

Planning classroom teaching observations

Guidance for faculty and staff

If you'd like to follow along:
http://bit.ly/teaching_obs

Office of Assessment, Trinity College
September 2018

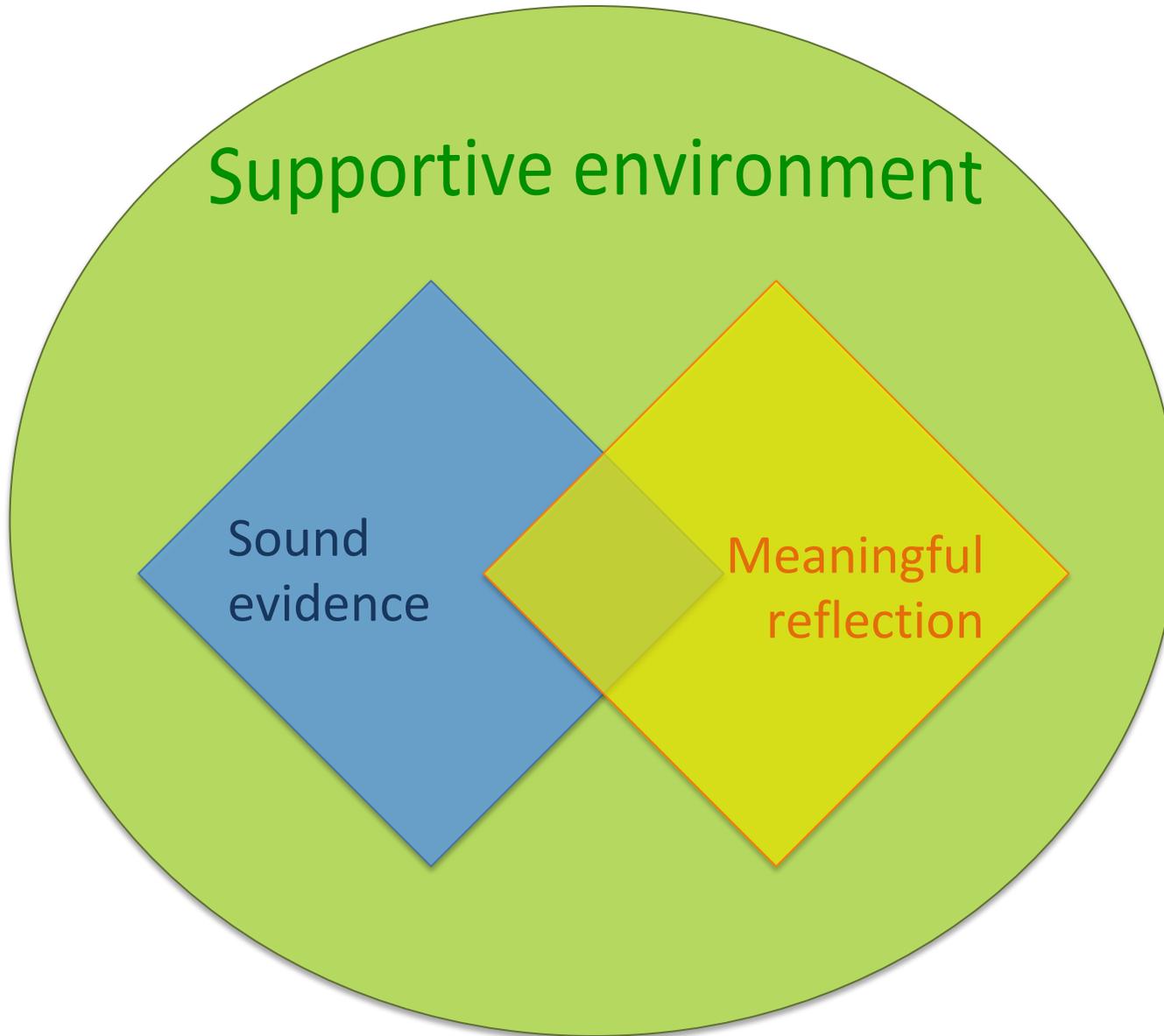
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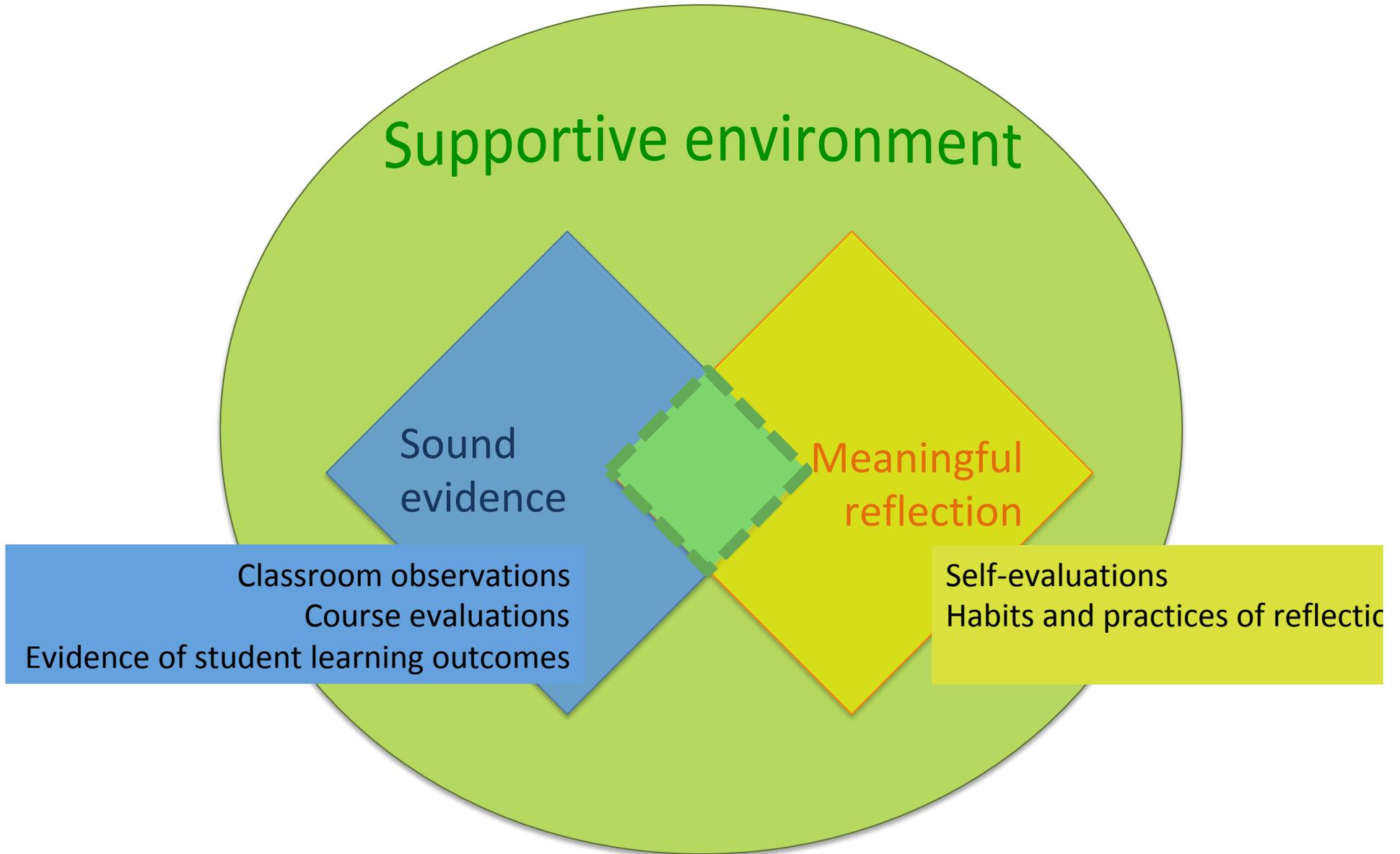
The PowerPoint and audio (if acceptable quality) will be posted on our website within a week.

<https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/assessment-roundtable>

Culture of continuous improvement



Culture of continuous improvement







We understand student learning through:

Tests

Surveys & evaluations

Rubric-scored projects

Interviews



We understand instructional delivery through:

- Surveys & evaluations*
- Teaching observations* ★

We understand student learning through:

- Tests*
- Surveys & evaluations*
- Rubric-scored projects*
- Interviews*

Outcomes assessment

Understanding the degree to which students are learning

Understanding what students know and can do following a learning experience:

- Basic content knowledge
- Comprehension & application
- Analysis & evaluation

Program evaluation

Understanding how a program operates

Understanding the inputs to learning:

- Are our facilities sufficient?
- Are lectures and readings aligned?
- ***Are instructors effective?***

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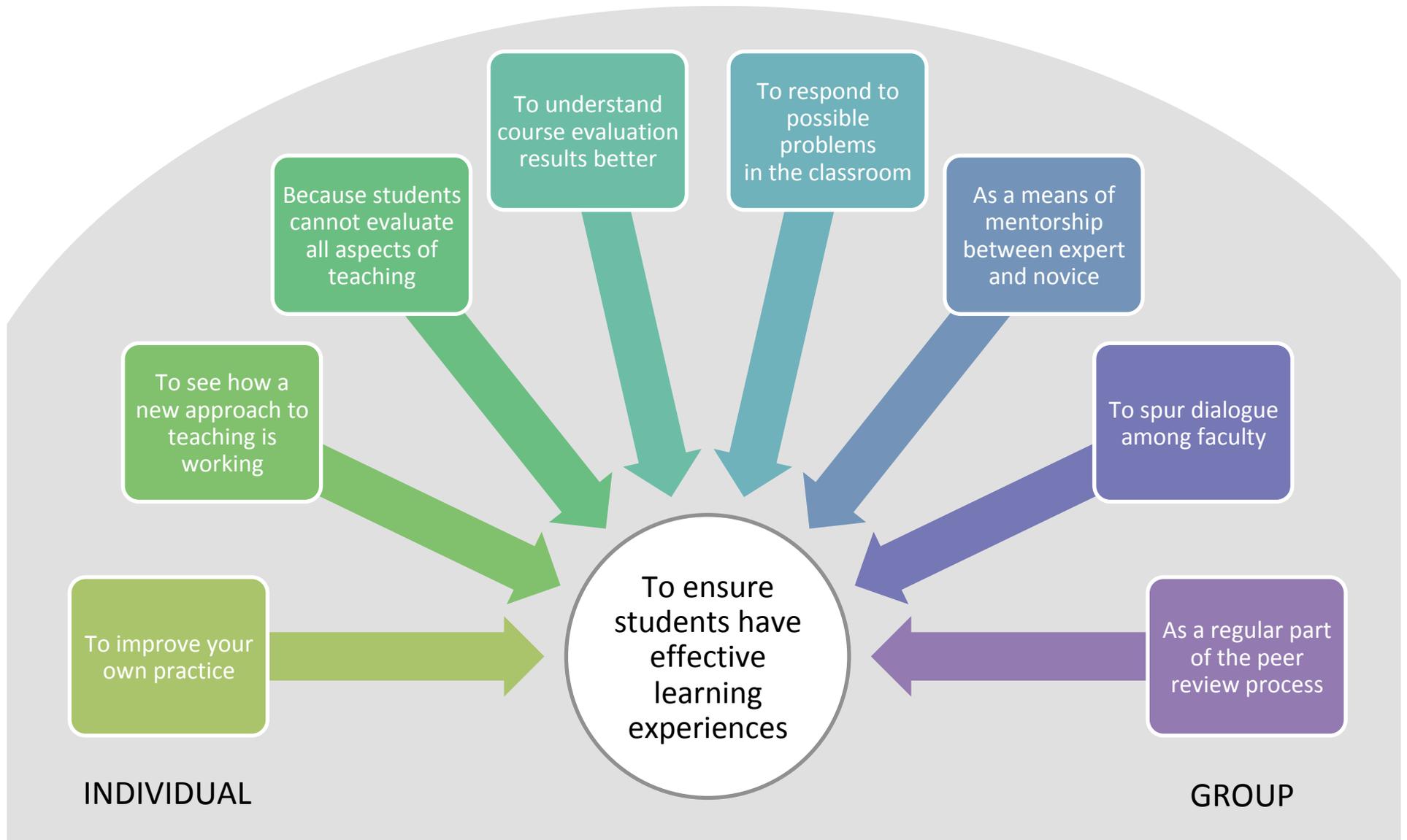
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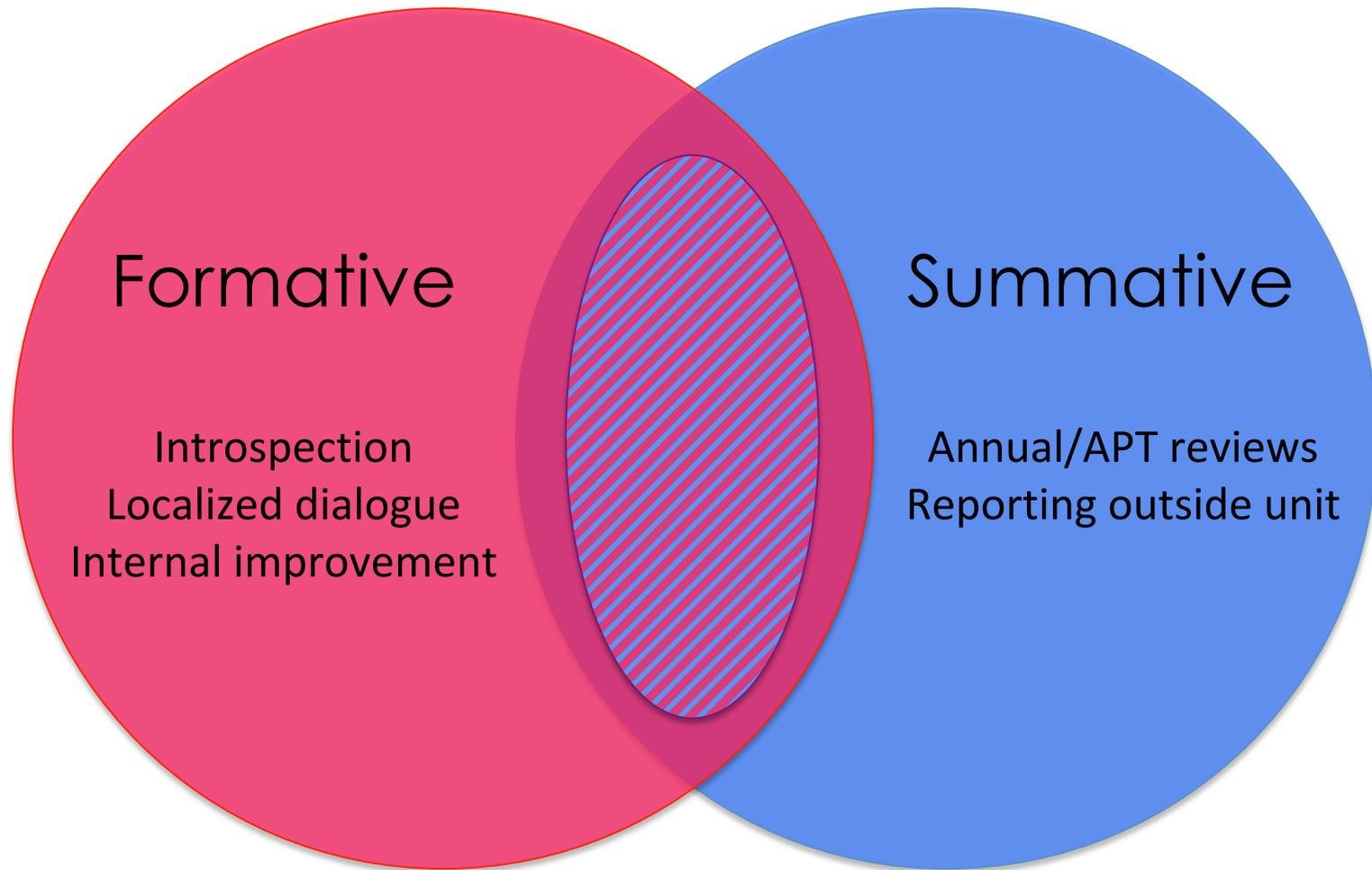
Why might an individual or department desire classroom teaching observations?



What are your objectives?

What brought you here?

What do you want to accomplish?



Formative

Introspection
Localized dialogue
Internal improvement

Summative

Annual/APT reviews
Reporting outside unit

Models <i>Hybridization is possible!</i>	Characteristics	Advantages	Challenges
Department-facilitated	<p>WHO: Instructors within the department</p> <p>WHAT: Rotate and reciprocally evaluate teaching across courses and faculty in the dept</p>	<p>Observations will be aligned with the mission & outcomes of the dept</p> <p>Should result in consensus about teaching excellence</p> <p>Informs program evaluation and self-study</p>	<p>Requires substantial investment across the unit</p> <p>Must set order of priority for courses or instructors</p> <p>Instructors may feel vulnerable; may be less invested if not involved in process.</p>
External observer (from another institution or department)	<p>WHO: Individual observer(s) unaffiliated with the program</p> <p>WHAT: Plan with instructor in advance the objectives, format, rubric, desired information.</p>	<p>Objectivity: Personal relationships don't influence the evaluation</p> <p>Well-trained, sufficient experience with rubrics</p> <p>Results may be more reliable and valid</p>	<p>Observer doesn't know the program or personnel</p> <p>Observer may not know the field</p> <p>Difficult to implement across a department</p>
Peer-to-peer (reciprocal)	<p>WHO: Individual instructors who want to reflect on their teaching practice, independent of departmental efforts</p> <p>WHAT: Join small group of like-minded colleagues to reciprocally observe/discuss</p>	<p>Conversational</p> <p>Low risk; emphasizes formative development of all parties</p> <p>Insights from other fields and teaching methods</p>	<p>Possibly divergent conceptions of teaching excellence</p> <p>Observer may not know the field</p> <p>Information doesn't feed back to the department</p>

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“A **teaching square** consists of four faculty from different disciplines who visit each other’s classes within a two-to-three-week period. After the classroom visits, the four gather around coffee or a meal to discuss the teaching observed.

The intention of the square is not to criticize each other’s teaching. Rather, it’s to gather ideas on different teaching approaches that might be used in one’s own classes. It’s an opportunity for faculty to reflect on their own teaching in light of colleagues’ teaching examples.”

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/faculty-development/teaching-squares-cross-disciplinary-perspectives/>

→ <https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/faculty-opportunities/connect-with-other-faculty/>

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Department provides leadership, structure, and resources to enable systematic, intentional teaching observations.

Create and reinforce the message that introspection and peer review are **part of the department's culture**. This is not a punitive approach to teaching practice.

It's up to the faculty and departmental officers to determine what format works best. But it's not necessarily top-down: **Requires dialogue** and consensus about excellent teaching.

Specific thought questions for department chairs and program officers

Will observers be administrators such as chairs or program directors, senior faculty, or teachers at all levels who are paired to observe one another's courses?

Will you invite faculty from outside your program or the institution? If so, whom?

Will the responsibility of observing be voluntary or mandatory?

Will the faculty who do formative observations be the same as those who do summative observations?

Be transparent about how will feedback be used. For informal feedback? For teaching reviews?

Adapted from

<https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/reflective-practice/Pages/teaching-observations.aspx>

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External observer (from another institution or department)	WHO: Individual observer(s) unaffiliated with the program WHAT: Plan with instructor in advance the objectives, format, rubric, desired information.	Objectivity: Personal relationships don't influence the evaluation Well-trained, sufficient experience with rubrics Results may be more reliable and valid	Observer doesn't know the program or personnel Observer may not know the field Difficult to implement across a department

Not wholly separate from or distinct from the other models.

Simply means bringing in objectivity from outside the unit, usually in the form of an external colleague or expert within the discipline.

May require additional coordination if external observers are asked to utilize rubrics, feedback tools, schedules, etc. that are part of the department's structured approach to teaching observations.

Structuring observations

Each department will have its own approach! Common practices include:

Timing: 3-4 times per course, distributed across the semester, and touching upon authentic representations of the course experience.

Select instructors and/or courses: Cyclical basis, perhaps based on existing review schedules. You'll have to prioritize some individuals and courses, and determine fair decision rules.

Selection of observers: 2 colleagues from within the program, possibly + 1 from outside the program. Determine which observer(s) bring a balance of content knowledge and teaching expertise. Is service as observer voluntary or required?

Using a rubric/feedback tool: It's helpful to have a standardized feedback tool, but which can accommodate differences in course types (e.g., labs and lectures). Develop, share, solicit feedback, revise. Like all rubrics, it takes time to develop consensus among individuals who have a stake in effective teaching evaluations

Discussion and reporting. Prompt delivery of feedback, including *specific suggestions for teaching*, is essential. How this occurs is up to the department. Instructors should consider including in their teaching portfolios *summaries of how they use* observational feedback to develop their teaching practice.



http://bit.ly/teaching_observation_tools

<https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/course-evaluation-codes-trinity-college>

Types of rubric/feedback tools

Examples collected here: http://bit.ly/teaching_observation_tools

Structured categories, with mostly free-response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://stanford.app.box.com/s/fe73bkt0cwx7mr4z6kme2wt3fi7aa84 • http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/peer_review/documents/observation_protocol.docx • http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/FacultySuccess/FacultyDevelopment/ClassObservations/contents/criteria_for_peer_observation.pdf • https://wiki.ubc.ca/images/7/75/CTLT_SGIF_Form_March_2016.pdf
Structured categories, with defined rubric ratings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.augusta.edu/pamplin/documents/peerevalteaching_rubric.pdf • http://tdop.wceruw.org/Document/TDOP-2.1-Users-Guide.pdf
Checklist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.celt.iastate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/examplechecklistclassroomobservationform-.docx
<i>Specialty:</i> Learner-centric rubric	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://cetl.kennesaw.edu/sites/default/files/resources/Learner%20Centered%20Rubric%20for%20Classroom%20Observations.pdf
<i>Specialty:</i> Distance ed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.westga.edu/~distance/roblyer32.html
<i>Specialty:</i> STEM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/COPUS.htm • https://www.lifescied.org/doi/full/10.1187/cbe.14-02-0023
<i>Speciality:</i> Humanities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://utop.uteach.utexas.edu/sites/default/files/utop-instrument-humanities-august2014_0.doc

Mapping observational tools across classroom visits

http://www.ben.edu/faculty-staff/ctle/fac_resoources/forms_teaching.cfm

Sample Forms for Teaching Observation

Classroom Visit 1

Classroom Visit 2

Classroom Visit 3

Classroom Visit 4

L&L Peer Mentoring Observation Form

L&L Peer Mentoring Guidelines

Peer Mentoring Observation Form

Peer Mentoring Report Form

Notice to Faculty re Class visit (Template)

Suggestions for Letters of Recommendation on "Teaching Excellence"

Reviewing other instructional artifacts

http://www.academic.umn.edu/provost/peer_review/

Rubrics for peer review

Rubrics for inclusion in promotion and tenure dossiers

Downloads:

- Peer Observation of Teaching Protocol (.docx)
- Peer Review of Class Assignments and Assessments (.docx)
- Peer Review of Examples of Student Performance (.docx)
- Peer Review of Professional Growth and Development (.docx)
- Peer Review of Syllabus (.docx)

What challenges already come to mind?

Typical challenges to acknowledge

- Observations make instructors **feel vulnerable**. Protect their agency, and recognize their commitment to self-development.
- Well-planned observations require an investment of faculty **time**.
- Teaching while observed can **feel unnatural**, inauthentic.
- There might be a **lack of consensus** around what constitutes effective teaching...
 - ...which can frustrate participants and
 - ...impede the development of a common evaluative rubric.
- If the process is not well-calibrated, the results may be less reliable.
Plan to triangulate: use observational evidence with other measures of teaching

Concern	Advice to the observer	Advice to the observed instructor	Advice to Chairs & other officers
Instructor vulnerability	<p>Recognize there are multiple effective approaches to teaching, and differences in comfort with instructional technologies.</p> <p>Collaborate on the focus of the observation, goals, areas of concern. Use them to guide feedback.</p> <p>Balance constructive criticism with genuine, specific praise.</p>	<p>Be open to discussing your teaching challenges as well as strengths.</p> <p>Actively participate in the development of the observation process, especially feedback tools.</p>	<p>Recognize those who voluntarily participate in teaching observations and who use feedback to develop their professional practice.</p> <p>Nurture a culture of constructive introspection and dialogue about teaching excellence.</p>
Time & labor	<p>Plan for 3-4 visits across the semester. Balance thoroughness of observations over time with labor requirements. Recognize that a good rubric or checklist may take multiple iterations.</p>		<p>Acknowledge the investment of faculty time. Provide release time to development group, if possible.</p>
Authenticity	<p>Be as unobtrusive as possible when visiting face-to-face classes to put both the students and the instructor at ease.</p>	<p>Try not to adjust your teaching style and methods to the presence of the observer. Feedback should be based on your authentic practice.</p>	<p>Communicate that teaching observations emphasize formative improvement. Reinforce idea that every instructor brings unique strengths to the classroom.</p>
Consensus	<p>Actively participate in the development of the observation process, especially feedback tools. Be inclusive of different styles, assumptions, experiences, and levels of comfort/confidence with teaching innovations.</p>		<p>Invite discussion of expectations, concerns, and goals. Clarify purpose of the observation and how results will be used. Convene working group to develop feedback tool.</p>
Reliability & usefulness	<p>Focus your summary remarks and follow-up discussion on specific areas for improvement.</p> <p>Offer relevant strategies that the instructor can try in the near future.</p>	<p>Save materials to include in your teaching portfolio. Make specific, focused plans to adjust elements of the course or your teaching approach. Ask for help interpreting/blending observational feedback with course evaluation findings.</p>	<p>If implemented across the dept., encourage calibration of observations and feedback. Provide training. Integrate professional development opportunities. Use observations in conjunction with course evaluations.</p>

Adapted from

<https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/reflective-practice/Pages/teaching-observations.aspx>

Observations are one source of evidence

There are other ways faculty can reflect on and enhance their teaching practice.

- Reflection journals
- Video-recorded teaching practices
- Teaching portfolio
- **Mid- and end-of-semester evaluations**

Another type of evidence

Mid-term course evaluations:

Course Dynamics	1	2	3	4	5
The course had a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Compared to the requirements of other classes of this type, please characterize the course difficulty	Very low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High
How much did you learn from this course	Nothing	A little	A moderate amount	A lot	A great deal

Trinity College learning objectives	1	2	3	4	5
This course helped me gain factual knowledge	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me understand fundamental concepts and principles	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me learn to apply knowledge, concepts, principles, or theories to a specific situation or problem	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me learn to analyze ideas, arguments, and points of view	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me learn to synthesize and integrate knowledge	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me learn to conduct inquiry through methods in the field	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me learn to evaluate the merits of ideas and competing claims	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me to effectively communicate ideas orally	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This course helped me to effectively communicate ideas in writing	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

<https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/course-evaluation-codes-trinity-college>

Another type of evidence

Mid-term course
evaluations:

The screenshot shows the website for the Office of Assessment at Trinity College of Arts & Sciences. The page title is 'Midterm Assessment Strategies'. The navigation menu includes 'Assessment', 'Course Evaluations', 'ePortfolio', and 'Survey Support Services'. A sidebar on the left lists various links, with 'Midterm Assessment Strategies' highlighted. The main content area includes links to 'Mid-semester Course Evaluations', 'Additional methods for collecting mid-semester feedback', and 'Best practices'. Below these links is a section titled 'Mid-semester Course Evaluations' which explains that course evaluations are a valuable form of indirect evidence used in the study and assessment of student learning. It also lists three questions that mid-semester course evaluations should typically aim to answer.

Duke
TRINITY COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES

OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT

Events | News

SEARCH

Assessment | Course Evaluations | ePortfolio | Survey Support Services

Students - Course Evaluations
Faculty - Course Evaluations
Departments - Course Evaluations
FAQs
▶ Tableau Evaluation Reports
Midterm Assessment Strategies

Midterm Assessment Strategies

[Mid-semester Course Evaluations](#)

[Additional methods for collecting mid-semester feedback](#)

[Best practices](#)

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Mid-semester Course Evaluations

Course evaluations are a valuable form of indirect evidence used in the study and assessment of student learning. Course evaluations can be used in both formative (Mid-semester course evaluations) and summative assessment (End-of-term course evaluations). On behalf of the Trinity College and in collaboration with academic departments, the Office of Assessment administers end-of-term course evaluations for eligible undergraduate courses. The Office of Assessment does not administer mid-semester course evaluations on behalf of the college, though an instructor may still wish to administer mid-semester course evaluations to their students. Collecting mid-semester course evaluations offers multiple benefits, including the opportunity to immediately inform current teaching and learning within a course, as well as addressing the unique concerns or desires of currently enrolled students.

Mid-semester course evaluations should typically aim to answer the following three question:

1. What aspects of class are going well and what needs improvement?
2. What changes in the course would benefit student learning?
3. What are the mid-semester benchmarks to help you interpret end of term data?

<https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/midterm-assessment-strategies>

Another type

Mid-term course evaluations:

The screenshot shows the website for the Office of Assessment at Duke University. The header includes the Duke logo, the text 'OFFICE OF ASSESSMENT', and navigation links for 'Events' and 'News'. A search bar is located in the top right. Below the header, there are tabs for 'Assessment', 'Course Evaluations', 'ePortfolio', and 'Survey Support Services'. The main content area is titled 'Midterm Assessment Strategies' and includes a sub-section for 'Students - Course Evaluations'. The main heading is 'Additional methods for collecting mid-semester feedback'. The text explains that in addition to online surveys, instructors can use other formative assessment methods. It lists two methods: 'Small group feedback sessions' and 'Third party classroom observations'. Each method includes a description and a list of resources.

Additional methods for collecting mid-semester feedback

In lieu of, or in addition to, an instructor using an anonymous online survey to collect mid-semester feedback he or she may wish to use other formative assessment methods to gauge student learning in the classroom. This can include the following methods:

Small group feedback sessions

Making time in class for students to share their perceptions on the course can be a great way to quickly and easily get themed feedback from a class. Conducting small group feedback sessions can also give students a chance to hear their peers perceptions of the course, sometimes adjusting their own understanding of course material through these interaction – for example someone may perceive the out-of-class assignments as disorganized or irrelevant though may recognize their benefit after hearing classmates explain why the assignments have been helpful.

Resources:

- [Using focus groups to get student feedback](#) – Carnegie Mellon University
- [How to facilitate a Small Group Instructional Diagnosis \(SGID\)](#) – UC Berkley

Third party classroom observations

Classroom observations can be a valuable opportunity for reflection and growth. The information gathered through classroom observations can help inform your teaching practice and pedagogy. While classroom observations may not provide particular insight into students' learning and development they can help guide your approach to instruction in the classroom.

Resources:

- [Classroom Observation Notes](#) – Stanford University

Duke's Visit a Classroom program provides Duke faculty with an opportunity to observe their colleagues teaching in their classrooms. More information can be found [here on Duke's Learning Innovations website](#).

<https://assessment.trinity.duke.edu/midterm-assessment-strategies>

Last notes:

Evaluating unionized faculty

<http://admin.trinity.duke.edu/finance/non-regular-rank-union-faculty/self-assessment-portal>

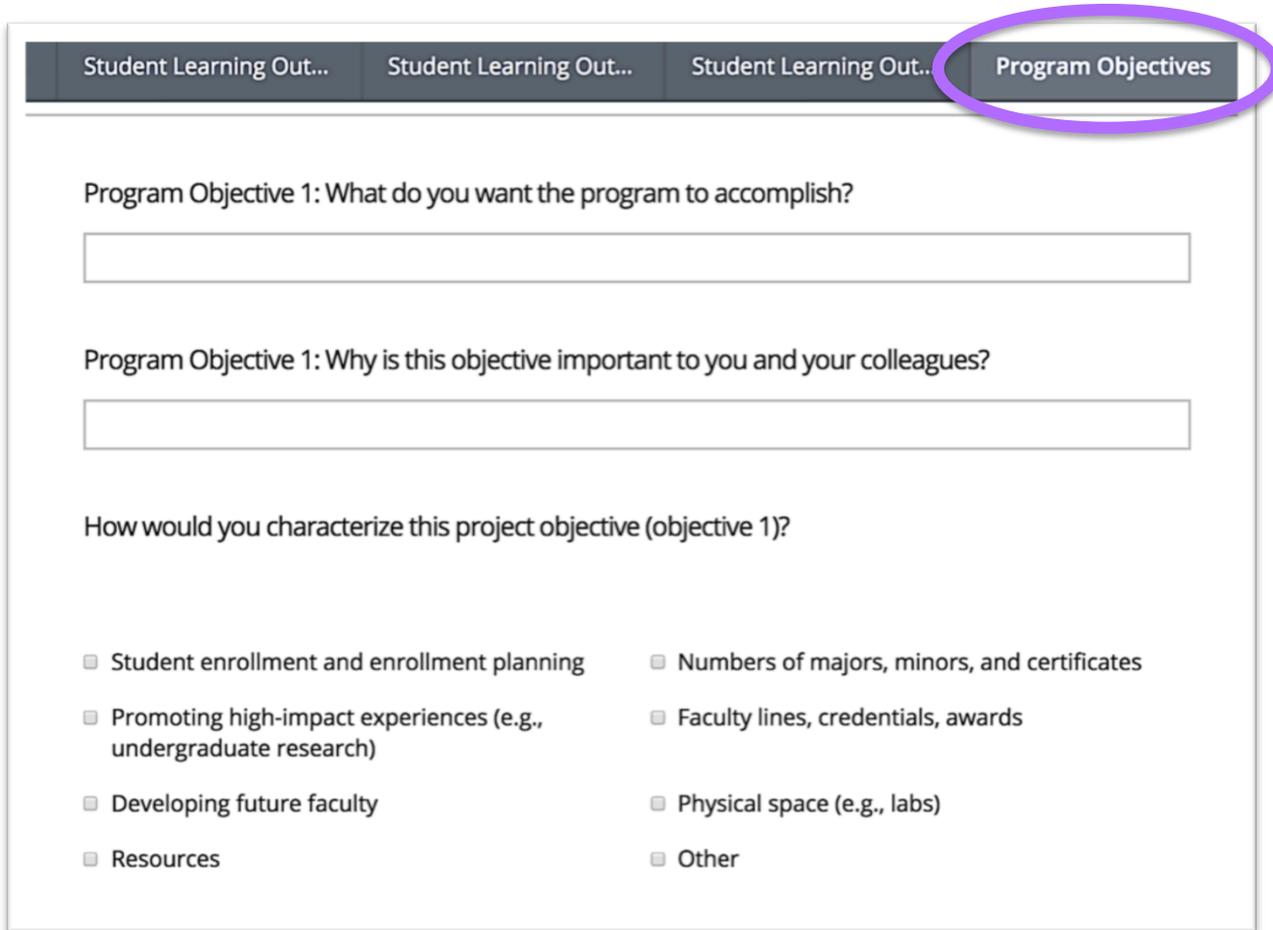
Consult resources on Faculty Affairs website

For example,

http://admin.trinity.duke.edu/faculty-affairs/policies-procedures?qt-faculty_affairs_policies=4#qt-faculty_affairs_policies

Program evaluation Outcomes assessment

Department Assessment Portfolio: *Program Objectives*



Student Learning Out... Student Learning Out... Student Learning Out... **Program Objectives**

Program Objective 1: What do you want the program to accomplish?

Program Objective 1: Why is this objective important to you and your colleagues?

How would you characterize this project objective (objective 1)?

- Student enrollment and enrollment planning
- Numbers of majors, minors, and certificates
- Promoting high-impact experiences (e.g., undergraduate research)
- Faculty lines, credentials, awards
- Developing future faculty
- Physical space (e.g., labs)
- Resources
- Other

Web resources

<https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/faculty-opportunities/connect-with-other-faculty/>

<https://learninginnovation.duke.edu/faculty-opportunities/art-and-science-of-teaching/assessing-your-teaching/>

<https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/reflective-practice/Pages/teaching-observations.aspx>

<https://resources.depaul.edu/teaching-commons/teaching-guides/reflective-practice/Documents/Classroom-Observation-Checklist-AustinCC.pdf>

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/peer-review-of-teaching/>

<https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/faculty-development/teaching-squares-cross-disciplinary-perspectives/>

<https://ctl.yale.edu/Observation-Protocols-Teaching-Inventories>

<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/resources/peer-review>

Select bibliography

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- Stone, D., & Heen, S. (2014). *Thanks for the feedback: The science and art of receiving feedback well (even when it is off base, unfair, poorly delivered, and frankly, you're not in the mood)*. New York: Viking.