular basis or have forgotten what we need to complete to

fulfill our obligation. Taking time to discuss why we should each other, what forms are needed, establishing a timeline, choosing a class and follow up afterwards. Clarify that you will conduct a formative assessment of teaching directed toward areas the faculty member identifies as important and in need of improvement. Be sure to stress that the observation results and discussion will be confidential and provided only to the faculty member being observed. Any written notes or documentation will not be shared with supervisory staff.

- **Set expectations**

When a faculty member invites you to conduct a peer observation of his or her teaching, begin by determining the goals for the observation. It is important to set expectations with each other, share what each of you want out of this interaction. Allow the faculty member to discuss what you should observe from this class/ lesson. What takeaways do they want students to have? What is the purpose of the lesson? Is this lesson tied into a larger concept? It is also important for you to discuss your interactions and goals for the observation. What are you looking for and how are you going to accomplish that?

**Step 2: Review logistics:**

- **Before meeting/ appointment time face to face/ zoom/ call**

Prior to the first meeting, determine how you are going to communicate during this meeting.

If Synchronous course, get zoom meeting ID and passcode. Instruct faculty to give you access to course as a student for the week to be reviewed. You want to look at the curriculum, weekly assignments, or any assigned readings. Ask the faculty member what has been taught previously and what will be taught in subsequent sessions (if appropriate) to help you place this session into an educational context.

If Asynchronous course, request the faculty to give you access to course as a student for the week to be reviewed. When completed you should remind the faculty to remove you from the course.

In Person observation, you should note the exact date, time, and place of the teaching session, as well as where you can meet the faculty member before the session. Schedule enough time to arrive early and stay until the determined time to exit. Many teaching interactions happen before and after a session, providing you with further insight into the faculty member's teaching approach. Although this may seem minor, it is important to determine how the faculty member will introduce you to the learners.

An initial Zoom call is recommended to go over procedures and time-line with new faculty. Provide the faculty member with any contact information needed, zoom ID or meeting location needed.

### **Step 3: Plan the observation feedback meeting first**

Prior to the observation session, Set-up a meeting with the faculty to review the TFO form and your observations. The week following the observation is best to discuss observations as it will be fresh in your mind. The feedback discussion is an essential component of conducting an observation; therefore, scheduling a feedback meeting should be as high a priority as scheduling the observation. In addition to an observation discussion, it may also be useful for the faculty member to receive written documentation of your observations, ideas, and suggestions. Note that all comments will be kept in strict confidence.

### **Step 4: Focus the observation:**

Speak with the faculty member before the observation to review his/her goals for the teaching encounter. What is the expected student learning outcome? Are there specific learning situations that he/she has struggled with prior to this meeting? By identifying specific aspects of teaching on which you should focus your attention during the observation, you will be able to provide valuable and meaningful feedback to the faculty member after the class. To help the faculty member identify specific teaching skills and behaviors on which he or she would

like you to focus during the teaching encounter, you might review the observation form.

**Step 5: Conduct the observation:**

Conduct Observation within the agreed upon week of instruction. If there are certain areas you cannot evaluate due to assignments or subject matter in the week or module, such as Student Engagement, contact the faculty member to ask for permission to look at other weeks in Canvas, or to suggest a module where that “missing” item can be seen and evaluated. If you are joining a Zoom synchronous class, ask to be added to break out rooms or sessions to observe students’ interactions and engagement.

To record what happens during the teaching session it is best to take detailed notes about the learning environment, student engagement, teaching methods, and classroom management. Bring the form to the observation but refrain from completing it until after the class. Remember the form’s purpose is to guide the observation. It is best to review the form ahead of time, bring it with you, and then take notes. Later, with the faculty member, you can look over the form and your notes, paying particular attention to areas on which the faculty member asked you to focus your attention. When taking notes, it is important to stay focused on the pedagogy rather than the specific topic or content. To this end, pay particular attention to what is happening or being discussed during the teaching encounter rather than taking notes about the topic being presented. It is best to record questions the students ask, interesting comments, points of confusion, etc.

If this is an in person observation, try to situate yourself so that you are seated outside of the faculty member’s line of sight as this will reduce his or her sense of anxiety about being observed. Do not participate in the session (e.g. answer

questions, share comments). If the faculty member should invite your opinion, politely decline.

When conducting the observation, take note of the following:

- The learning environment (does it feel safe? are the learners relaxed?)
- Whether the faculty member states the goal or focus of the session.
- Whether the faculty member appears to know the learners and to direct teaching to their level of training.
- How well prepared the faculty member and the learners are for the session, and how much enthusiasm they have for the topic at hand.
- How well organized the faculty member is and if there seems to be a logical sequence to the session.
- The teaching methods and if they seem appropriate for the goals of the session.
- The degree of learner engagement, and if this is encouraged or not.
- How often the faculty member checks the learners' level of understanding or asks for questions from the learners.
- (For discussion group teaching) The flow of discussion – Who are the active participants and who is trying to avoid engagement? Who keeps the discussion going? Are all questions and answers relayed to the faculty member or do participants address each other? Which participants are listened to when they speak? Which are ignored? How is silence handled?
- How learners' emotions are handled (e.g. disagreement, boredom, frustration, curiosity).

- The level of questions the faculty member poses to the learners (e.g. lower order factual-type questions or higher-order analytic and evaluative-type questions)
- How long the faculty member pauses for learners to respond and how he or she handles responses (e.g. encourages further elaboration, points out misunderstandings, accepts any response provided, doesn't allow time for response, or answers own question)
- How effectively the faculty member's body language, eye contact, voice, and movement support the learning process and demonstrate enthusiasm for the topic. Does the faculty member look mainly at his or her notes, computer or the learners? Does he or she focus on particular learners or parts of the audience?
- How well the faculty member's voice can be heard by the learners.
- How the session is concluded and how major points are summarized. Is a handout or readings provided? If appropriate, is there a reference to upcoming educational sessions, assignments, or activities?
- What occurs after the teaching encounter? Are there informal discussions among the students or do several learners approach the faculty member to help clarify their understanding of the material?

### **Step 6: Meet soon after the teaching session**

Feedback is most useful when given at the earliest opportunity so that reflections on the faculty member's teaching are not forgotten or become vague. Send the Faculty Member the completed TFO form to review the morning of your zoom follow-up meeting. This way they can read the form carefully and come prepared with any questions or comments to your meeting. You may decide to modify

some of your comments or numerical evaluations based on this conversation. (For example – learning that a faculty member had less than 1 week to prepare before the term began may mitigate some of your criticisms and comments). Immediately following the teaching encounter, encourage the faculty member to write down his/her own reflections about the session.

*Consider these self-assessment questions to help stimulate reflections:*

Please name two main teaching points you hoped to convey to the participants. Describe the technique(s) you used to emphasize the importance of these points.

Please identify one question or issue you would most like to discuss during our debriefing.

Describe at which point during the teaching session you felt the participants were most engaged. At which point were they least engaged? Why?

If you were asked to teach this session again, describe one thing you would do exactly the same and one thing you might change.

### **Step 7: Debrief the teaching session**

Conduct at least a ½ hour observation meeting. Go over the form and answer any questions the new faculty member may have about the TFO process and what they need to do next to complete their observation. Explain that you enjoyed observing the faculty member teach and would like to share feedback and reflections about the session. Start by inviting the faculty member to share his or her own reflections.

Be sure to address:

- 1) the specific areas on which the faculty member asked you to focus during the observation.
- 2) the faculty member's instructional strengths and ways these may be leveraged while teaching.
- 3) opportunities for growth, addressing specifically those areas that would yield

the greatest improvement in teaching effectiveness.

4) key moments or turning points in the session.

5) general, yet constructive recommendations for future teaching experiences.

6) specific techniques or skills that you witnessed during the session and hope to utilize in your own teaching – thank the faculty member for sharing those with you.

If applicable, review the section(s) of the peer observation of teaching form that address the feedback sought by the faculty.

### **Step 8: Give feedback that is useful (a few pointers)**

In your role as trained faculty observer you have the advantage of stepping back to notice, and later share, critical teaching moments with the faculty member. Your goal is to “mirror” back to the faculty member what impressed you about the learner engagement, group dynamic, and the instructional and process issues that you were able to see from your vantage point. Be sure to highlight the positive elements, build confidence, and focus on the specific areas that the faculty member asked for feedback. Approach the feedback experience as a mutual exploration of best teaching practices.

*In giving feedback:*

1. Begin on a positive note. Starting with something positive also gives the faculty member a teaching behavior to continue to do, rather than hearing only about skills that need to be improved.
2. Structure your feedback so that you are sharing reflections rather than giving advice. By sharing information, you give the faculty member the option of deciding for him- or herself the most appropriate changes or improvements to make.
3. Identify one teaching skill or behavior that the faculty member did well. By doing so, faculty members will relax and be able to hear ways to improve. Keep the tone supportive and constructive.

In conclusion, the next step after this process is to encourage all of us to build a professional relationship with our colleagues. Reaching out to those we have observed and making yourself available for follow up or working together on various committees or professional meetings. Collaborating and learning from each other is what makes education grow stronger. The role of the TFO is the first step to building mentoring relationships and furthering professional development relationships. As we move forward in improving the evaluation process and development of TFO training we should refer to the Senate CCC white paper on Sound Principles of Faculty Evaluation (Spring 2013).

[https://asccc.org/sites/default/files/publications/Principles-Faculty-Evaluation2013\\_0.pdf](https://asccc.org/sites/default/files/publications/Principles-Faculty-Evaluation2013_0.pdf)

## **GCFA Article 19.7**

### **19.7 PART-TIME FACULTY**

Part-time faculty shall be evaluated one (1) time in their first semester teaching at Gavilan College by the area Dean, thereafter, every third semester that the faculty member teaches, the faculty member will select a Trained Faculty Observer (TFO) to conduct their observations. Additional evaluations can be scheduled at the discretion of the District.

**19.7.1** Evaluation team composition - the evaluation team for a part-time faculty member will consist of the supervising administrator and one (1) trained faculty observer.

The administrative member of the Evaluation Team, who is also responsible for seeing the process through to its conclusion, will be appointed by the Chief Instructional Officer.

The part-time faculty member being evaluated will be evaluated by the supervising administrator during the first semester of service. Thereafter, the faculty member being evaluated will select a trained faculty observer to carry out the evaluation.

The trained faculty observer shall be a member of GCFA. The faculty asked to do the observation may decline, at which point another trained faculty member will be chosen, or the administrator on the team may aid in selecting the trained faculty observer. Where the number of faculty within a discipline is small in number, the trained faculty observer may be selected from a discipline outside of the faculty member's area of expertise.

The PT faculty member being evaluated may select a colleague to carry out a peer evaluation. Where the number of faculty within a discipline is small in number, the peer observer may be selected from a discipline outside the faculty member's area of expertise. The evaluating peer shall be a member of GCFA. The evaluating peer will make at least one (1) class visitation with a second (2nd) visitation being mandated at the request of the evaluatee or visit the main work setting for non-instructional faculty. The visitation(s) will be summarized in a written report and the peer will present and discuss the written report with the faculty member being evaluated. The faculty member

has the option of placing this report in his/her personnel file. For their participation, peer observers can accrue three (3) flex and/or co-curricular hours.

#### **19.7.1.1**

Training for faculty observers and administrators will be offered annually within the first month of the Fall semester. The district, Academic Senate, and GCFA representative(s) will co-design and offer the training. Flex and/or co-curricular hours can be awarded at the discretion of the trained faculty observer with prior approval from the supervising administrator for this training.

The trained faculty observer will be paid \$157.21 per completed observation form. Any future increases to salary schedule will increase by the same percentage amount. In lieu of compensation, three (3) flex and/or co-curricular hours can be awarded at the discretion of the trained faculty observer with prior approval of the supervising administrator.

#### **19.7.2 EVALUATION PROCESS FOR PART-TIME FACULTY**

For part-time faculty, notice of pending routine evaluation will be within the first two (2) weeks of the semester. Non-routine evaluations may be performed at the discretion of the supervising administrator.

The trained faculty observer will make at least one (1) class observation with a second (2nd) observation being mandated at the request of the evaluatee or supervising administrator. If concerns are raised, the supervising administrator and part time faculty member will meet to discuss the concerns and create a remediation plan.

The trained faculty observer and administrator will each schedule a post-observation meeting with the evaluatee. The TFO will discuss with the evaluatee the results of the observation and overall classroom performance, as certified on the cover sheet. An administrative evaluation summary, prepared by the supervising administrator, will be included as part of the final evaluation package after the TFO has met with the evaluatee. The final evaluation packet will include the cover sheet, classroom observation, self-evaluation, student evaluation summaries, and the administrative summary, will become part of the evaluatee's permanent personnel file.

### **19.7.3 HOLD HARMLESS**

The District agrees to indemnify and hold harmless any faculty member against any and all claims arising out of any evaluation conducted under the provisions of this Article.

### **19.7.4 REMEDIATION AND TIMELINE**

Any areas of serious concern in the final evaluation report (i.e. cover sheet, trained faculty observer observation form, self-evaluation, student evaluation and administrative evaluation) will be reviewed with the faculty member and the supervising administrator as soon as they are identified. When remediation is required, as evidenced in the evaluation report, a remediation plan will be developed by the evaluatee and administrator outlining specific performance improvement objectives, timelines, and subsequent classroom observations.

Part time faculty whose performance is deemed unsatisfactory upon the first evaluation, may or may not, at the discretion of the supervising administrator, be offered a subsequent course-load assignment and/or a remediation plan for an upcoming semester.

Continuing part-time faculty whose evaluation is deemed unsatisfactory shall work with the supervising administrator to develop a clear remediation plan with specific, reasonable goals, activities and timelines.

Remediation Plan activities may include attending workshops or conferences on academic discipline material or on teaching and learning, observing other faculty members' classes, additional student observations, working with faculty or administrative mentors, and inviting further observations of his/her classes. Individual remediation activities will not be paid for using District funds or any paid time with the exception of flex time.

Administrators may conduct additional, non-routine, evaluations as necessary, particularly to support a faculty member who is implementing a remediation plan.

Remediation timelines shall be limited to one or two semesters and be followed up by re-evaluation in the following semester. Timelines shall include follow-up meetings with the supervising administrator to discuss progress towards stated goals. Written administrative appraisals of its implementation shall become part of the evaluatees' personnel file. If a part-time faculty member receives two (2) consecutive negative

evaluations despite remediation, this will be grounds for the District's ceasing to offer assignments to that faculty member.

#### **19.7.5 APPEALS PROCESS**

Part-time faculty being evaluated shall have access to all materials used to make a given evaluation. They shall have the right to respond to any observer's written materials or verbal statements in writing, and to have their responses included in the record of evaluation.

## Timeline and Letter for Trained Faculty Observers:

### Dean's/TFO Protocol for New adjunct faculty Reviews

1. TFO List arrives from HR 3rd week of term. Liaison creates and sends a letter to new Faculty needing reviews for the term. (Example – letter 1)
2. Follow up. Set up a week for review with faculty. If Synchronous course, get a zoom meeting ID and passcode. Instruct faculty to give you access to course as a student for the week to be reviewed. An initial Zoom call is recommended to go over procedures and time-line with new faculty. (Example – letter 2).
3. Confirm week/date of observation with new faculty. (Example – letter 3)
4. Conduct Observation within the agreed upon week of instruction. If there are certain areas you cannot evaluate due to assignments or subject matter in the week or module, such as Student Engagement, contact the faculty member to ask for permission to look at other weeks in Canvas, or to suggest a module where that “missing” item can be seen and evaluated. If you are joining a Zoom synchronous class, ask to be added to break out rooms or sessions to observe students’ interactions and engagement.
5. Set-up a meeting with the faculty to review the TFO form and your observations. The week following the observation is best to discuss observations as it will be fresh in your mind. (Example – Letter 4)
6. Send the Faculty Member the completed TFO form to review the morning of your zoom follow-up meeting. This way they can read the form carefully and come prepared with any questions or comments to your meeting. You may decide to modify some of your comments or numerical evaluations based on this conversation. (For example – learning a faculty member had less than 1 week to prepare before the term began may mitigate some of your criticisms and comments).
7. Conduct at least a ½ hour observation meeting. Go over the form and answer any questions the new faculty member may have about the TFO process and what they need to do next to complete their observation.
8. As there is currently no way to have faculty sign the observation form, ask them to send an email to Department Liaison stating they have read and accepted the evaluation form from (term). Have them include the course name and CRN with

their signature. (Example letter 3). Go over the final steps for them: Self-evaluation, copy of syllabus, acceptance of form email, student evaluations, etc. Make sure they understand their responsibilities to complete the TFO process and to whom they should submit the electronic forms (Program Liaison NOT VPAA office).

9. Complete evaluation/observation cover sheet. Send cover sheet and completed TFO form to Liaison to forward to VPAA's office with syllabus, self-evaluation, etc.

#### Letter 1: Introduction Email

Welcome new Gavilan Faculty!

I am (Name) \_\_\_\_\_, (Department) \_\_\_\_\_ Faculty. This year I am helping the VPAA office to facilitate observations for new faculty. I want to let you know about your options for observation and to ask which week this term you would like to be observed.

As you are on the new faculty list this term, you have two options. You may choose to have either Denee or myself visit your online course. Please let me know which of us you would prefer to do the evaluations by (Date) \_\_\_\_\_. We will email you Monday to confirm your request or suggest an option if scheduling is an issue.

By contractual obligation, all GCFA evaluations must be completed by the end of 12th week. Please consider which week would work best for a visit. We will look at your online shell, as well as drop in on synchronous sessions (where applicable). Starting Week 8 (Date Range) we only have 1 month to 12th Week- so please get your requests back on or before (Date)!

Thanks for your time. I know that there is a lot to process as a new faculty member, but this is an important part of our contractual agreement as faculty with Gavilan. Please let me or Pilar Conaway (pconanway@gavilan.edu) know if you have any questions about the observation process. I have been a TFO (Trained Faculty Observer) for many years and am happy to discuss observations with you.

All the Best,

Letter 2: Confirmation Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for your quick response to my email. This email will confirm that your observation is scheduled for:

Please send me a quick email confirming your course number, CRN, and title for Fall (ex: Thea 1 (CRN: 44444) Theater History, M 9:45AM). Please remember to grant me access as a student to your shell the week we have scheduled. (Please let me know if you need help with this step)

If your course is synchronous, make sure you have specified which date for the week and the time.

Thanks for your help! See you in your classes soon!

All the Best,

Letter 3:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am writing to you confirming my observation for your course number, CRN, and title for Fall (ex: Thea 1 (CRN: 44444) Theater History, M 9:45AM). I will arrive 10-15 mins before class to get set up and leave at our arranged time.

Thank you for your time.

Letter 4: Follow up Email

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Thank you for the opportunity to observe your class this term. Our next step is to schedule a Zoom meeting to go over the observation form together, so I can answer any questions you may have. I am available this week:

Propose two different times and days

If these times do not work for your schedule, please suggest an alternate time when you send me an email to request a ½ hour meeting. My private Zoom Room is: \_\_\_\_\_. Here is my cell in case we have trouble connecting at a meeting: \_\_\_\_\_.

After our zoom session, there are only a few steps to complete this part of your observation/evaluation:

- 1) After our meeting please send an email to me and Division Asst Email \_\_\_\_\_ - Liaison to our Dean) it needs to state “I have read and reviewed the observation form from (date) 2021 and accept the observation”. Include your full name in signature as well as class number & CRN.
- 2) Make sure you have sent an electronic version of the syllabus for this class to division Asst (email above)

All the Best,

P.S. You will still need to do your self-evaluation once you have received and reviewed your student evaluations.