

Contractual Aspects of Teaching Observations

All term and tenure-track AAUP bargaining unit members are required to have regular classroom observations and this requirement is guided by Article 16 of the 2017-2020 WMU-AAUP Agreement.

Purpose – one aspect of evaluating professional competence.

Periodic evaluation of professional competence and performance will be conducted, the results of which are to be used for the purposes of: (a) improving the quality of instruction and/or the quality of the other professional duties and services rendered; (b) identifying and rewarding individual meritorious performance; and (c) assisting those responsible for making personnel recommendations by providing regular, useful, reliable, and comparable data for comparable groups.

Details – important for all tenure-track and term appointees in the AAUP bargaining unit!

16.§3.3.1 Pre-Tenure Observations.

- ✓ Faculty on probationary status shall have at least one observation per year by either a faculty colleague or an administrator. The probationary faculty member and his/her chair shall determine for each observation, by mutual agreement, who the observer shall be.
- ✓ The observer may be a department colleague, the department chair, or a faculty member or administrator outside of the faculty member's department, but within the institution.
- ✓ The date/time of each observation shall be determined, by mutual agreement, between the faculty member and his/her chair. There shall be no unscheduled observations.
- ✓ Additional observations are allowed per 16.§3.3.1.1 if the faculty member desires, and thus the faculty member could choose who does any additional observations without consultation with the chair/director.
- ✓ Note: We advise that only tenured faculty members do teaching observations, but this is not a contractual requirement.

Early Termination of the Observations Requirement

16.§3.3.1.2 Termination of Observations.

- ✓ After three (3) annual pre-tenure observations during the first three years in the probationary track, the faculty member and his/her chair may determine, by mutual agreement, that no further observations shall be necessary for the duration of the probationary period.
- ✓ You should directly request this and have it in writing before ceasing the annual required observations. There is no DTC role in this decision.
- ✓ Per 16.§3.3.2 teaching observations may not be required after the faculty member is awarded tenure.

Narrative Report Is Required (i.e., feedback from the observation)

16.§3.3.3 states that “For each required visitation, the observer shall prepare a brief, signed narrative report that shall be distributed only to the faculty member and his/her chair.”

- ✓ The department chair shall schedule a conference with the faculty member to discuss the report.
- ✓ A copy of the report shall be entered into the faculty member’s personnel file for use in tenure and promotion reviews.
- ✓ The faculty member shall have the right to append a response to the report at the time that it is entered into the personnel file.
- ✓ Note: If you chose to conduct additional observations, you may ask for them to be added to your personnel file, but this is optional. They can be for your own growth and development.

Term Appointees (significant changes!)

16.§6.2 Teaching Observations. During the first semester of a term appointment, an observation may occur, at the discretion of the chair, the results of which are to be considered by the Administration in determining subsequent appointment.

16.§6.2.1 For term appointees, the department chair (or his/her designee) shall determine who shall conduct the observation. The time/date of the observation shall be mutually agreed to by the term appointee and the department chair (or his/her designee).

Important Things to Remember

1. While it is the responsibility of your chair/director to ensure these observations take place, it is critical to your future employment. Thus, it is wise to be ahead of the game and shape your own future.
2. The language “classroom visitations” was removed to acknowledge that these concepts may reasonably be adapted for hybrid or online teaching. In some cases, a faculty member has provided the “observer” with student-like access to the eLearning site for a course for a week.
3. Observations are one way to provide evidence of professional competence for tenure. They are not given some special or extra “weight.” If yours are looking good, have some more done to beef up this part of your portfolio.