**General guidance for observees:**

Consider having two observers in one class, one a SME and one focusing on pedagogy.

**General guidance for observers:**

*Required:*

Connect to college and program standards for teaching

*Recommended:*

Be specific, not vague. Take sufficiently detailed notes to allow for specific supporting details in a final report.

Be careful about making value judgments—especially be careful about use of adjectives. Keep in mind that what you say make be selectively quoted in files or letters.

Consider listing standards of excellence that have been met—“The faculty member has met the following standards…” SIPET Fellows were not in agreement about how direct an evaluative role observers should take on in their final, official, written reports.

Consider using phrasing that recommends faculty member “reduce, maintain, increase” pedagogical strategies related to the standards (use of technology, etc.) SIPET Fellows think this would be helpful for file readers and new faculty alike but also worry that it too closely mimics IDEA language

Consider using a list of prompts or a checklist to help direct observer attention to items of potential interest, but be wary of providing checklists as part of evaluation or in lieu of a narrative. In the spirit of this suggestion, the IFD website links to some PDF lists that are meant to be used as prompts and are not conveniently provided as word documents. Here are items that are more strongly recommended for use in a checklist or ranking *--yes or no or with ranking categories (e.g. no, a little, somewhat, fairly well, very well):*

*Syllabus lists course goals*

*Syllabus communicates grading expectations*

*Syllabus communicates attendance policy*

*Connections were made to other fields of knowledge*

Prompts like the following might be used, followed by lists:

Opportunities for learning outside the classroom:

Technologies used:

Or, more generally, observers might use prompts like “Please comment on class organization, interaction with students, delivery of material….”

Or, observers might checklist simple items, like the following (note that these items are not directly mentioned in the policy definition for excellent teaching):

Student behavior/class structure:

Class begins on time

Class ends on time

Use of breaks

Students come late

Observers might prompt themselves with heading like “Strengths” (evidence of teaching excellence listed) and “Opportunities”

Consider drafting a list or brief preamble about your foci, background, philosophy, and areas of expertise as an observer.

Consider, early in an observation report, including a summary that situates the context of the class being observed in these ways: the class within course, the course within the curriculum, and the observation within the development of the teacher being observed.

Use summaries, lists, headings, bold, italics, color, and other organization and document design strategies to both help readers get a quick overview and, if they desire, more detail.

**Areas of significant discussion among inaugural SIPET fellows:**

Use of checklists. The group did appear to reach consensus that checklists might be more useful as a tool for the observer and not as part of the official final report, with the exception of items that can be put into a checklist from the list of college or program standards. The concerns with checklists in final reports related largely to whether readers would skim them and note positive or negative checks or ratings without considering context—for example, would a faculty member not having related to recent scholarship in the field in an individual class session seem like a negative, when it might be something that just wouldn’t normally occur very frequently in an intro math course or the like? Many available checklists also essentially add new standards of teaching not in the policies, which would be dangerous—making eye contact, for example.

There was significant discussion about the appropriateness of either objective description or clear evaluation. Some people considered it more appropriate to write as objective, descriptive a report of what happened as possible, taking care not to be evaluative and leaving evaluation up to the reader. Others thought it essential to also include evaluation. Some thought that if the purpose was largely evaluative, observers might include less narrative, descriptive detail and provide more concise evaluation. Many worried that where, as currently, a mix of these exists, observers providing a more objective description may do accidental harm if this is interpreted as faint praise or worse by file readers.

There was significant discussion of the problems caused by the somewhat dual purposes/audiences for the observations: formative, reflection-generating for change for the faculty member, especially less experienced teachers, vs. summative, evaluative to mainly note if someone is a poor teacher for the personnel process.