University of Salford
MANCHESTER

Observation of Teaching Policy – applies to all Apprentice Programmes and, where required, PSRB Programmes

Version Number 2.0

Effective from 1 July 2021

Author: Quality & Enhancement Office

Quality & Enhancement Office

Background

The Observation of Teaching Policy is a part of our work to ensure we put consideration of the student experience at the heart of our teaching and learning practice.

The Observation of Teaching Policy provides a clear, developmental path through which we can take pride in the innovative and high-quality teaching demonstrated throughout the University. It is also a way in which the academic community can continually improve, champion and recognise good practice in the University's most significant asset: its staff. The Policy provides a safe environment for teaching staff to observe different teaching methods in practice and to share their own teaching practice with colleagues with the aim of placing consideration of the student experience at the heart of our endeavours.

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This document outlines the general principles and guidance relating to the routine use of observation of teaching (OoT) as part of the University's approach to improving students' learning experiences through advances in teaching practice. In addition, the University's aspiration is that observation of teaching will result in developmental, constructive feedback leading to improvements in reflective practices and educational scholarship. The experiences of the observers and those who have been observed should contribute to the sharing of good practice and offer fresh perspectives on teaching and learning.

1.2 OoT will contribute towards the University's preparedness for an Ofsted inspection of the University's Level 3 to Level 7 Apprenticeship provision. The Further education and skills inspection handbook states that inspection activity will include *"direct observation of teaching, training and assessment"* (Gov UK, 2021, para 128). Also, OoT will help the University meet the Learning and Teaching Advice and Guidance Section of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education which states the *"Providers operate staff performance review processes that include opportunities for observed teaching and/or peer review of teaching"* (QAA, 2018, p9).

1.3 The University of Salford supports the Higher Education Academy's (HEA 2006) list of reasons why academics should be observed and observe teaching :

- "To enhance the importance attached to quality of teaching.

- To encourage all staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching and identify their development needs.

- To foster discussion and dissemination of best practice.

- To increase staff awareness of the whole student experience.

- To identify any weaknesses and put in place an action plan to remedy them.

- To assist departments in providing a high-quality educational experience for their students." (Abridged from Gosling)

2.0 Scope

2.1   This policy applies to staff who teach on Apprenticeship programmes and those who teach on programmes where the Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) requires formal observation of teaching to take place. Hourly paid academics teaching these programmes are within scope of this policy. In addition, it may apply to staff teaching any type of UoS programme at collaborative provision where the collaborative provider does not have an Observation of Teaching Policy.

2.2   "Teaching" for the purposes of this policy includes all activity with students that contributes to module learning outcomes. Thus, staff who meet the criteria in paragraph 2.1 but whose only teaching activity is supervising dissertations and/or projects for students on taught programmes are included.

2.3   Staff who are registered on the PGCAP Learning and Teaching in Higher Education module, that includes observation of teaching at the University can, in the academic year they are doing the module, opt out of the developmental OoT scheme (described in 3.2 – 3.12) as they will be engaging in observations as part of their studies. They cannot opt out of the judgemental OoT inspection exercises described in 3.13.

3.0 Policy Statements

Different types of OoT

3.1 The University recognises that a developmental and supportive approach to teaching is the most helpful to the professional development of observers and observees. This approach is set out in section 3.2 to 3.12 of this document. There is also a need for staff to participate in judgemental OoT exercises carried out as part of an external inspection by Ofsted or a PSRB. Section 3.13 sets out the University's approach to carrying out judgemental observation of teaching, including 'mock' inspections to help staff prepare for the external inspector's visit.

A developmental approach to OoT

3.2   If the OoT policy is to deliver the impacts outlined in section 1.0 above it needs to be recognised as a supportive process. All the teaching staff that are in scope are expected to engage with this activity regularly (i.e. at least once a year) with the option to take part more often according to development needs. Academics being observed should feel that they could choose to be observed in an area of their practice that they struggle with without concern that this may go beyond the observer/observee relationship.

3.3   OoT is part of a wider enhancement strategy that further develops the University's ambition to be pedagogically excellent.

3.4   The University provides online learning and development material and optional staff development sessions for all staff who are required to take part in OoT.

3.5   Those taking part in OoT can decide what teaching activity they want to be observed, this could range from a one-to-one supervision to a lecture to a large cohort. The activity can be in-person teaching or online. Academics are expected to propose several options for observations to help ensure that a mutually agreeable date can be identified. It is expected that observations should be a minimum of an hour long. The observation should be of the full length of the scheduled teaching event and of sufficient duration to allow the desired skills to be meaningfully observed.

Organising observations

3.6   Schools are responsible for arranging groups for the observation of teaching. These groups would normally be of between four and seven staff will be expected to contact each other and arrange observations.

3.7   Staff will normally observe colleagues from within their own Schools, although not necessarily from within their own discipline area.

3.8   If, once they are informed about their observation of teaching group, a member of staff is uncomfortable working with a particular colleague, they can request (via the Associate Dean Academic or the School nominee) a change of group.

Code of Practice

3.9   The Code of Practice for OoT (see Appendix 1) will apply to all staff taking part in developmental OoT.

Records of observations

3.10 The post-observation discussion between the observer and observee is private but can be captured using the optional OoT template (se Appendix 2). This is not obligatory.

3.11 For audit purposes, staff taking part in observations are required to report to their School OoT organiser both the date they observed a colleague and the date they were observed by a colleague. This data will be reported to the School Teaching and Learning Committee.

3.12 OoT will not be recorded on PDRs however, staff are encouraged to use the feedback from observations to identify proposed learning objectives and/or development activity in their PDR.

Judgemental Observation of Teaching as part of external quality assurance

3.13 When an external quality assurance exercise involves observation of teaching, all staff teaching on the programme must be prepared to be observed. Staff may have very short notice of which teaching session is to be observed. To prepare academics for the experience, the School, in conjunction with the QEO, will organise mock OoT exercises that as accurately as possible reflect the likely approach the external inspector will follow. Leading up to an external quality assurance inspection, academics will normally be expected to take part in at least two mock inspection OoT sessions. Feedback from the first session should help inform their approach to the second session and build their confidence. Any judgements made in these mock observations will confidential between the observer and observee. They will not be used in any form of performance management. The aim is to help prepare colleagues for what the external inspection visit may involve.

University Consideration

3.14 School Teaching and Learning Committees are responsible for ensuring the implementation of this Policy. The University's Teaching and Learning Committee will receive an annual report, collated by the Quality and Enhancement Office, about the operation of OoT to provide assurance re compliance.

3.15 The University's Teaching and Learning Committee will commission audits and other such evaluations or reports as may be required to verify the effective implementation of the OoT Policy to assure Senate that the procedure and the policy governing it remain fit for purpose and contribute to the enhancement of the quality of student learning opportunities.

4.0 Related Documentation

- Observation of Teaching Code of Practice (Appendix 1)
- Observation of Teaching Optional Observation Template (Appendix 2)

5.0 References

- HEA Study Centre for Education ESCalate (2006a) Peer Observation [Accessed online from http://escalate.ac.uk/resources/peerobservation/index.html 14 Feb 2013].
- HEA Study Centre for Education ESCalate (2006b) Planning for Peer Observation of Learning and Teaching [Accessed online http://escalate.ac.uk/resources/peerobservation/02.html 14 Feb 2013].
- Gov.UK (2021) Further education and skills handbook [Accessed online from Further education and skills handbook - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) 10 May 2021].
- QAA (2018) UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Learning and Teaching [Accessed online from Learning and Teaching (qaa.ac.uk) 10 May 2021]

Appendix 1: Observation of Teaching Code of Practice

This Code of Practice applies to all staff taking part in Observation of Teaching under the University's Observation of Teaching Policy.

General Principles

- Constructive and 'friendly' dialogue (similar principles to student 'feedback sandwich')
- Focus on learning experience from student perspective
- Open to difference in practice
- Open to discussion
- Trust amongst colleagues
- Collegiate and 'developmental' (regardless of level)
- Reflective and evaluative – continuous learning opportunity

Practicalities

BEFORE – What would you consider important practice for both the observer and observee before the observation of teaching takes place?

Observer	Observee
- Meet with observee to: - Familiarise with the context of the session. - Familiarise with what the observee would like out of the session – (e.g. focus on ...). - Develop a 'friendly' rapport before the session. - Agree practicalities (e.g. where to sit/stand, time of arrival, length of stay, etc.). - Agree time/place for post-observation dialogue.	- Prepare the students. - Prepare for the session – when, what, why? - Meet with the observer (see 'Observer'). - Think about personal development – could be a chance to gain constructive feedback on 'something new'. - Agree time/place for post-observation dialogue.

DURING – What would you consider important practice for both the observer and observee during the observation of teaching?

Observer	Observee
- Be unobtrusive (e.g. in where seated and in note taking). - Arrive on time. - View holistically. - Focus on the learning from the student perspective - learning and teaching experience as a whole.	- Remind students. - Try not to let the presence of the observer change your practice. - Try to relax.

AFTER - What would you consider important practice for both the observer and observee after observation of teaching takes place?

Observer	Observee

• Reflect on the experience from the observer 'learner' perspective immediately after (before post-observation dialogue):
   o what happened?
   o how did you feel?
   o what was good?
   o what could be improved?
• Meet for the post-observation dialogue soon after the session whilst still fresh in mind (within week).
• Meet somewhere comfortable and neutral for both the observer and observee (i.e. informally).
• Ask the observee how they feel the session went to open up discussion.
• Be open-minded about feedback and respectful of difference.
• Constructive feedback – if making suggestions for improvement make sure you explain why, and offer advice on where to get help (e.g. staff development, key contact, online resources, literature, etc.).
• Share any general outcomes with the group either via direct contact or during the (optional) group discussion.
	• Reflect on the experience from the observee perspective immediately after (before post-observation dialogue):
	   o what happened?
	   o how did you feel?
	   o what was good?
	   o what could be improved?
	• Meet for the post-observation dialogue soon after the session whilst still fresh in mind (within week).
	• Meet somewhere comfortable and neutral for both the observer and observee (i.e. informally).
	• Be open-minded about the feedback and respectful of difference.
	• Be reflective formulating any personal goals arising from feedback.
	• Share any general outcomes with the group either via direct contact or during the (optional) group discussion.

What should you do if you have serious concerns about what you have observed?
The answer to this question depends on the nature of the serious concerns.

A. If your concern relates to having observed behaviour that is not in accordance with the University's Dignity at Work and Study Policy you should follow the processes set out in that policy.

B. If, in your opinion, you have observed seriously poor teaching (but it is not an issue re Dignity at Work and Study) you should raise it in your post-observation discussions with the observee in line with this OoT Code of Practice. You should sensitively make it clear that your concerns are serious. In order to keep the process entirely developmental and outside the PDR process you should not discuss the matter with anyone other than the observee. See note below for more information.

Further note re B –There are other mechanisms that the University uses to help ensure that teaching is satisfactory. If there is a general issue with seriously poor teaching it is likely that it will have been/be identified through student feedback and other processes including the Programme Monitoring and Enhancement Procedure (PMEP). The developmental and supportive approach to OoT will be undermined if judgements made about observations of teaching may be reported to line managers or others. Academics being observed should feel that they could choose to be observed in an area of their practice that they struggle with without concern that this may go beyond the observer/observee relationship. For this reason, observers should only escalate concerns about teaching if the concern falls into category A above.

What to do if you feel that the Code of Practice is not being adhered to…

Please take the matter up with your Associate Head/Dean (Academic)

Appendix 2: OPTIONAL OBSERVATION OF TEACHING TEMPLATE

This template is provided to facilitate the observation of teaching before, during and after an observation. Use of the template is optional.

Before the observation

Pre-observation dialogue between observer and tutor (i.e. the person being observed) should explore which criteria are appropriate for the circumstances of the session to be observed.

When and where is the session to be observed? *(Does the tutor want the observer to view the Blackboard module site prior to the session?)*	
Module/session title	
Details of learners *(give a brief description of what is known about the learners including numbers expected)*	
Learning outcomes to be achieved during the session	
Brief session outline *(include any details about teaching methods, resources, assessment & feedback strategies)*	
Are there any aspects of the session which the observer should focus on? *(e.g. interaction with students, use of resources, pace, feedback etc.)*	
Does the tutor want to include any feedback from the students? *(if 'yes' what format should this take?* [1]	

During the observation

---

[1] *For example, a relatively quick and easy technique is as follows: the tutor gives students 3 post-it notes. Students are asked to write 'liked' on one note, 'disliked' on the next note and 'learnt' on the final note. At the end of the session the students then give feedback in the form of three points on each post-it note. As students leave the session, they hand the notes in or stick the notes on a flip chart under the appropriate headings. The observer and tutor can then take this feedback into consideration as they discuss their views of how the session went.*

Whilst observations are not a process of checking against a checklist, which cannot encompass all the complexities of the teaching situation, there are some common features that do exist and therefore can be used as a guide to provide feedback. The session should focus on the student learning experience as facilitated by the teaching approach. The observer's role is <u>not</u> to focus on the academic content of the session.

Planning/Organisation • Did the tutor relate the session to previous sessions and set it in the overall context of the Unit/Module? • Did s/he set out the structure of the session at the start? • To what extent did the session appear to be well-planned and organised?	
Methods/Approach • Were the methods/approach taken suitable to achieve the learning objectives set? • What other alternative approaches could have been taken? • Were examples given?	
Delivery/Pace • Did the pace and delivery seem appropriate for the students present? • Were any aspects, in your view, dealt with too briefly and/or with too much elaboration?	
Student Participation • Were students invited to participate? • How effective were the participatory elements of the session? • To what extent did participation enable the tutor to check the students' understanding of the material/approach?	
Use of Learning Resources • How effective was the use of visual aids e.g. PowerPoint etc? • Were they clearly produced and in a suitable font size? • To what extent did the resources contribute to the session or detract from it? • If applicable, to what extent did the Blackboard module site support the session?	

Use of Accommodation • How effectively did the tutor use the accommodation and demonstrate an appreciation of the impact it had on student learning?	
Overall style and ambience • Did the tutor appear confident in delivery? • Did s/he convey enthusiasm? Was s/he clear and audible? • Did the session seem to "go well"? Was there good rapport with the students? • Were students attentive/bored? Did they seem to "engage with the session"? • Did the tutor have good presentation skills? Was there good eye contact with students? • Did the tutor seem sensitive to the "mood" of the students?	

Additional notes:

After the observation

Following the observation, it is important for both tutor and observer to take some time to reflect on how the session went, and to prepare for the post-observation discussion which should take place within a week of the observed session. If student feedback has been sought after the session, this should also be taken into consideration. Feedback provided during the post-observation discussion is confidential and should remain focused and constructive, encouraging reflection from both perspectives.

Good feedback will:

- Allow the tutor to describe the session and say how they felt it went before the observer makes any further comment. The tutor might reflect on whether the observation process had affected the session in any way, for example, in his/her behaviour or that of the students.
- Focus on particular issues rather than allow generalised description or evaluation.
- Positively state what the observer considers the tutor to have done with skill, insight, competence, etc. The observer will provide evidence or instances of any claims made.
- Identify what did not appear to be so successful, or any areas in which some difficulties were observed. Again it is important that specific instances are cited as the basis for discussion.
- Provide adequate opportunity to discuss any matters of concern to the tutor about the session or about the observation process in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality.
- Provide an opportunity to identify constructive solutions to any agreed difficulties, including sources of professional development and support.

Notes:

Document location:	[Academic Handbook	University of Salford](Academic Handbook | University of Salford)

The owner and author are responsible for publicising this policy document.