

Dear Jane Doe,

It was a pleasure to observe your Music Theory II class on Wednesday, February 8th. You did a fantastic job reviewing a binary dance, helping students locate musical patterns in unfigured bass, and leading students in a discussion of their composition project.

What the TA did Well

- Students seemed very comfortable participating in the discussion. You were very engaging as you actively posed questions and helped students discover core concepts. Given the dynamic discussion, I never had the sense that you were lecturing to your students.
- You communicated both openly and transparently with them. For instance, you clearly outlined your expectations for their quiz performance, reiterating how in-class activities prepared them for the quiz and what learning objectives the quiz assessed.
- You “signposted” the class well. At the beginning, for example, you gave an overview of the day’s class (e.g. “here are the three main sections for today”). Overall, this made the lesson easy to follow and your expectations clear.
- I was impressed by your students’ involvement in the discussion. You always had students eager to raise their hands and answer questions, even if their answer was incorrect. This shows that you created a comfortable classroom environment where students felt safe. When students were incorrect, however, you not only clearly explained what was incorrect, but also emphasized positive points of their answer.
- You responded well to your students. For example, you often built off of their responses.
- Another excellent approach you used was to have students work in small groups to realize an unfigured bass example. This activity, which students found very engaging, gave them an opportunity to not only think critically about and apply concepts and patterns learned in class, but also connect these abstract concepts to a concrete piece of music.

Suggestions for Improvement

- The middle towards the end of the class felt rushed, which made parts of the class a bit “muddled.” For instance, instructions for the small group activity were not completely clear (e.g. it was unclear whether you wanted students to find a secondary dominant chord or not).
- You could have given students more time to complete this activity.
- When you felt rushed, some questions (albeit only a few) became either too broad or “guess-what’s-in-my-head-questions” (questions where you clearly wanted students to give a specific answer). One solution might be to prepare more questions in advance to prevent yourself from defaulting to these types of questions when you feel rushed.
- If you give students time to reflect on questions, then they might feel even more confident in their answers. One suggestion might be to sometimes give students thirty second to write down an answer first before discussing the question as a class. For example, one question that could have benefited from reflection first was “What is the overall structure of the piece?” This would give students time to pay close attention to the question itself instead of feeling as if they have to give an answer as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,
Your Name