

Twelve Tips for Peer Observation of Teaching
(From Siddiqui et al, Medical Teacher 5 Sept 2007)

- 1. The observation process should be a collaborative effort** among colleagues who trust and respect each other.
- 2. Set aside time for the peer-observation** which occurs in three stages: pre-observation (understanding the session and goals to be observed), observation, post-observation (reflection and debriefing).
- 3. Clarify expectations:** “It is helpful to meet before the observation and clarify the roles of the observer and the observed teacher and to agree on the process and evaluation criteria.”
- 4. Familiarize yourself with the course.**
- 5. Familiarize yourself with the instrument.**
- 6. Inform students.** The presence of an observer can cause anxiety for students. Inform students that there will be an observer and that they are participating in professional development of the staff, not evaluating the students.
- 7. Be objective.** Focus on specific teaching techniques and methods that were agreed on beforehand and/or are outlined in the instrument. You should communicate your observations, not your judgments.
- 8. Resist the urge to compare with your own teaching style.** Being peers does not necessarily mean that the two of you will have the same teaching style. Concentrate on the teaching style of the person and the interactions that you observe.
- 9. Do not intervene in the teaching.** Your role is just to observe. Intervention can reduce the credibility of the observed teacher. “It is harder to observe than be observed.”
- 10. Follow the general principles for feedback.** “Observation itself does not lead to improved teaching; rather it is the process of debriefing and feedback that is so helpful.”
- 11. Respect confidentiality.** “It is likely that your observations will lead you to make judgments about the person’s teaching abilities, but these thoughts should not be shared or discussed with colleagues.”
- 12. Make it a learning experience.** “Giving supportive feedback and constructive advice is an extremely challenging skill. The observational experience is a great learning experience for the observer, who can build or enhance skills such as teaching techniques, managing students, and asking questions.”