

Visiting an Online Class: A Discussion Guide for Colleagues

The following Discussion Guide may be used to enhance the learning experience when visiting an online class, and/or the quality of feedback provided to the class instructor. Consider the guide as a helpful starting point for a fruitful discussion between colleagues. Note that faculty engaging in a formal evaluation of a tenure candidate or tenured faculty member must refer to and abide by the PG&E handbook.

Class Organization	
<p><i>The equivalent of a class syllabus, the arrangement of class topics during the semester (by topic, chronologically, or within another framework), plus the organization of a particular class meeting (e.g., the ordering of and transition between activities within a learning unit). The class syllabus may be traditional or interactive with links, or may consist of a flow of tasks with transitions.</i></p>	
Was it clear how to navigate to find the learning units? was the ordering and flow of the elements in the learning units apparent?	
To what extent is it clear what students need to accomplish?	
To what extent is it clear when elements are due?	
Instruction	
<p><i>The equivalent of pedagogy for class sessions. In class, one may lecture, show video clips, demonstrate on the board, use slides to illustrate a lecture. Online, instructors may do any of these, plus link to relevant materials or website, or post multimedia for viewing, that is interactive, or as a basis for student collaboration. Text should be clear but may be in formal or informal style, images may be illustrative or demonstrative or merely decorative. Material preferably is designed, or updated as funding resources permit, to be accessible to students with disabilities.</i></p>	
What methods is the instructor using to achieve the learning goals of the course?	
To what extent are there methods to support multiple approaches to learning?	
To what extent do topics feature engaging materials and/or activities?	
Is the material accessible to students with disabilities (e.g., blind, deaf)?	

Regular and effective contact between the instructor & students	
<i>The equivalent of communicating with students during class and office hours, regular and effective contact with students may include discussion forums/boards, chat rooms, wikis, or other methods of communication. Instructor contact with individual students may be through regular announcements or discussion posts, email, Skype or other methods.</i>	
With what methods and frequency does the instructor achieve effective contact with students?	
What method is used for students to reach the instructor with individual concerns?	
Student-student interaction	
<i>The equivalent of class discussion, small group work, or interactivity during lecture, student to student interaction online may take the form of discussion forums, chat rooms, wikis, collaborative projects, group work, Facebook, or other forms of electronic or web-based communication. In some courses, student-student interaction may not be necessary.</i>	
Do the discussions, group exercises, chats or projects encourage students to apply their learning?	
Ask the instructor the purpose of student-to-student interaction. Are those goals being accomplished?	
Assessments	
<i>The equivalent of in-class assessment plus assigned homework...via papers, presentations, tests, etc. All of these can be achieved in an online environment, and in some cases may represent either collaborative or individualized work.</i>	
How is the instructor assessing the extent to which learning is taking place?	
How are student assessments contributing to learning?	
What sort of feedback is offered to help students improve?	