

OBSERVATION GUIDANCE

What am I expected to do?

- Do the required number of observations for the teacher training programme following. For the Diploma it is a minimum of 4 observations per year
(2 by ITT tutor and 2 by subject specialist mentor) - minimum one hour each
- Provide verbal & written feedback

At **observations** – use the relevant awarding body documentation

- note any action points/targets agreed from previous observations - have these been addressed/ being implemented in this session?
- please provide comments about subject knowledge/ content of the session/ level delivered at and use of subject specific terminology
- be constructive
- be prepared to challenge
- provide written feedback within 1 week of the observation
- report to the course tutor any problems that may affect trainee's progress on the course

Following observations, discuss one or all of the following:

- ❑ Review progress drawing together evidence from session observations and evaluations
- ❑ Review targets and celebrate successes
- ❑ Set new targets
- ❑ any particular difficulties, devising ideas for new training activities and experiences to help overcome these
- ❑ any work that will contribute to an assignment
- ❑ Check subject knowledge, suggesting ways of making good any gaps

If time is tight, an alternative method of communication can be by **telephone or email**. **What is important** is agreeing some targets to enable the individual to **develop** & widen their experience and skills

Guidance - Teaching Practice Observations

Guidelines for Observers

- Remember that the visit is not a casual or peripheral event for the observed teacher.
- Ensure that you have received confirmation of the observation and you know the location and the parking arrangements.
- Treat the teacher, the students and what they are doing with respect.
- Recognise that you are not invisible and they know that you are there.
- Verbal feedback should be given immediately after the observation.
- The post-observation discussion should follow closely on the visit itself.
- Try to avoid making the feedback discussion a one-way process. Listen more and talk less.
- Offer positive suggestions and support to the teacher.
- It is likely that your comments may have a long lasting effect on the teacher. Think carefully what you say and be sensitive.

TEACHING PRACTICE OBSERVATIONS

Few of us enjoy having our work assessed by another, even when the purposes include a formative, staff development function. An observation visit is frequently regarded as a threatening activity and therefore the whole process requires sensitivity and tact. As the observer, you must develop a style with which you feel comfortable, which teachers find acceptable and supportive, yet takes account of the objectives involved. Establishing good relationships and effective communication are at the heart of this most important staff development activity. The following are some of the more critical points in the process.

1. Pre-visit Preparation

- 1.1 Ensure that the purposes of the observation are clear to the observed teacher.
- 1.2 Only undertake the observation if you have received a copy of the lesson plan, a lesson justification and copies of any resources to be used.
- 1.3 It usually helps the teacher if you negotiate with him/her where you will sit during your visit. Whilst it is likely that you will observe from the side or rear of the class, find out what he/she would prefer.
- 1.4 Negotiate how long you will stay.

2. The Visit

- 2.1 Arrive in good time to speak to the teacher and put them at ease. Confirm what you are going to do during the session. Being early will allow you to observe any preparation and how the teacher greets the students.
- 2.2 Remember that your presence will affect the process which you are observing. Try to be unobtrusive and reduce the "observer effect". Nevertheless, be sociable with the group in an acceptable, everyday manner. It is usual to have the teacher introduce you.
- 2.3 Be familiar with the method of recording your observations and how this is to be shared with the teacher.
- 2.4 After the session has finished thank the students and the teacher.

3. The Post-observation Discussion

- 3.1 The teacher should have organised a quiet venue – somewhere you will not be interrupted or overheard. Even though you may be on the teacher's home ground, the power relationship has altered and, rightly or wrongly, he/she will see you as in control of what takes place. Remind the teacher that they need to take written notes of the feedback discussion to help them write their self-evaluation report.
 - 3.2 The teacher will want and expect to hear what you think about the session and the teaching "performance" straight away, whilst you, on the other hand, will want to discover the teacher's opinions. Rather than play games, offer some general, positive feedback at the beginning so that he/she knows that, at least, you don't think it was a complete disaster. Once this has been established, open up a two-way dialogue – "tell me how you think it went --- - do you feel that you managed to do what you had hoped, etc.? Continue the feedback as a discussion: be sensitive and empathetic; confirm good practice; acknowledge significant shortcomings whilst helping the teacher to identify alternative, more effective strategies and techniques. Avoid being prescriptive but there is no reason why you shouldn't pass on successful experiences for him/her to consider.
 - 3.3 As part of your role is to assess, be straight forward and tell the teacher your overall assessment decision and be specific about why. If you have serious reservations you should say why and negotiate with the teacher how they might address the identified weaknesses. If the teacher has not met the required standards then negotiate a tutorial to formulate an action plan and arrange another observed session.
 - 3.4 Finish the discussion on a positive note. Confirm one or two points that the teacher might beneficially develop and end by emphasising aspects of good practice which you observed.
 - 3.5 Remind the teacher that you require him/her to provide you with a self evaluation report within the next week.
- √ Remember to keep a record of the feedback you provide
 - √ Remind the trainee that they must write up an evaluation of the session
and encourage them to reflect on anything that has just been discussed
 - √ Arrange the next mentoring and/or observation session

Mentors

√ Time spent mentoring can be recorded as Continuing Professional Development, some of which can contribute towards your personal target of 30+ hours per year (as stipulated in the White Paper – ‘FE Reform: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances’)

Remember to record:

- any learning during the mentoring relationship
- any impact upon own teaching and learning delivery

√ In order for these hours to be captured on your individual training record, inform your HR/ staff development department.