

# Faculty Observation Program Introduction Letter

Dear Onsite Faculty,

In order to improve the quality of teaching at AAU and provide the best educational experience for our students, we are continuing our **Faculty Observation Program** this semester. This program provides instructors with teaching strategies that can result in better support for students, an improved quality of student work, improved retention and a more engaging class environment.

Classroom observations are a direct way to provide instructors with feedback about teaching approaches and activities, as well as clarify expectations held by AAU. They provide an opportunity to showcase your strengths, identify areas for improvement, and serve as a training tool by increasing your awareness of teaching practices to model.

**The Faculty Observation Program is a formal assessment practice, similar to observations conducted at many colleges and universities.**

**With this in mind, please use the teaching criteria attached to this letter as a reference guide to help you with classroom teaching, management, and for meeting AAU expectations. The criteria will be used for assessment during the observations, however please also refer to it when teaching your classes every week. Use it as a training tool to help you focus on specifics that can make you a more effective instructor.**

(Please note that instructors teaching for the first time at AAU receive classroom visits from teaching coaches. During that time, they are provided with feedback for training purposes. That process is not part of the Faculty Observation Program.)

**The observation program is outlined as follows:**

**Pre-Observation Outreach:** Instructors who will be reviewed this semester can expect to receive an email from a member of the Faculty Evaluation and Coaching department notifying them of the observation.

1. **1<sup>st</sup> Classroom Observation:** Instructors being observed can expect a classroom observation to take place within the semester they are contacted. Instructors will *not* be provided a specific observation date as the observer's goal is to review a typical classroom session. During the visit, observers will stay for a few hours to review classroom practices according to the AAU Onsite Teaching Criteria. Kindly do not draw attention to the observer.
2. **1<sup>st</sup> Post Observation Debrief:** Following the observation, a debriefing will be conducted to provide feedback. At that time, the instructor will be provided with oral and written information that will outline what was done effectively and coaching strategies that can help make improvements. The written feedback contains a list of personalized coaching strategies, and the instructor should work to make improvements to their teaching as indicated. Coaching will be provided after the 1<sup>st</sup> observation to help the instructor understand how to make the improvements.

3. **Coaching:** These meetings may focus on whatever is needed by the instructor, such as, communicating with better clarity and focus, lesson planning, creating in-class activities for students to practice skills and demonstrate knowledge, developing questions that foster classroom discussion, and more. During this process, the coach will provide training support and guidance.
4. **2<sup>nd</sup> Classroom Observation and Debrief:** Instructors will receive a 2<sup>nd</sup> classroom observation in order to determine the degree of improvement. The 2<sup>nd</sup> observation will occur a few weeks after the 1<sup>st</sup> observation debrief in order to allow time for the instructor to implement improvements and receive coaching. For this observation, a timeframe for the return visit will be prearranged with the instructor. Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> observation, another debrief will be conducted, and additional feedback provided. If sufficient improvement has not been made, a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) will be generated and provided to the instructor, along with additional coaching strategies. Human Resources will also be notified of the PIP and may provide support during this process.
  - Results of both observations are filed and communicated to the department director and the executive office.

Our strength as a university is due to the professional artists that choose to come and work with our students. Thank you being part of their experience and for the positive impact you have had. It is our hope that through the Faculty Observation process, we foster communication with our instructors that enables them to implement more effective teaching practices, and create more productive classroom experiences for our students.

### **Faculty Evaluation and Coaching**