



May 21, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

I observed and conducted an end-of -semester evaluation for Amanda Halliburton's PSYC 2094: Principles of Psychological [Research] Methods Course on April 30, 2015 from 2:00-3:15PM. This class meets twice a week and a total of 26/45 students were present on the observation day. Amanda is a fourth year student in the Clinical Science Psychology program and is teaching this course for the second time. Amanda requested this teaching observation specifically to ensure she made effective use of class time without covering extraneous information while at the same time not simply teaching to the test. She was looking for ways to maintain student engagement and she wanted to discern whether students were online/ off-task or note-taking during her class.

Amanda began her class punctually and prepared a slide for the teaching observation which was a nice touch. It helped orient students to the voluntary survey and gave them an approximate idea of the time allotted. She made sure to introduce me as the Peer Teaching Mentor demonstrating both her charisma and thoughtfulness also reflected in her course design. She indicated that she valued student feedback and explained the importance of the survey in addition to the departmental Student Perceptions of Teaching Survey they would also complete. Amanda added three questions to the survey about: 1) instructor availability (via email, office hours etc.), 2) advice for a fellow student just beginning the course and 3) whether they felt comfortable attending office hours and why or why not. This demonstrates her tailoring not only the survey but optimizing of the peer teaching observation opportunity.

The general outline of the lecture consisted of lecturing on two-way ANOVAs, with one formula and tabled example from the prior class and two new hand calculated examples, while reviewing all relevant parts of all formulas.

During the lecture, Amanda made excellent use of clean, large-font and color coordinated slides including many tables. She referenced the tables while explaining formulas so students could follow along with where the numbers were taken from for substitutions and calculations in the formulas. Her pacing was superb and she frequently stopped at the correct intervals to allow students to take notes. I most appreciated that at the conclusion of each statistics problem, Amanda discussed statistical significance, rejecting or failing to reject the null and also interpretation to the findings. For example, Amanda included

Cohen's guidelines for effect size interpretations and discussed practical implications, bringing her research methods full circle to the original questions queried by experiments. I feel students who attend her class are taken through the research process comfortably from the initial research question, to design, to statics hand calculations, to interpretations and then to practical implications.

There were a total of 17 laptop users in the room. Four minutes into the lecture, 4 students were on task and 5 students were off-task. Ten minutes later, 6 students were on task and 3 students were off task. Ten minutes later, 4 students were on task and 3 students were off task. Ten minutes later, 10 students were on-task and 2 students were off-task.

A total number of 6 different students participated repeatedly in the class by asking and answering questions. The majority of students, except for the off-task students engaged by hand computing the practice problem. Amanda made the practice problems relevant to students by personalizing the content to a fun video game or apartment complexes in Blacksburg. During the practice problem computations, Amanda engaged in more of a dialogue style with her students and even though few were brave enough to answer, students were writing and computing in class. Despite Amanda's concerns about student engagement, students were quietly engaged and clearly working. In fact, three students stayed behind after dismissal at 3:17 to discuss the example. Amanda asked approximately 12+ questions and students asked approximately 10+ questions during the lecture and nearly a third of the students wrote answers on the board.

In terms of Amanda's lecturing style, she was primarily near the podium, however in order to clarify the statistics portions it was necessary for her to have the slides, notes and formulas readily visible. She made excellent use of audio-visual equipment via slides and also wrote on the chalkboard (e.g. for effect size calculations). Her volume was perfectly audible from the back row of the classroom. When students struggled with answering problems, Amanda gently asked if anyone would help them out, to which other students raised their hands. Thus, Amanda has a way of encouraging students to attempt working on problems interdependently and without fearing making mistakes. She also provides hints when students hesitate to answer. Her gesturing on slides was particularly helpful for students to see how to compute means.

When asking questions, whether it be about differences between terminology, Amanda answers all questions with ease and waits for students to confirm that they understand before moving on, exemplifying her patience and thoroughness. Some suggestions for improving the lecture would be for her to occasionally sweep her eyes across the room and increase eye contact with her students. Amanda missed 3 student hands but took extra time at the end to answer three questions from three students who did not participate in

the main lecture. She might also urge students to get her attention vocally when they raise their hands since they tend to raise them for only a few brief seconds. One idea to boost student engagement may be to collect some voluntary student data in a class activity so the findings to the practice examples come from students themselves. This might be a fun way to add an extra discovery component.

Lastly, Amanda dismissed class by indicating they would resume with their calculations next time. This was a great way to provide students extra time to work on their hand calculations and orient them to the next class.

For student feedback, 96% indicated course expectations and assignments were clear, 100% indicated the content was arranged in a clear and logical manner, 100% indicated the difficulty level was appropriate, 70% indicated their time spent with reading and assignments proved valuable, 73% said assignments were useful for learning, and 85% indicated they gained valuable knowledge and skills from this course. In terms of the textbook, 42% indicated the textbook was excellent or good in quality, 19% said the text was average quality and 35% did not use the textbook. In terms of Amanda as an instructor, 96% said she communicated clearly and clearly answered questions, 92% said she created a learning community that encouraged positive social interactions and active engagement, 92% said she used instructional time effectively to maximize student achievement, 96% said she demonstrated flexibility and responsiveness in adjusting instruction to meet student needs and 92% said she created an environment of mutual respect, rapport, and fairness. In terms of Amanda's responsiveness to student emails, 73% indicated she responded within 1 day, 8% said she responded within 3 days, 4% said she responded within a week and 15% said they did not need to email her.

Students knew they could easily reach Amanda as 85% said she was available at the end of class, 50% said she was available during office hours, 23% said she was available by appointment, 81% said she was available by email while 15% said they did not require any help in the course. Amanda stimulated interest in the course content for 57% of her students while 35% remained neutral. In terms of Amanda's last teaching observation, she has mastered effectively using the PowerPoint slides and chalkboard at the same time and incorporated feedback by lecturing equally to both sides of the room. She is a knowledgeable and expert research methods instructor from my observations and student feedback.

Sincerely,

Ruth-Anne E. Poli, M.S. Ed.
Graduate Peer Teaching Mentor
Department of Psychology