Classroom Observations Guidelines

Classroom observations are an important element in Gallatin’s effort to improve teaching, to develop the skills of our faculty and to make sound decisions about hiring, tenure, promotion and reappointment. The following are some guidelines about how to set up, conduct and process the observations:

Setting up the Observation
• Contact the instructor and provide reasonable notice of the observation. Arrange a mutually convenient date and time.
• Look at the course syllabus before the visit, so you know the basic structure of the course. If possible, talk to the instructor to find out what he or she is planning to do during that session.

Conducting the Observation
• Arrive before the class starts and take a seat in a relatively unobtrusive place. For a class that is 75 minutes long, plan on staying the entire length of the class; for a longer class session, try to stay until the class is over, but if that is not possible, leave during a break.
• As the class progresses, take notes on what happens: how the instructor interacts with the students; how he or she structures the class sessions (lectures, discussions, small groups, exercises, videos, etc.); how he or she uses the board and other resources (handouts, overheads, etc.); how (and how many) students participate, and in what ways, and so on. This information should be included in section one of the form.
• Also, note what you think the instructor does particularly well, as well as what the teacher might have done differently, or might need to work on. These notes will be used to complete the attached form.

Completing the Observation
• As soon as possible after the class, while the class is fresh in your memory, please type up your observation using the Word document sent to you as an attachment. (Please note the text boxes will automatically expand as you type). The length of the observation report should be one-page long with the exception that for tenure-track faculty the report should be 1-3 pages.
• When you have completed the observation, send a copy to the instructor. Ask the instructor to sign the observation and return it to you. The signature indicates only that he or she has read it (not necessarily agreed with it). Let the instructor know that you are available to discuss it, if the instructor wishes to do so. You may or may not revise the observation after receiving the instructor’s feedback---that’s up to you. The instructor also has the option of appending comments to your observation.
• Send the final observation (including any comments from the instructor) to the Curriculum Committee Chair, Kim Phillips-Fein; she will keep a copy for the instructor’s file and will forward a copy to the appropriate member of the Curriculum Committee.