

appendix

STRUCTURED OBSERVATION OF TEACHING: GUIDELINES

There are no hard rules to be observed when observing teaching since individual differences on both sides are extremely important. The following points, however, may be worth considering when planning how to make the process an interesting and useful experience for both. The guidelines and the accompanying observation form are designed to help focus the teacher and the observer on the following:

- The learning objectives of the teaching session.
- The relationship of different kinds of structures available for teaching to those learning objectives.
- The relationship of teaching to the student experience of the session.

PART 1: PRE-OBSERVATION SESSION

Before the observation, the teacher and observer should meet to clarify the expectations about the process. The first part of the form will help both understand the expectations of the session.

1. Agree on the aims and structure of the observation

- Do the instructor and observer both agree on the purpose of the observation?

- What role, if any, will the observer play during the observation process?
- Will the observer be able to talk to the students directly at any point?

2. Identify the instructor's learning and teaching objectives for the teaching session

Intention

- What is the instructor trying to achieve (generally in the course; specifically in the session)?
- What type of student learning outcomes are being encouraged?

Strategy

- What are the instructor's primary teaching methods for the class?
- Why has the instructor opted for a particular approach or format?
- How does the instructor inspire or motivate the students to learn?
- What is the observer's role, if any, in planning or structuring the session?

3. Understand the observation context

- Who are the students?
- What are the instructor's perceptions of the students in the class (diversity of learners, disciplinary mix, perception of class characteristics, etc.)?
- What expectations, attitudes, assumptions or skills do the students bring?
- Have there been any recent changes in the programme/course/student outcomes?
- Are there any special problems or constraints in the course/classroom, etc., to be aware of?

4. Agree on the post-observation discussion

- Will the observer debrief each session, or set of sessions?
- What type of style (formal, serious, relaxed, challenging, developmental)?
- Format? Should there be a definite structure to the discussion?
- Are there any particular areas the instructor would like feedback on?
- Will the observer provide verbal or written feedback/reflections on the teaching?

PART II: OBSERVATION ACTIVITY

This part of the form is intended to provide both the teacher and observer with a way of looking at the teacher's general teaching practice in the session, particularly with respect to the session's learning objectives and the students' potential experience. The observer is encouraged to write comments within each area, but to defer deeper interpretation until reflecting on the session later, when preparing for the follow-up discussion.

PART III: POST-OBSERVATION DISCUSSION

The post-observation phase has been structured around a form designed to provide information for the debrief session and discussion with the teacher about specific areas of their teaching practice. The form consists of a combination of quantitative scores and qualitative comments. The quantitative scores are mainly intended to provide the observer with a useful way of quickly developing an overall sense of the session to provide the teacher with additional information from which to reflect and consider their teaching practice further and to help identify areas where improvement and further development may be appropriate.

The assessment for the general skills is on a four-point Likert scale of agreement (or not), with statements about the skills:

- *Strongly disagree (SD)*: suggests that the skill has neither been integrated into practice nor has it shown substantial signs of being developed.
- *Disagree (D)*: suggests there are signs that the skill has been developed but it can be taken much further in practice.
- *Agree (A)*: suggests the skill has been acceptably developed but it can be taken further in practice.
- *Strongly agree (SA)*: suggests the skill has been very effectively integrated into practice.
- *N/A*: not appropriate to the session.

Scores are calculated by assigning a number from 1 to 4 on the level of agreement with the 12 'teaching skills' items (1 = Strongly disagree; 4 = Strongly agree). The higher scores suggest more ability in the particular teaching skill. Scores for the three different dimensions – providing support, encouraging independence and developing the interpersonal – can be scored separately here to help in the identification of issues concerning the balance between the three areas. (*Note*: to compare support, independence and interpersonal scores, an average for items in the specific category should be used.) An overall

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score can be calculated, although some criteria may be less appropriate to some forms of session. This needs to be considered if scores are aggregated.

Written comments related to the scores given to the 12 items are particularly helpful in facilitating the discussion between the observer and the instructor. Such comments help specify particular issues under each skill area. Table A.1 provides a range of statements which characterize the issues addressed by each of the 12 items. The observer may wish to draw upon these descriptions in constructing their written comments. They should only be seen as a guideline, however. In addition to comments, the observer may also wish to write down suggestions which the instructor might want to think about in developing and changing particular aspects of his or her teaching. These may also be useful for the instructor during the post-observation discussion.

Table A.1 Descriptions of items by critical matrix categories

Providing support skills			
1. <i>Maintains students' curiosity and interest to end of the session</i>	2. <i>Makes material and content clear and accessible to students</i>	3. <i>Acknowledges and clarifies students' role(s) during session</i>	4. <i>Communicates effectively</i>
<p>Sets the scene for the session, relevance of the material</p> <p>Links the session to the overall course, to wider contexts, to students' personal interests, etc.</p> <p>Captures students' interest at the beginning (with problems, questions, key ideas, etc.)</p> <p>Varies styles and modes of presentation</p> <p>Ends the session in a stimulating and interesting way (leaves students with interesting questions, problems, etc.)</p> <p>Encourages the students to enjoy the session</p>	<p>Makes the purpose of the session clear</p> <p>Offers clear and accessible explanations</p> <p>Uses effective examples, illustrations and quotations</p> <p>Uses technology and visual aids effectively to interpret material</p> <p>Stresses important concepts and ideas</p> <p>Provides alternative explanations/descriptions of difficult concepts, issues or ideas</p>	<p>Clarifies the role or value of note-taking during the session</p> <p>Clarifies expectations about student participation</p> <p>Obtains feedback about students understanding of the material</p> <p>Clarifies work expected from the students after the session</p>	<p>Modulates voice effectively; speaks to (not at) the students</p> <p>Uses gesture and body movement effectively</p> <p>Maintains regular eye contact with the students</p> <p>Uses the space and resources (technology, multimedia, etc.) effectively</p> <p>Demonstrates energy; is lively and stimulating</p> <p>Paces the session appropriately</p> <p>Displays strong rapport with students; seeks to engage students</p>
Encouraging independence skills			
5. <i>Chooses and organizes material well</i>	6. <i>Encourages students to think critically during the class</i>	7. <i>Encourages students to relate their experience to class content</i>	8. <i>Encourages students to offer their own knowledge, ideas or opinions</i>
<p>Chooses material relevant to the topic and objectives of the course</p> <p>Organizes and offers material in a form appropriate to the students' ability and level</p> <p>Uses material that animates student interest and makes them curious to explore more</p>	<p>Provides time for reflection on problems, concepts, ideas</p> <p>Provides time for students to test positions, ideas, concepts with respect to content presented (in groups or with a fellow student or in the class as a whole)</p> <p>Encourages consideration of alternative views</p>	<p>Provides time for students to reflect on their experience</p> <p>Provides time for sharing experience in groups or with peers</p> <p>Encourages active participation within the class as a whole</p> <p>Ensures access for a wide range of student experience</p>	<p>Provides opportunities and a 'safe' environment to contribute</p> <p>Allows time for students to answer key problems or questions raised</p> <p>Recognizes and permits a range of ways of expressing one's ideas, knowledge, opinions</p>

(Continued)

Table A.1 (Continued)

5. Chooses and organizes material well	6. Encourages students to think critically during the class	7. Encourages students to relate their experience to class content	8. Encourages students to offer their own knowledge, ideas or opinions
Provides the right amount of material for the time allowed	Challenges assumptions	Developing the interpersonal skills	
9. Leaves students feeling stimulated to think and learn more about subject	10. Encourages students to respond to one another	11. Introduces activities in which students interact with one another	12. Encourages students to engage/challenge one another
Selects engaging material, examples, cases, problems, etc. Encourages students to do further reading/research Encouraging students to follow up their own ideas and lines of thinking Encourages students to see the session as part of an ongoing open learning process	Devises ways to get students to address and respond to one another His positive with respect to student contributions and interactions Provides opportunities for students to play different roles in a group (leader, reporter, etc.)	Provides opportunities for teamwork, leadership, group communication Arranges the students within the room or space to allow for group interaction Uses activities and technology (games, simulations, role play, etc.) which motivate students to interact	Encourages students to challenge or question respectfully one another's ideas and opinions Provides opportunities (debate, role play) for student interaction Provides opportunities for student presentations Provides opportunities for students to critique and evaluate one another

STRUCTURED OBSERVATION OF TEACHING: FORMS

Part I: pre-observation session

Teacher	Session
Course	Session length
Topic	

Specific learning objectives planned for the session

For example, knowledge and understanding; key/core skills; cognitive skills; subject-specific (including practical and professional) skills; interpersonal skills

Part III: structure observation of teaching: follow-up form

Teacher	Session
Course	Session length
Topic	

Dimension of critical matrix	Area of observation	S D	D	A	S A	Observations	Suggestions
Providing support	1. Maintains students' curiosity and interest to end of the session						
	2. Makes material and content clear and accessible to students						
	3. Acknowledges and clarifies students' role(s) during session						
	4. Communicates effectively						
	5. Chooses and organizes material well						
Encouraging independence	6. Encourages students to think critically during the class						
	7. Encourages students to relate their experience to class content						
	8. Encourages students to offer their own knowledge, ideas or opinions						
	9. Leaves students feeling stimulated to think and learn more about subject						
Developing the interpersonal	10. Encourages students to respond to one another						
	11. Introduces activities in which students interact with one another						
	12. Encourages students to engage/challenge one another						