



To Whom It May Concern:

I observed Amanda Halliburton PSYC-2094 (Principles of Psychological Research) course from 11:15 am—12:05 p.m. on 11/5/14. Amanda is currently a third year doctoral student and is teaching this course for the first time. At the time of my observation, Amanda had already obtained mid-semester feedback from the students and had effectively implemented changes that improved the learning environment. Overall, I was very impressed with Amanda’s teaching. Considering how early she is in her teaching career, she demonstrated expert-level performance in several aspects of teaching. The class, itself, was well-organized, engaging, and effective in facilitating student-participation.

As the class began, I was immediately captured by Amanda’s confidence and comfort in the front of the classroom. She began the class with an activity that required the students to apply their knowledge from earlier in the course; it was interactive and several students voluntarily responded. After this activity, she transitioned to lecturing the course material. The class’s content covered some of the basic statistical elements of a research methods course. This involved the use of equations and having students actually solve problems and calculate statistics on their own. Amanda presented problems via a PowerPoint presentation, but then answered the problems on the chalkboard. She would do this step-by-step in a way which students could easily follow along. After completing the problem, she would present a similar, but new, problem to the students and require them to complete it. This was a very effective pedagogical technique and the students were clearly engaged. Most students were rigorously taking notes and clearly trying to master the material.

The overall pace of the class was very smooth and appropriate for the material that was covered. Amanda orchestrated her classroom with the poise that usually comes from someone with much greater teaching experience than she possessed. She seemed knowledgeable, friendly, and offered assistance to the students both in- and outside of the classroom. Amanda would regularly pose questions to the class about particular problems and was comfortable in waiting for students to collect their thoughts and then eventually generate answers. During the lecturing periods of the class, she effectively would touch base with the students and assess where they were at (e.g. “see where I pulled those numbers from?”). Further, Amanda provided regular reinforcement and encouragement to students who participated (e.g. “that’s exactly right”, “that’s a great question”) which established a comfortable environment for students to ask questions.

In summary, it was a pleasure to have observed Amanda Halliburton’s teaching. She clearly demonstrated not only a good pedagogical toolset, but also a fundamental poise in the classroom, that ensures success as an instructor. I have no doubt that Amanda will continue to be an exemplary teacher through her time at Virginia Tech and will continue this trend wherever she might decide to teach in the future.

Sincerely,

Jared J. McGinley, ABD
Graduate Teaching Mentor
Department of Psychology

Invent the Future