Classroom Observation Summary Report

Instructor Name: Alyssa Pybus

Observer: Leonardo Garcia, Graduate Teaching Fellow, Center for Teaching and Learning

Course: BMED 3600: Physiology of Cellular and Molecular Systems

Topic: Stem Cells

Date and Time: Monday, November 9. 11:00 pm - 11:50 am

Number of students: 50-60

Room arrangement: Online/BlueJeans

Quick Observation Notes

- Overall, I think you did a great job in teaching this lesson. The class was slow enough for students to follow along, and the amount of content covered fitted the time allocated for the class.
- The lecture outline and procedures generally summarized the topics to be covered and the class followed this structure. For bigger lessons you might want to consider a more detailed lesson plan that helps you guide the conversation, but for this type of class you handled everything really well.
- I saw you incorporated the recommendation from your previous observation, to create spaces for students to ask questions. That was great and also gave some time for students to digest what they were learning. Not many students had questions, but I would not worry too much about it since the lesson was pretty clear. To account for shy students, you could consider encouraging students reach after the lesson.
- As mentioned in your previous observation, incorporating current research aligning with the topics was great way to show your knowledge on the topics and the relevance of it. Good to see you kept doing it.
- You projected a lot of confidence during the lesson. It was clear you knew the topic really well, and kept connecting it with previous concepts and examples, which all the students valued very much.
- You seem to have worked on the amount of content covered with respect to your first observation, because this time the lesson felt not rushed at all and with the appropriate number of topics. Also, having contingency plans for the time issue was a great way to plan for things that might happen.
- The fact that your advisor took the first 10 minutes of class could have been a huge issue time-wise, but you handled it pretty well, compensated for the time lost, and used one of your contingencies to skim through a topic which you knew was not fundamental. Excellent job.
- Your means of representation were great. Uploading the slides in advance for students to start getting familiar, print them, or take notes on top of them reflects how you care about making the most out of the lesson.
- The incorporation of interactive aids to your presentation (turning point) really boosted the engagement in the class, made it easier to stay focused, and was deeply appreciated by several students.
- The intermediate checkpoints where you checked that key concepts have remained were awesome, and students really valued it too. One consideration would be to highlight or show the correct answer while you are explaining, in case someone is having issues listening or missed the moment when you mentioned the answer.

Summary

Learning Outcomes and Assessment

The class outline was in clear alignment with your proposed learning outcomes for the lesson. The time you assigned for each section of the class was evidently well estimated and the structure of the class was well thought of: it was clear of how you went from explaining how different cells form and the types you can find, to focus later on stem cells and their applications. The lesson plan could have used more detail on the actual plan for the lesson, such as subtopics to cover, things where special attention was to be paid, key ideas to focus on, etc. However, your class was extremely effective and well structured without the need of such detail in the plan, but it is worth considering for future more complex lessons. You seem to have worked on the amount of content covered with respect to your first observation, because this time the lesson felt not rushed at all and with the appropriate number of topics. Also, having contingency plans for the time issue was a great way to plan for things that might happen.

It is great that you presented the goals of the class at the start, to show students what was going to happened during that day. However, I think this went a little fast and it seemed like there were about 10 things to be covered, which was not the case per se. You could consider spending a couple minutes explaining that there are three learning outcomes for the lesson, mention them, and then show the type of questions each outcome will address during the lesson. Another good practice you could implement could be to bring back the slide containing the objectives for the lesson after each section, to remind students where in the lesson are they and they questions that they now can answer with that they learned. Regardless of this, the goals for the class seemed to be clearly achieved and the intermediate questions to ensure that key concepts were clear was an awesome way to make sure those outcomes were progressively achieved. Students really valued this and thought it helped them retain the information much better. When providing the answer for a question, consider highlighting it in the presentation in case someone's audio is having issues. For example, humans having about 200 types of cells, or the ability of self-renewing which makes stem cells unique. However, the explanation of the answer was always given and that was great, just consider writing it or highlighting it, maybe with a very short explanation.

Finally, creating spaces for students to ask questions, was great and also gave some time for students to digest what they were learning. Not many students had questions, but I do not think that's something to worry much about. The lesson was very clear, with lots of examples and applications. If you want to make sure no outstanding questions remain, you could open a discussion in canvas, or encourage them to send you an email after the class for you to answer the questions individually.

Instructional Strategies

Your familiarity and confidence with the topic were present at all times, and as a student I would have been comfortable asking a question knowing that you had a good grip of what was being addressed in the class. Based on previous comments regarding the amount of information on the slides, I think you improved a lot. Your slides were very graphical, clear and with just enough content in each (not overwhelming at all). Not only your means of representation were great, but also uploading the slides in advance for students to start getting familiar, print them, or take notes on top of them reflects how you care about making the most out of the lesson.

You really focused on creating an active learning environment and your students showed a huge appreciation for it. Asking questions about key concepts and using turning point to gather student responses really boosted the engagement in the class, made it easier to stay focused, and was deeply appreciated by

several students. You also took good advantage of these opportunities to clarify points or expand on important things, which also felt very helpful for the students. In addition to this, you also gave a lot of examples, which always connected to the concepts addressed in the class. That was great because it shows that what they are learning has actual applications in research and in real life.

Compared to your previous observation, I saw that you created spaces for students to ask questions and reflect on what they learned. That was great and also gave some time for students to digest what they were learning. Not many students had questions, but I would not worry too much about it since the lesson was pretty clear. This strategy is great to create a pause in the class and let the organize their thoughts. Very well done. Finally, incorporating current research aligning with the topics was a great way to show your knowledge on the topics and the relevance of it. It really increases the level of engagement by showing the class how these things are actually a trending research topic nowadays.

Classroom Climate

The climate of the classroom was great as you projected a lot of confidence in your knowledge and interest in the topic, and this helped greatly your ability to explain it and connect it to other topics and research. I know working on the engagement part in an online environment is a hard thing to achieve, but you tried to bridge the gap with your active learning approach. As mentioned in your previous feedback, encouraging discussion could be a great addition to improve the climate of the class, maybe through controversial/engaging prompts that could get students involved by sharing their perspective. For example, you could ask a question that you know will bring different perspectives, and work on top of them to keep developing the topic. However, and as I mentioned, the interactive active learning approach you took was a fantastic first step towards it.

Presentation Skills

You are clearly a very good presenter who has a good tone easy to hear and follow, confidence and experience on the topics being addressed. All that really helps the overall flow of the class. Furthermore, you printed your passion for the topic in the way you delivered the content and talked about it, and that will definitely help you become a great instructor as I think those are some of the most important teaching qualities: a passion for what you do and your ability to transmit it. Congrats for that, never lose it. You incorporated the comments from your previous observation, and had a steady pace throughout the entire lesson which was slow enough for the information to be processed, but not too slow so that students would get bored. On several images you added labels or small descriptions, which shows you incorporated the comments on this topic as well, and it really helped navigate the slides much easier. As I mentioned before, consider highlighting the answers to the questions you ask and adding key ideas of the awesome explanations you do around the correct answer. Again, you worked on a very interesting way of delivering, connecting with examples and applications, which made the students and even myself, a person who has never liked biology, want to learn more about the topic.

As a final comment, I would advise you to rearrange your environment in a way that allows you to teach the class “to the camera” (looking directly at it). All the class you were looking at a secondary screen where you probably displayed the slides the students were seeing, and that helps increase a little the inherent distance imposed by the remote environment. Looking directly at the camera considerably helps bridging that gap because students feel you are talking directly to them, even if it is through a screen. Complementing that with some hand gestures towards the camera could really help the students feel more engaged by feeling you a little closer.

Student Feedback Response Summary

Almost all the students agree that you prepared a very good interactive class, which encouraged active learning and helped them learn. They found the questions and polls really engaging and fun. They also value a lot how you showed them the applications and current research on the things they were learning. Some of them would have appreciated some more explanations about the papers, but they understand they are time constraints which impose a limit on the time that can be used to discuss them in depth. Overall, your students would really like you to know that you did a great job, and they value the effort you put in the class and how engaging and interactive it was. Below you will find the responses the students provided to the survey.

What did you appreciate most about today's lesson? Why?

- Asked questions every time something was taught which helps retention of content
- the interactiveness and the visuals made the presentation engaging! connecting the material to real world application makes everything more engaging.
- Overall the examples of application and their explanations really helped shape an image of what stem cells can be utilized for in research, industry, and medical practice. I liked how there weren't too many details and you kept a lot of the concept introductions brief but also informative.
- I really enjoyed the turning point questions, and how they were integrated into the lesson. I think that having the variation between short answers and multiple choice was a good way to check my understanding of what was going on in the lecture.
- Lecture and survey on the stem cell.
- The interactive component of the lecture really helped me solidify what I did/did not understand yet of the lecture. It was also helpful to see what other students answer to the interactive questions.
- interactive questions about lecture material
- I really loved the quizzes during the lecture! It was great!
- Great slides. Very interactive with the class. Made sure to see if anyone had questions.
- The turning point questions helped; especially when explaining what was wrong and right
- The uses and types of stem cells
- Poll questions
- Using turningpoint to make it interactive was great!
- She made little check points to make sure that we understood the content, which I really liked!
- I liked the turning point questions to help understand questions
- Asked for students' thoughts/questions and answered them
- She used turningpoint in an engaging way! I feel like it was well-paced and she was very reseptive.
- turning point questions that tested understanding
- It was a very good pace - not too slow, not too fast
- Allowed me to answer questions first so I know whether my intuition was right/wrong when clarifying
- Immediate and interactive polling
- TurningPoint questions

- I liked the turningpoint addition - it was nice to have additional engagement :) That it wasn't graded that was nice as ewll.
- She stopped a few times in the middle so that I can absorb the information
- Interactive parts
- Interacted via turningpoint
- Turning point

What changes would improve this lesson? How?

- Show more immages?
- I loved it! No changes necessary
- I thought this was a very high-quality lecture. The only improvement I would consider is to retouch on each of the learning objectives following the end of the lecture or conceptual section.
- I liked this lecture better than the last lecture because instead of unmuting to participate in class, I was able to type some short answers in turning point.
- Maybe more questions during the lecture
- I do not think any changes need to be made, I think the lecture was very well organized and I learned a lot.
- Videos could be helpful
- Honestly this was a really good lecture with a mix of modern application and interactive components.
- I thought it was a great job!
- There's a lot of terms so sometimes terms would be used again but I wouldn't remember their meaning. May adding a quick definition the first few times when using these terms.
- It was probably due to time, but it'd be cool to have more time dedicated to discussing the research papers that were shared
- slightly more in depth explanations
- I overall thought it was great! Maybe go into the general knowledge needed for the paper to understand some wording!
- I'm not sure I thought it was a good presentation
- N/A, the instructor did a good job
- The content seemed a little shallower than I expected. While I learned some new things, some of it I already knew.
- talk slower and more in detail about the "basics" to ensure understanding
- Nothing really, maybe a video or animation in slides would be nice?
- N/A
- n/a, I thought it was great!
- Spoke more clearly and did not run through intricate material at blazing speed
- Slow down a little bit.
- N/A
- not much i thought this was helpful
- Make it more applicable to me
- None

What is the most important feedback you want the instructor to hear about today's lesson?

- I think this was an improvement, it helps us engage. But it might go a bit too fast
- I would love to learn more about tissue engineering!!
- The research and the different applications you discussed were really fascinating. I probably will go back through the recorded lecture and look into the rat tail pluripotent stem cell research some more.
- I like stem cells :)
- Nothing much. Great lecture!
- I think Alyssa did a great job with this lecture. It was very interesting and very well put together!
- Keep up the good work!
- You are an excellent teacher.
- Great job
- Great job! The interactive parts were very engaging
- I really enjoyed this lecture! The pacing was great and the stopping to check-in was helpful
- I thought she did a great job (: Best lecture of the class so far!
- great job :)
- Great presentation.
- You did great!
- overall good lecture and interesting
- Really enjoyed today's lecture!
- Great presentation! Alyssa described everything perfectly
- You did great!
- You are improving!
- N/A
- She does a great job teaching!
- nope
- none
- Good job