Guidelines for ESL Class Observations

Depending on your professor’s requirements, you may choose to observe several classes in one context (for example, adult education) or you may prefer to observe classes in several different contexts (for instance, EAP, IEP, literacy-level, etc.). Choose several of the schools listed on the attached spreadsheet to contact after you have decided what you want to observe, and what general location you can get to. Keep in mind that you are representatives of AU as well as the TESOL profession, and you are expected to behave with the professionalism, courtesy, and respect these institutions deserve.

Once you have chosen which programs, class times, and dates you would like to observe, contact the program coordinator to arrange your observation. E-mail is probably the best way to arrange things, but you may want to call as well. In your e-mail, include a little bit about yourself and your reasons for wanting to observe, then suggest dates and times you are available to observe their classes. The program coordinator will get back to you with times and classes you can observe, and will most likely provide the teacher’s name and contact information as well. At that point, you should e-mail the teacher to let him/her know that you are coming, and to introduce yourself and explain why you need to observe his/her class. It is probably not a great idea to tell the teacher exactly what aspects of teaching you will be focusing on in your observation, but you may want to mention which graduate course you are observing this class for, and why you have chosen to observe at this particular institution.

Please arrive to the observation site 5-10 minutes early, introduce yourself to the teacher, and respect the school’s policies, directions, and operating procedures. Unless you have expressly arranged something different, you should stay for the whole class, and be sure to thank the teacher at the end. If the teacher asks you for feedback, and you choose to give some, please keep it respectful. Even if you disagree with everything the teacher has done, he or she has been kind enough to let you observe him/her and should not have to hear how differently you would have done everything. You can put all of that in your observation report.

After you observe, please fill out a class observation form (attached below) and return it to the TESOL office so we can send the teacher and the program a thank-you note.