GUIDELINES FOR THE OBSERVATION OF
AN ASYNCHRONOUS COURSE

Introduction

These guidelines are required to meet the contractual obligations of faculty who only teach asynchronous courses, and will address the overall increase in the number of asynchronous courses currently being offered. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide observers with a set of criteria that can be used while conducting an observation, and enable the observation to be conducted in a manner that approximates a classroom observation.

For the purposes of these guidelines, a **Learning Unit** has been defined as a distinct group of learning activities and course content created by the instructor to guide the progress of students through a structured presentation of materials.   In a given Learning Unit, instructors present content items, files, and assessment tools (such as assignments, quizzes, tests and/or papers.) These materials are sequenced in the order in which they should be read by the students.

Protocol

- Only faculty with special training or experience with online teaching may conduct observations of asynchronous courses.

- The observation time should approximate the time allocated for a standard classroom observation.

- The forms to be used for the observation are those in current usage in the classroom setting.

- The observer and the observee will arrange the date and time for the observation to take place. Following this arrangement, the observer will send the written *Notice of Observation* to the observee.

- The observee will provide the observer with *student-role* access to the course on the agreed date and time.

- The observee will inform the observer of the first and final announcements for the Learning Unit being observed.

- Observers should not be compelled to respond to each of the items suggested in this set of guidelines.

- The post-observation conference shall include the observee and the observer. If the presence of a third party is requested by the observee or the observer, the faculty member chosen should have training or experience with online teaching.

- Because Question I represents perhaps the most comprehensive of all the questions, we recommend that it be completed after questions II through IV are done. Question I calls for the evaluator to examine the instructor's ability to incorporate all the specific academic goals of the unit, using the tools provided by the particular course development software.

- Questions V-VII from the current form do not require special guidelines for the observation of asynchronous courses.

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I.   **How effectively does the instructor demonstrate organization/presentation of the material?**

With regard to this learning unit, has the instructor provided:

- Adequate announcements and directions to enable easy navigation?
- A clear, logical and consistent path through the site?
- A clear statement of specific goals and expected outcome?
- Appropriate assignments and/or assessment items?
- Sufficient content either directly or through links and other reference?
- Relevant and clearly-presented content?
- Active and appropriate links.

II.   **How effectively does the instructor demonstrate knowledge of the subject matter?**

With regard to this learning unit:

- Is the content thematically-integrated?
- Is the content clear and accurate?
- Is the language appropriate for the audience?
- Does the content reflect awareness of current trends and developments?

III.   **How effectively does the instructor motivate and encourage students to respond to the material presented?**

With regard to this learning unit, to what extent does the instructor:

- Provide compelling instructions of the work to be completed by the students?
- Provide opportunities for students to integrate different types of knowledge?
- Value discussion board participation?
- Encourage student-to-student interaction?

- Address questions and issues presented by students?

- Give positive feedback to students' postings and ideas?

- Achieve a balance between the medium and the content?

- Clearly state their office hours and availability?

IV. **How effectively does the instructor influence the classroom atmosphere and learning environment?**

With regard to this learning unit:
- Is there a policy about *online course conduct* posted in the *Course Information* area? If so, is there evidence that this policy is being followed?
- Is there a policy on addressing system reliability issues?

V. **Was the objective of the lesson attained?**   **YES** ☒   **NO** ☐   **NOT SURE** ☐

VI. **Total impression of the lesson. Highlight strengths/weaknesses.**

VII. **Recommendations for the instructor and/or alternatives that can be tried in the classroom. (Optional)**

Prepared by: Committee on Instructional Evaluation

Approved by the Hostos Senate: 02.16.2006