

New Faculty Class Visit

Instructions for Chairs and new faculty – Version September 2016

Sections of the Faculty Manual relevant to class visit

5.1.4.1. Principles and Purposes

Effective and engaged teaching by each member of faculty is central to the mission of The American University of Paris and the learning of students. The review of faculty teaching at the University thus aims to share best practices and strengthen individual teaching and the culture of teaching without encroaching upon the rights of faculty as scholars and professional teachers.

Faculty review is an open, planned, and collaborative project that leads to constructive and formative dialogue as well as improvement of collective delivery of the curriculum. The Provost and the faculty acknowledge there is no single effective teaching method or style and are committed to supporting the development of the personal pedagogical capacity of each faculty member. Teaching effectiveness is reviewed in accordance with the general criteria of academic soundness, coherent development of content, effective delivery and communication, and sound assessment of student learning outcomes, taking into account established pedagogical standards. To this end, the University has instituted a variety of methods such as scheduled classroom visits, self-reporting (Faculty Activity Reports), and the gathering of student feedback. Whenever a faculty member is reviewed by any of these methods, the method, function and use of the review must be clearly communicated to the faculty member. In accordance with French law all faculty have access to any written records of these reviews.

When faculty members request course release, sabbatical leave, or promotion in rank, the Rank and Promotion Committee reviews their teaching as part of a summative global review of their work and makes a recommendation to the Provost.

5.1.4.2. Classroom Visits

Each new member of faculty must receive at least two scheduled classroom visits during one of the courses taught during the first semester at the University. A faculty member designated by the department chair, in consultation with the faculty mentor and the program director where appropriate, first makes a visit to observe a class, which is followed by a discussion about the observations and about teaching methods, and then a second visit for formal teaching review. On the basis of these visits and these conversations, a written report on a faculty member's classroom effectiveness is produced. New faculty teaching more than one course may, at the discretion of the department chair(s) and/or program director(s), receive visits in more than one course. With the agreement of the Provost and the department chair and/or program director, other methods of ensuring teaching quality may be devised for faculty teaching courses that run occasionally, or for short periods (such as modules, for example).

Written assessment of teaching effectiveness, based on the classroom visits, is subject to criteria determined by the Provost and the faculty. These criteria, listed in section 5.1.4.1, are communicated clearly to faculty in advance of the review process.

The written assessment is discussed between the new faculty member and the department chair and/or program director. The record of any peer review must be signed as having been read by the faculty member and by the department chair and/or program director before being transmitted to the Provost. The faculty member is free to attach any observations or comments. Use of these reviews and comments will be explained to all new faculty before they begin teaching at the University.

With the aim of sharing good practice and fostering teaching effectiveness, and in agreement between the faculty member, the departmental chair, and the Provost, further classroom visits may be scheduled at other points in the faculty member's career. The method, function and use of these visits will be established in advance and explained to faculty.

To support the effective teaching at the heart of the University's mission, the Office of Academic Affairs regularly holds workshops and seminars for faculty seeking to improve their teaching or to develop new pedagogical approaches. Faculty mentoring is required at the University in order to teach in the multi-lingual, multi-leveled classroom that is characteristic of the University's learning environment, and to develop pedagogical methods appropriate to the University's American-style curriculum. Funds are also earmarked to provide faculty with opportunities to improve teaching skills in collaboration with other faculty members.

Conducting a class visit: some suggestions

Before the class visits you may want to:

- Ensure that the new faculty is aware about the classroom visit procedure (you may, for example, share this document or point the new faculty to the relevant section in the Resources for Faculty booklet available online)
- Ensure that you have agreed on dates for the visits and that the class periods will not be mostly taken up by students' presentations
- Familiarize yourself with the course syllabus
- Ask for the planned content (maybe a lesson plan) for the lessons you will be observing and maybe some comments on the ambiance in the class and any particular challenge
- Inform the mentor of the new faculty of your visit so that he/she can address any questions the new faculty may have about the procedure (note that, while new full time CDIs always have a mentor, other new faculty may not have one. Brenda Torney can provide you with the name of the faculty mentor if one has been assigned)

Some suggestions about your observations during the visits

- Does the class seem to work towards the achievement of one or more of the stated learning outcomes?
- Do you have the impression that there is continuity between this class, previous ones, and future ones (does this class seem integrated in an overall course plan?)
- Does the class encourage independent thinking?
- Do students seem to follow well and are they interested by the lecture / work proposed by the professor?
- Are students given enough space and are they encouraged to contribute?
- Do students seem to want to learn more? Do they ask questions?
- Does the professor ask questions? Do questions seem clear / at the right level?
- Do students interact with the professor?
- Is there student – to – student discussion / interaction on the subject of the class?
- Does the class seem well prepared?
- If there were assignments / readings, do you have the impressions that the students had completed them? Were they challenged and interested by the assignments?
- Is the professor's feedback on assignments helpful?
- Do needs of students at different levels seem equally addressed?
- Does the overall ambiance in the class appear conducive to learning?
- Does the professor give the impression to be interested in what he/she is teaching? In what students have to say?
- Does the professor answers students' questions appropriately?
- Are the professors' classroom policies clear and respected (late arrivals, use of electronic devices, etc.)?
- Was the classroom physical environment and equipment well functioning and appropriate?

During the meeting with the new faculty

- What were your comments/suggestions after the first class visit? If you had any concerns, were they addressed by the time of the second visit?
- Is there any major difference in teaching style between you and the new professor? If yes, what is it?

Class Visit Report Form

Professor submitting the report:

Date of submission:

Department:

Department chair or program director:

Professor whose class was visited:

Semester:

Course name:

Course number:

Date of first visit:

Date of second visit:

Report

Comments from the new faculty

Date and signatures

The new faculty member

Professor who visited the class
and wrote the report

Department chair or program
director