



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool (ELEOT)

What purpose does ELEOT serve?

Essentially, ELEOT's purpose is to identify observable evidence of classroom environments that are conducive to learning. ELEOT was developed for use by the External Review Team while on-site and replaces the former classroom observation walk-through instrument. The instrument is a school improvement resource to conduct observations for the purpose of creating the most optimal environments in which students can learn. The reason for the shift from a focus on teachers to a focus on learners is to ensure that learners are engaging acting, reacting, and benefiting from various contexts or environments that should be evident in **all** effective learning settings.

What are learning environments?

The simplest way to understand the concept of learning environments is first to consider a broad definition of *environment* as a condition or setting. For purposes of using ELEOT, learning environment means the context in which student learning occurs with a particular thematic overlay, e.g., an Equitable Learning Environment, High Expectations Environment, etc. The items included in each of the environments are "evidence" that students are engaging in or experiencing an environment that is conducive to learning that focuses on a number of important themes including equity, high expectations, support of learning, active learning, progress monitoring and provision of feedback, well-managed, and digital.

What is the expected length of time for the observation?

Observations of classrooms or other learning venues are conducted for a minimum of 20 minutes per observation. Observing for a longer period of time is optimal, but not required at this time. It is possible that not every team member will engage in conducting observations. The Lead Evaluator has the discretion to assign different roles for different team members based on knowledge, expertise, schedule and willingness. We recommend that at least two members of the team engage in observations though this may vary according to the constitution of the team.

Is the ELEOT a tool to evaluate or measure an individual teacher's performance or quality?

No. Just as the AdvancED Standards and Indicators are used to provide school/system/organization level ratings through performance levels (which the team determines), the aggregated mean rating for each environment of all observations conducted during the External Review is what is reported and **NOT** individual classroom data.

Is the expectation to observe and score every item during the 20-minute period? There will be instances in which you may observe evidence for each of the 30 items included in the ELEOT (at varying levels) during the minimum observation period of twenty minutes. However, each classroom or learning venue is unique, so it is probable that some items may not be evident during the observation period (and you would provide a rating of "1" for these). Nevertheless, **every item should have a rating of 1 to 4 and no items should be left blank.** The two most important elements of this process are to observe as many individual learners as possible while also observing the overall setting/context (as opposed to focusing on one learner) and to score the items fairly and appropriately. Remember the ratings for

individual observations will not be shared. Rather it is the collective of all ELEOT ratings that provide an overview of the evidence of effective learning environments created across the school.

Why is it not possible to score an item “not applicable”?

Every item included in the ELEOT is applicable at all times, but may not be observed in every classroom setting or context. Therefore, there is a “*not observed*” category but no “*not applicable*” category.

Why is “not observed” scored as a one “1” and not a zero “0”?

For research purposes, it is more advantageous to use the 1-4 scale so that we are able to analyze the data using frequency counts, averages and means. This also is helpful when we begin the task of correlating items with each other (factor and item analysis) as well as with other data we believe may have relationships with ELEOT items. The Innovation Division still is discussing the rating scale (using not observed, somewhat evident, evident and very evident) and still may modify these after the pilot period. Likewise, the items themselves may change as we learn more about the discrete properties of individual items. We are dedicated to not increasing the number of items (currently 30) but may consider reducing the number based on pilot data.

Are the items aligned with the AdvancED Standards and Indicators?

Each student item is aligned to one of *AdvancED’s Standards for Quality Schools*. The most prevalent indicators aligned to the learner items are found in Standard 3. Please consult the document that aligns ELEOT items with the AdvancED Standards and Indicators.

How do I get the aggregated mean scores for each of the environments that I need to complete the ELEOT section in the External Review Report?

The Innovation Division will provide an Excel spreadsheet template into which the team can enter the 30 item ratings for each observation (1 row = 1 observation). Lead Evaluators may ask team members to help with data entry of the ratings. After inputting all observations conducted, pre-set formulas automatically will calculate the mean score for each of the seven environments, and these scores automatically will be labeled and displayed at the top of the spreadsheet. The demographic data at the top of the ELEOT (date, school, etc.) does not need to be input into the spreadsheet—completed ELEOT hardcopies should be returned to the Innovation Division.

What do I do with the hard copies of the completed ELEOTs?

All hardcopies must be returned to the Innovation Division electronically (by scanning front and back) and e-mailed to Karmen Gary at kgary@advanc-ed.org OR originals in hardcopy may be mailed to:

AdvancED
Innovation Division-ELEOT
9115 Westside Parkway
Alpharetta, GA 30009

How will the results be used by the External Review Team?

The results of the ratings are used by the team to corroborate information obtained from interviews, artifacts or evidence, student performance data and stakeholder feedback data. It is important that the External Review Team use the results to form a collective perspective of a school and not focus on the results of one classroom. For example, if after all observations were completed and results tabulated, team members found evidence for a number of environments (and thus a higher average number, say

3.45 for “Active Learning Environment) but a “not observed” (and thus a 1.0 rating) for one environment in particular (e.g., Well-Managed Learning Environment). The team could report that across all its observations it found a preponderance of evidence that indicated that students were engaged in active learning, but that there was little evidence that the environment was well-managed.

Are the External Review Team’s scores shared with the institution during the External Review?

The mean rating for each learning environment is provided during the Exit Report and is included in the written *External Review Report*. Because ELEOT is used as one of the several evidence-gathering techniques, its results should be treated and regarded as all other evidence and not shared with the institution during conversations and interviews. If asked by the Head of the Institution/Principal, the Lead Evaluator may provide a high-level summary of the ELEOT results. The results can provide the External Review Team with information to write Powerful Practices, Opportunities for Improvement, and Required Actions for inclusion in the *External Review Report*.

What do the various levels mean?

Similar to the performance levels for each AdvancED Standards for Quality Schools, AdvancED Standards for Quality Systems, etc., the levels for rating the items on ELEOT coincide with the indicator performance levels. For example, Level 4 “Very Evident” means that all students in the classroom during the observation are engaging in or experiencing the main focus of the ELEOT item, or there is an environment created that allows this to occur for any student. In the next phase of development of ELEOT support materials, there will be descriptions for each of the rating levels.

Can school leaders use ELEOT when their institution is not in an External Review?

Once the pilot phase is completed by the end of the 2012-2013 school year, the AdvancED network will have access to ELEOT for use as a continuous improvement tool.

Will ELEOT be available as a web-based tool?

Yes. In the near future ELEOT will be accessible from your iPad, Tablet and smartphone. An announcement will be made when the tool is ready for use in these mobile formats.