

Observer Form

To be completed by the graduate student instructor doing the observation

Use your handwritten "field" notes to create narrative answers. Your responses to these questions may vary in length. Focus on what you saw that 1) acknowledges what was done very well in the class session, and 2) provides constructive feedback on aspects of teaching that are actionable. Email this completed observation form back to the TA/instructor as a typed pdf as soon as you are able.

Your name: Ernest Pujol León

Observation date: February 22, 2021

Instructor/TA name: Shannon Dailey

1) Describe what happened in this class session. What was done by the TA/instructor and/or the students? What teaching methods did you observe? How effective were these activities and methods in achieving the goal or student outcome that the TA/instructor had set out for this class session? Explain.

TA conducted a lab session on threats to validity in psychological studies. Students were asked to break out into smaller groups of 4-5 participants and discuss among themselves various hypothetical vignettes in which threats to validity might potentially compromise the design of a research study. Breakout groups spent around 5 minutes reviewing each vignette before reconvening with the larger class to present their answers. In my view, this was a highly effective strategy that allowed students to collaboratively work through the various practical scenarios they were tasked with evaluating on their own. The vignettes that Shannon had prepared beforehand for students to analyze worked out really well, as they covered all the various types of threats to validity students had previously learned about in class with the main instructor and made for a thoughtful, lively class discussion through which to consolidate their knowledge of the material.

2) What "worked" particularly well during this class session? Were there any small-group activities, assignments, or teaching strategies in particular that you think the TA/instructor should continue to use?

I found Shannon's facilitation of the lab session was very successful in helping students strengthen their understanding of the material by offering them the chance to examine concrete case studies in which to apply and develop their knowledge of quantitative research methods.

She was very good at responding to students' queries and addressing any sources of confusion, making sure there were plenty of opportunities to ask questions and even praising students who wanted to seek clarification. In addition, Shannon was very effective at ensuring that time was wisely allocated and made sensible adjustments according to the real-time needs of the class (such as when she opted for discussing the last vignette without breaking into groups due to class time running out).

3) Was there a point during this class session when the TA/instructor "lost" student attention? If so, what do you think caused it? How did the TA/instructor react, what did they do to regain student attention? Were the TA/instructor's efforts in this regard effective?

No, the TA managed to consistently keep students' attention throughout the entire session. Use of time was very effectively and evenly distributed, and the periodic changes in class format from small group discussion to big group revision of the material allowed for no moments of distraction or loss of student interest to take place.

4) How did the physical surroundings or environment of the class session affect the learning experience, if at all? (For example, the temperature or set up of the classroom, the time of day, number of students in the class, outside noise, lighting, problems with equipment or technology, etc.)

This was a virtual session held over Zoom. However, I did find that, despite the obvious obstacles to human bonding and interaction that virtual environments pose, Shannon managed to make the "coldness" of the medium significantly less impactful on her students' learning experience. I found that starting class with a fun icebreaker question, for example, was not only a great way to make roll calling a little less dull, but it also made the students feel more engaged and supported by their instructor. There were other small (if impactful) details in the TA's facilitation of the session that similarly contributed to making students feel connected to each other and the classroom despite the constraints of a virtual setting.

5) What suggestions do you have for the TA/instructor you observed in terms of expansion of particularly effective teaching strategies, improvement of teaching strategies that didn't work well, solving problems you observed, etc.?

I would suggest maintaining the breakout groups format, as it seemed to work very well in the context of these lab sessions. I also found it was a very effective use of class time to divide the time spent in the breakout groups into small chunks interspersed with moments of re-assembly of the whole group, in which the TA would take more control of the classroom. I found this

approach contributed to an efficient, balanced pace that managed to keep students focused throughout the session and didn't let the small groups stray from the task at hand. In my personal experience as both a student and a teacher, I've found that group activities in which discussion time is longer or less structured tend to create more opportunities for distraction or disorganization. I wouldn't necessarily discard trying out longer breakout group activities, but in such cases, I'd especially encourage the TA to spend more time "walking around" and peeking into the groups (like they normally would in a physical classroom setting) to check on students' progress and possibly address any questions or problems they might be facing.

6) Other comments or observations:

Overall, Shannon did a great job with her lab session. The students seemed to really enjoy her teaching and appreciate their TA's knowledge and assistance.

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Your name__Emily Gentles_____

Observation date __3/8/21_____

Instructor/TA name __Shannon Dailey_____

1) Describe what happened in this class session. What was done by the TA/instructor and/or the students? What teaching methods did you observe? How effective were these activities and methods in achieving the goal or student outcome that the TA/instructor had set out for this class session? Explain.

The class started off with an ice breaker which also served as attendance which I thought was a really fun idea! The instructor introduced the lab and then the students went into breakout rooms for a couple of minutes to work through the exercises together. When students came back to the main room they shared their findings. I thought this system was really effective, especially since the instructor kept the breakout room lengths to a minimum. I thought that this was a good way to achieve the goals of the lab as hearing an explanation from peers might have been more accessible to students and allows the entire class to review all of the material without every student having to complete all of the exercises themselves.

2) What "worked" particularly well during this class session? Were there any small-group activities, assignments, or teaching strategies in particular that you think the TA/instructor should continue to use?

I think that the breakout rooms worked really well here, especially, as I mentioned above, because they were kept to a minimum length. It felt like students' time was being maximized.

3) Was there a point during this class session when the TA/instructor "lost" student attention? If so, what do you think caused it? How did the TA/instructor react, what did they do to regain student attention? Were the TA/instructor's efforts in this regard effective?

I don't think the instructor lost the attention of the class. I thought they did an excellent job keeping students engaged, especially through having students read out the exercises as well as taking volunteers to answer questions.

4) How did the physical surroundings or environment of the class session affect the learning experience, if at all? (For example, the temperature or set up of the classroom, the time of day, number of students in the class, outside noise, lighting, problems with equipment or technology, etc.)

NA

5) What suggestions do you have for the TA/instructor you observed in terms of expansion of particularly effective teaching strategies, improvement of teaching strategies that didn't work well, solving problems you observed, etc.?

I think the instructor did a great job! It was clear that they were well prepared for the class and did a fantastic job of keeping students engaged in the subject. I especially appreciated that students felt comfortable expressing confusion which is evidence that Shannon has created a welcoming and productive learning environment.

6) Other comments or observations:

Feedback form adapted from Benedictine University Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence