USC Center for Excellence in Teaching

# Observation guide for the active-learning classroom

## WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

Questions for faculty observing a peer’s class to evaluate the active learning taking place in an onground or synchronous online class. Active learning are activities in which students practice course concepts during class.

## HOW DO I USE IT?

Use these questions as a guide to observe active learning taking place in the class. For assistance, please [contact CET](http://cet.usc.edu/).

### Activity design

* Are the instructions and goals of the activity clear?
* Does the task relate to the course learning objectives and topic at hand (or session goals)?
* Did the instructor model the task and/or provide an example?
* Do the students have everything they need to complete the task (content knowledge as well as any materials)?
* Does the task occur after no more than 15-20 minutes of traditional lecture time?
* Is there a clear deliverable (e.g., completed worksheet) that students are expected to produce?
* Is the deliverable collected?

### Activity implementation

* Is the activity clearly related to a course or session learning goal?
* Are students told or asked how the activity relates to course learning objectives or session goals?
* Does the instructor circulate, monitoring how students are completing the task, helping with content and concepts as needed but not spending too much time with one student or a small number of groups while neglecting the others?
* Are students being monitored for levels of engagement, group interaction/dynamics, and progress towards a solution, with interventions for evident problems?
* Are there checkpoints and time management at appropriate intervals (5-10 minutes), where the instructor breaks in and makes sure everyone in class has reached a specific point?

### Activity conclusion

* Is there an appropriate summary or debrief, which highlights the important ideas and solutions to the task and connects them back to the course learning objectives or session goals?
* Does the instructor encourage questions during wrap up and allow time for students to formulate questions?
* Is there a connection of the finished task to next steps or further applications?

Adapted from C. Wieman, [Observation Guide for Active Learning Classroom](http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/files/Active-learning-class-observation-guide_Wieman.pdf), June 2016