**OB2 Tutor/Peer Observation Report**

**Example observation of Collaborate seminar (1 hr, 15 students)**

**Observer to complete the following:**

1 Observations and suggestions:

You greeted students as they arrived in the Collaborate room and informed them at regular intervals that the session would begin at five minutes past.

One student asked a question in the text chat about the Critical Report writing and you said that the course leader would be joining towards the end of the session to brief them about that.

At 10.04 there were around 11 out of an expected 15 students in attendance. You explained that your headphones had broken and needed to arrange an alternative, hence the slight delay. A welcome slide can be really handy on Collaborate, even if students are old hands with the technology. You can use this to give them a starter activity or question if they’re arriving in dribs and drabs, or if you’re having a shaky start yourself.

You introduced the session which was about the intersection between art and documentary photography.

You showed works by Vermeer (1660) and Turner (1844) to illustrate that before photography, painting often took the form of direct representation, with interpretation and impressionism being later developments. You highlighted two points of departure between art and photography; one being that photography is never purely conceptual but always focused on an object, even if the object is just the print itself. The other was around photography as a means of *documenting*—rather than *bein*g—an artwork. You then asked the question—*what makes a photograph* art, *as opposed to photojournalism*—and displayed a list of answers.

What was the rationale for displaying this immediately? An alternative approach would have been to set this question out to them in advance, and/or to discuss it in breakout groups.

You invited their comments on your list via the text chat. What will you do with their contributions? For example, one student suggested ‘audience’, which wasn’t on your list. What options are there for recognising and building on these offerings?

There’s an obvious difference in how we might respond to student contributions in online text chat, and in a physical classroom, and how (and whether) we then engage with that response, because of expectations, norms, intuition, or whatever. It is much easier to gloss or pass over an online text response without attending or responding to it than it is do we might do an oral contribution in a physical classroom. This isn’t necessarily a bad thing as it lowers the risk threshold for the contributing student, but it illuminates the question of *what we are doing* when we let a particular comment pass. What do you think?

You encountered technical difficulties around 10.15 (I think you couldn’t see the slides for some reason). This was rectified and you moved on. Between 10.20 and 10.35 you spoke for 15 minutes with no interaction until you asked for their interpretation of the Alfredo Jaar piece.

How did you perceive the energy and engagement of the students at this point? How did you imagine they experienced that shift from passive to active participation, and what possibilities are there for getting a clearer picture of this? Can you use a quick poll to rate their energy levels? Can you invite them all to unmute their mics and give you a quick ‘whoop’? One suggestion I saw recently to get students ‘back in the room’ was to ask them all to pick a number from one to 10, and show countdown slides, inviting them to say ‘hello’ when their number comes up.

In this session you’re primarily asking for two modes of engagement from the students; 1) listen to you, and 2) instant response. What other modes are possible? Is there a place for modes like contemplation, focused preparation, small group collaboration, or timed individual activities (e.g. take two minutes to construct a response of 140 characters)?

If you *are* throwing out questions and activities, just as is the case with in-person teaching, indicating how long they have to think about or work on something before you’re going to move on to the next slide, mode, or topic helps them to gauge what depth of consideration and response is needed, and whether it’s worth putting something down. When teaching online we never see the chat contributions that get started and then discarded, just as we never hear the half-formed thoughts that don’t get voiced. It helps to know how ‘big’ the task is (I must have told you about the SAT paper that mysteriously offered 15 lines and a large number of marks for the question ‘Do you think Anne Frank is still alive’?).

In photojournalism the ethical issue of profiting from suffering must come up a lot, as it did at the end of this session. I’d be really interested to hear your thoughts about how the issue is approached more broadly on the programmes you work on, whether there is a dominant viewpoint that the course team supports or leans towards, and how the debate is managed, etc., and what possibilities there are to link to this from the seminars.

**Observee to complete:**

3: Reflection on the observer’s comments, and ideas to follow up:

Thanks for these comments, they are really useful. I've been thinking for a while that one of the real difficulties I have with online teaching is that many of the tools I use in a face to face classroom to engage/dialogue with students just don't really seem to work online, and I've not really found adequate solutions or alternatives to that. My approach in the physical classroom tends to be much more conversational and less didactic, particularly with a topic like this that really invites discussion and which students often have quite strong views on, but I think that challenging to do in the same way in the virtual classroom where we tend to delineate lecture and discussion into much more distinct sessions (and in the latter there is still the difficulty of how to manage multiple voices).

Some of the difficulty is down to limitations of the platform and how far it makes it possible to emulate certain activities and not others, part of it is down to me perhaps not putting enough thought into how to transpose activities from the physical to the virtual classroom. As we discussed recently there is also just the technical aspect of sometimes not wanting to do anything which is going to cause technical upsets and delay or complicate the session (breakout rooms being an example) but perhaps I need to bite the bullet and try to employ those more even if it means things sometimes don’t go to plan.

I think your thoughts about questioning and timing with responses and activities is particularly useful, Also your thoughts about pre-class questions. The students have set reading linked to the topic which tends to posit a few questions but not explicitly 'think about this before class' type instructions which might be useful especially with a theory session like the one you observed.