

FAQs Regarding Synchronous and Asynchronous Classroom Observations

As courses moved virtual, questions have arisen regarding how classroom observations can be conducted in synchronous and asynchronous virtual sections. This document provides some FAQs to help answer these questions, with the goals of complying with the Collective Bargaining Agreement and continuing to ensure faculty do not suffer due to disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Relevant CBA sections:

- CBA 15.14
When classroom visits are utilized as part of the evaluation of a faculty unit employee under this Article, the individual faculty unit employee being evaluated shall be provided a notice of at least five (5) days that a classroom visit, online observation, and/or review of online content is to take place. There shall be consultation between the faculty member being evaluated and the individual who visits his/her class(es) regarding the classes to be visited and the scheduling of such visits.
- CBA 15.3
Evaluation criteria and procedures shall be made available to the faculty unit employee no later than 14 days after the first day of instruction of the academic term. Evaluation criteria and procedures shall be made available to the evaluation committee and the academic administrators prior to the commencement of the evaluation process. Once the evaluation process has begun, there shall be no changes in criteria and procedures used to evaluate the faculty unit employee during the evaluation process. Faculty members teaching online are subject to all the rights and conditions set out in Article 15 and applicable campus evaluation policies. The collection and use of online course quantitative data for evaluation purposes shall only occur when required in campus evaluation policies and procedures.

How do observers provide appropriate notice and consultation?

1. All evaluation criteria must be provided to faculty being evaluated in the first 14 days of the semester and cannot change.
2. Five or more days before observer is going to visit virtual section, notice must be given of the class(es) to be visited and consultation must occur.
3. During consultation, please discuss which classes/sections will be visited, approximate date/time, how access to the virtual classroom will be given and what is to be viewed in the virtual classroom. Also, if in your department other items are normally obtained/viewed during peer observation (syllabi and samples of recent assignments, for example), please discuss that during consultation.

How can we schedule observation in Synchronous Courses?

The observer must consult with the faculty member about the specific class(es) to be observed and date and time. During the consultation, the observer and faculty member should discuss what (and technically how) access will be given. The access should mirror the access students have to the class(es) for the date/time the sections are scheduled to meet, via whatever medium the faculty member is planning to use for that day. The goal is to "visit" the virtual class for the day, without overreaching and inadvertently delving into areas that wouldn't typically be observed during a classroom visit.

FAQs Regarding Synchronous and Asynchronous Classroom Observations

Discuss how access will be granted and ensure the faculty member knows to remove the access following the visit.

How can we schedule observation in Asynchronous Courses?

Similar to synchronous courses, consultation is key. During consultation, in addition to discussing which class(es) will be observed on which date(s), discuss which technologies the instructor uses that should be accessed by the observer. The goal is to “visit” the virtual class for the day, akin to a student, without overreaching and inadvertently delving into areas that wouldn’t typically be observed during a classroom visit.

Discuss how access will be granted and ensure the faculty member knows to remove the access following the visit.

If the faculty member uses Cougar Courses--how do they grant access to the observer?

The faculty member should add the observer to the course as a “student” to see how students experience the course, without gaining grade book access, etc. If the faculty member has questions about how to add the observer, IITS has a guide at

<https://www.csusm.edu/iits/services/ats/idesign/cougarcourses/guides/course-management-add-course-users/index.html>.

In Cougar Courses, how can the faculty member who was observed end the observer’s access when the observation is completed?

The faculty member will follow the same steps, discussed above, to add a user and then click the trashcan icon to the far right of the person’s name to delete the person from the course.

If a faculty member uses modalities other than Cougar Courses (Zoom, etc.) can they be accessed?

Yes, following consultation, as discussed above. The goal is for the observation to mirror what a student would experience that day in class. Again, during consultation, discuss how and when access will be granted.

If normally the observer would be provided other items (syllabus, etc.), can that still occur with Synchronous or Asynchronous courses?

Yes. For example, in some departments, syllabi and samples of recent assignments are provided by the faculty being observed to the observer. The key is working together (observer and observee) and discussing this during consultation. If typical in your department, discussions could also establish what is going on in the class at the time, asking how students know what is due when, how feedback is provided, etc. The goal is not to overreach, but to follow your standard departmental practice to the extent possible in a virtual environment.