

# Observatory Visit Information

## *What is this observatory visit thing any ways?*

As part of your grade (50 points, in fact), you need to visit the McCollum Science hall observatory. You will then write up a report about your visit and turn this in.

## *When should I visit the observatory?*

The schedule below doesn't start until the second week of classes, so you have some time before you have to go. You need to visit the observatory using the schedule outlined below. The schedule is based upon the **last number of your student ID**.

Last Number of Student ID	Visit Observatory
0	September 3
1	September 10
2	September 17
3	September 24
4	October 1

Last Number of Student ID	Visit Observatory
5	October 8
6	October 15
7	October 22
8	October 29
9	<b>November 5 (8 PM)</b>

If you want to visit the observatory **before** your designated date, that is okay, in fact that's actually a pretty good idea. If you do your observatory visit later than your designated week, you will lose points - the later you visit, the more points you will lose.

## *What night of the week do I go to the observatory? What time do I show up?*

McCollum observatory is open only on **Thursday** nights. The program will start at 9 PM sharp, except for November 5<sup>th</sup>, when it starts at 8 PM! You should be there **before** the start of the program - if you show up even 1 minute late, you may not be able to participate in the program and you'll have to come back the next week.

## *Exactly where do I go?*

First of all you need to go to McCollum Science Hall. This is the building that is directly north of Latham hall. In there you need to go to the area outside (**not inside**) of Lantz Auditorium (the large auditorium located on the east end of the main level of McCollum, room 137, right next to the stuffed polar bear). You should go early enough so that you aren't late for the start of the program - you may get locked out if you are late and you'll miss important information as well.

There you will find some signs and a notebook that you **must** sign in. Actually anyone that visits the observatory needs to sign in, so if you bring a friend along, make sure they sign in as well.

**Failure to sign the notebook will result in no points!**

## *What do I need to bring with me?*

You should have something to write with and something to write on. Do not use red ink (or reddish like ink) pens, since these will in general not be visible in the observatories. And dress appropriately - when the sun goes down so does the temperature, and observatories are not heated. **DO NOT BRING OR USE CELL-PHONES IN THE OBSERVATORY!**

***What if it is raining or cloudy?***

The show will go on. You will always have the chance to at least see the observatory and telescope and learn something about it, so the program will not be canceled due to bad weather.

***What if I can't go to the observatory any time during the semester due to my work schedule (or something similar)?***

You will have to tell me **before** the week that you are scheduled to visit the observatory, so that I can give you another assignment. If you don't tell me this until after your scheduled week, you will get no points. Forgetting to tell me is no excuse.

***What if I have an emergency during the night that I was planning to visit?***

I'll deal with those on a case by case basis. You'll have to have a doctor's note or similar documentation to get a second chance without penalty.

***How long will the program last?***

It will be over when it is over, geez I hate this question.... Well, that's not very helpful, so let me give you a general comment about how long it will last. On cloudy nights the program will be short, maybe only 20-30 minutes. On clear nights it will last longer, probably around an hour or so. It will also depend upon how many people are in attendance - the more people, the longer it will take for everyone to get a view of the objects in the telescope. We also keep track of the people who skip out on the programs early, so don't even think of doing that.

***Is the observatory accessible to all people?***

Unfortunately no. The observatory is only accessible via a staircase, and the telescope is located on a pier and to look through it, you have to go up a small stepladder. If you are unable to visit the observatories because of this, please contact me as soon as possible.

***What do I include in my report?***

While you are on the roof, you will want to make note of several things, particularly the conditions of the sky - the degree of cloudiness, the amount of wind, the amount of haze etc., which is present. These things will affect what you see, and how well you see things. Even if it is totally cloudy, you will at least get to see what the telescope looks like and learn something about it.

Your report **must** include the following things to get full credit:

- Time and date that you visit
- Sky conditions (as mentioned above)
- Information about the telescope - type, size, etc.
- Moon phase (if visible)
- Planets, including their names and their locations in the sky ("Southwest horizon", "eastern sky", etc), and other descriptive information, like how bright they are, their colors, etc.
- If it is clear enough, various objects in the sky will be pointed out before you go into the observatory. These will include the stars and constellations you will learn about in class and anything else of interest. You should make note of all of the things that are pointed out.
- The name and type of object(s) that you see in the telescope.

- A description and/or drawing of the object(s) that you see in the telescope. You don't have to make a drawing if you don't have a lot of confidence in your artistic skills, but sometimes drawings are helpful. A *good* description though is **REQUIRED**.
- Additional information about the object(s) must also be included. This can be found at one of the many web sites that are listed at the course website. This can include information such as distance, size, type of object, brightness (magnitude), who discovered it, etc. Exactly what you include about the object will depend upon what type of object it is. Failure to include information about the objects you see in the telescope will result in a large loss of points. Also make sure you do not plagiarize any sources and include all references.
- If you visit the observatory on a cloudy night and are unable to see anything astronomical, then you must write about one of the objects that would have been visible that night. You will be told what you missed seeing, so you can get information about it and include it in your report. You can use the links at the course website to obtain more information about the objects. And as mentioned with the previous point, you should avoid plagiarizing the sources of information and include all references that you use.

The length of your report should be about **3 pages double spaced** typed or more if you get real detailed, 1-inch margins all around, 12 pt font. All external references (books, the internet) should be correctly referenced and cited in the text. But as always, it will be *quality* and not quantity that you will be graded on.

**Your observatory visit report is due on the Monday immediately following your visit** or earlier if you want to turn it in before that time. For example if you go to the observatory on Thursday the 8th, the report is due by Monday the 12th. Points will be taken off for late reports. Even if you go to the observatory before your scheduled date, you turn in your report on the Monday immediately after your visit. Regardless of when you are supposed to visit the observatory, the report is due the Monday following your visit. For those visiting on September 3, turn it in on September 9 (since there is no school on September 7).

***When will I get my report back?***

If you wrote a sloppy, inaccurate, poor quality report I'll give it back to you as soon as I can so that you can rewrite it. There will be a new deadline in that case. If there are no grotesque problems with your report, I'll try to get it back to you a few days after you turn it in.

***My friend and I both went to the observatory on the same night and saw all the same stuff, can we just turn in one report and put both our names on it?***

Only if you share one brain between the two of you. You must turn in your own report with your own observations, opinions and such. When two people get credit for 1 document, that is plagiarism, and both people will get zero points for the assignment. Also any write ups that look a little bit too similar will get no points. Ignorance of what comprises plagiarism is not an excuse.

***There were some very complicated, unfamiliar words used during the program at the observatory and I don't think I know how to spell them all - what were some of those words?***

Here's a list of some of the common words/phrases that are used:

- Schmidt-Cassegrain
- Messier (pronounced Mess-ee-aa)
- Nebula (plural Nebulae)

- Planetary Nebula
- Globular Cluster
- Open Cluster
- Pleiades Cluster
- H II region (pronounced "H 2 region")
- Aperture
- Focal length
- Magnitude
- Magnification
- Reflecting
- Refracting
- Primary mirror
- Secondary mirror
- Eyepiece

There will also be star and constellation names that will be mentioned, but those are usually the ones that you need to know for the constellation quizzes. They'll be listed on the sheets that you have for the constellations.

***Will I earn all of the points possible?***

Hopefully you will get all 50 points. But you can be penalized for various things such as not signing the guest book, forgetting to include required information such as time/date/sky conditions, poor descriptions of the observatory/telescope, poor descriptions of the objects you saw, bad spelling, punctuation and grammar, and of course for visiting the observatory after your designated date or turning the report in late.

***What if I have another question about the observatory visit that isn't covered in this write up?***

Well then you should ask me.