

GUIDANCE NOTES FOR COMPLETION OF PEER OBSERVATION FORM

These notes are for guidance. They raise some of the questions that reflective practitioner might ask about his or her work. They are not intended to be exhaustive but rather to act as a guide to your thinking.

Major aims and learning objectives

Are the aims and objectives clearly stated? Is the content clearly set out? Are the desired student outcomes explicitly given? Are they appropriate for the group of students?

Assessment Schedule

Is there an assessment schedule for the whole course/module? Do the students know what is required of them and when? Are the assessment criteria made explicit to the students? Do they encourage deep learning? Are the assessment methods valid? Are they reliable? Are the students given any advice on the assessment? What feedback is planned? What steps have been taken to ensure that the students will learn from the feedback? Are the students encouraged to evaluate their own work?

Weekly teaching schedule

Is there a teaching plan? Does it meet the aims, objectives and desired student outcomes? Is there an appropriate variety of teaching activities to meet the needs of the course module? Have you planned what you will be doing each week? Have you planned what the students will be doing each week? Have you matched the objectives to the type of session planned (lecturer, seminar, etc.)?

Sessions to be observed

Is there a teaching plan? Do you have a plan? What support materials will you produce? Do you need other resources? Do you intend to provide handouts? Will you be using audio-visual aids? How does this session link with other sessions?

Preliminary meeting

This part of the process required the observer to meet the lecturer to discuss and record the following aspects of the session to be observed. It is against these criteria that the observation is made.

Overall Structure

Why have you structured the course this way? Are the aims and objectives clearly stated? Is the content clearly set out? Are the desired student outcomes explicitly given? Are they appropriate for the group of students? Is there a teaching plan? Does it meet the aims, objectives and desired student outcomes? Is there an appropriate variety of teaching activities to meet the needs of the course module?

Preparation

Are you properly and appropriately prepared for this session? Are support materials prepared, as required? Do they support the teaching activity? Are they helpful? Are they appropriate?

Appropriateness

Why did you decide to deliver this session as you did? Does the teaching activity fit in with the overall teaching plan? Does the session distinguish between subject content, cognitive level and student competencies? Is the activity appropriate for the teaching and learning outcomes? Does the activity encourage deep learning? Is the environment appropriate?

Delivery

Have you ensured appropriate teacher and student input to the session? Are the aims and objectives made clear? Does the session integrate with other sessions (underpinning, integration, complementary activity, skills, etc)? Is there a clear and appropriate structure? Do the students know why this session is necessary. Do they know what is expected of them? Does the session encourage interaction between the students? Are they taken at an appropriate pace? Are alternative models sought to explain concepts?

Relationship with students How are you trying to establish a rapport with the students? Is students involvement encouraged? Is there a good interaction between the students and the lecturer? Are students treated as individuals? Does the teaching activity provide motivation? Do the students enjoy the activity? Does it encourage independent learning? Do the students feel able to come to the tutor privately with problems?

Assessment

Why are you using these assessment methods? Is there an assessment programme for the whole course/module? Does it encourage deep learning? Does it distinguish between different cognitive levels? Does the assessment programme match the teaching and learning objectives and desired student outcomes? Is the observed session assess? Where does this assessment fit into the overall student assessment? Is the assessment method valid? Is it reliable? Do the students know what is required of them? Are the assessment criteria made explicit to the students? Are the students given any advice on the assessment? Is feedback planned? Will it be useful? Will it be relevant? What steps have been taken to ensure the students will learn from the feedback? Are the students encouraged to evaluate their own work?

Evaluation

How do you determine the effectiveness of the session and course/module? Do you encourage feedback from the students? How do you use the assessment results to inform your teaching? Does your summary re-state the objectives? Does it test if they have been met? How do you develop your teaching programme as a result of feedback and evaluation.

General Comments

How well were the learning objectives achieved? Were they appropriate for the students and the module? What additional advice might you give to the lecturer? (How) might they do things differently? What might they have done which they did not do? What were the strengths of the lecture?

THE OBSERVATION(S)

Use a form to guide you. Focus on the aspects, question or points on the form. Focus also on the student activity and response rather than the teacher. Write down your observations as you make them. It is important that you write down your evidence, examples and reasons for observation as well as the observations themselves.

THE FEEDBACK SESSION

It is useful for the observer to focus on five aspects of providing feedback:

- **Be sensitive**

This may be a delicate session, especially if you have criticisms to make to make. Begin the feedback session by asking the teacher what he or she thought of the teaching session. You can then offer comments and feedback in the context of the teacher's perceptions.

- **Be constructive**

Don't just make judgements. For example, if you thought the opening of a lecture was confusing, then say it was confusing, and then indicate how it could have been made clearer. Consider what could be reasonably expected of a teacher with that particular class, environment and set of objectives. Try to be helpful with our imposing your views.

- **Be positive**

Do stress the good points of the teaching session. Try to start and end on a positive note.

- **Be economical**

Try not to cover every detail of the teaching session. Select three or four points for discussion which will yield the greatest improvement in teaching.

- **Be predominantly a listener**

Remember that the primary purpose of the discussion is to help your colleague to reflect upon and develop his or her own teaching. You will need to ask reflective, open and probing questions. Listen to, and build upon their responses. Invite the teacher to consider his or her next steps. Finally, try to make the experience rewarding and useful for your peer. Both of you will have invested quite a lot of time in the exercise, so at the end of the discussion they should feel the experience was worthwhile.