

Dear Mr. Jiaheng Xie,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to observe you teach a Data Management workshop in McClelland Hall 208 from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. on September 20, 2018. This was a graduate level workshop attended by nearly 40 students, who were sitting in a semicircle. You began the class by greeting the students and introducing yourself. You clearly stated the session's objectives and also laid down its structure, which helped students to know what they were going to receive from the workshop. You also provided the session's objectives using the appropriate action verbs from Bloom's taxonomy of education. You discussed the main theme of the lecture and then asked students informal questions to assess their existing knowledge on the topic. I am glad that you thought about the metacognition process and were keen to assess the existing knowledge of the students on the topic.

During the session, you also provided opportunities for students to apply the content by incorporating group exercises, which involved real life scenarios for a data scientist and encouraged students to think about situations where they can apply class concepts. The group exercise that asked the students to think like a data scientist working at YouTube encouraged active learning. This exercise also invigorated critical thinking by the students. I could see you were not able to facilitate the group discussions due to the classroom structure; however, your attempt of engagement during each group activity was appreciable. I assume your discussions would be more engaging and facilitating if a conducive classroom structure were available. The instructions for the group exercises were clearly mentioned on the PowerPoint slide you used. The group activities were also appropriately timed and well-suited for this type of workshop. The questions you asked for the group exercise were thoughtful and engaging. You also summarized the outcomes and main message after each group activity to reinforce the ideas, which is an important step in metacognition.

The ideas explained during the session on text and data mining techniques and tools were clear. You demonstrated your command on the subject and your ability to explain these concepts to novice students. These are important characteristics of teaching. You used appropriate non-verbal gestures and answered students' questions as they were raised. You used PowerPoint slides to depict graphs and images and also to represent some of the other information. The level of details you provide on the slides were appropriate and also allowed a non-subject expert like me to understand the concepts. You also demonstrated the ability and flexibility in pacing your session after students asked questions. You gave enough time for students to digest concepts, ask questions, and clarify doubts.

Though there were not many questions asked during the session, I found you were sensitive towards the questions raised. In fact, you paused several times and asked students if they had any queries. A few students asked "how" and "why" questions, demonstrating that they were processing the information provided during the session. You attempted to meet the diverse learning needs of the students by incorporating lecture and practice-based teaching approach. You appropriately created and executed your lesson plan to suit the needs of the diverse student audience. Examples of this include: clarification, slowed down speech, use visuals, use synonyms

To wrap up the class, you summarized the topics and eloquently handed over the session to the next speaker. Towards the end of the session, some students left early, while others were less engaged. However, this might be due to the evening time of the session. Also, it could have been due to a lack of motivation or personal reasons for those specific students.

Overall, I found your teaching to be interesting, reflective, and involving important aspects of effective teaching including active learning, critical thinking, group learning, student engagement, and accommodating diversity. Your friendly attitude and encouraging behavior facilitated classroom discussion. I found most of the time students were actively listening, comprehending, and participating in the group activities.

Thanks again for allowing me to observe you teach, and I wish all the best for your future teaching endeavors.

Sincerely,

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