Peer Observation of Online Learning

# Guidelines for Developmental Peer Observation of Online Learning

Part A: Overview of Peer Observation of Online Learning

Part B: Template for *Stage One: Pre-Observation meeting*

Part C: Template for *Stage Two: Session Observation*

Part D: Template for *Stage Three: Post Observation Action Plan*

Part E: Further Reading to support Observers

## Part A: Overview of Developmental Peer Observation of Online Learning

This Guide contains a series of proformas designed for both ***tutor-led*** sessions and students' independent learning sessions and are suitable for synchronous and asynchronous online delivery of learning and teaching.

The same proforma can serve as an evaluation framework for the review of existing online learning material.

The proformas can be amended for your particular purpose of context. However, it is strongly advised that whatever amendments Schools or programme chose to make, they retain the ‘*three stage’* structure which all scholarship supports as the most effective for enhancement. The three stages are the Pre-Observation discussion, Online Observation, and Post-Observation discussion.

The Pre-Observation discussion drives the agenda for the Online Observation and acts as ‘objective setting’. These objectives are then reviewed in Post-Observation debriefing discussion.

Timing and mode of each stage is flexible:

Pre-observation can be done face to face or virtually, as can the post-observation individual action plan session. You may wish to consider whether to use AdobeConnect to hold and record these conversations, or use a shared authoring space (GoogleDocs).

The Learning Activity being observed could be:

* An entire online module in the VLE
* A single topic or week in the VLE with multiple components
* A single activity based discussion forum
* A single activity such as a wiki or project space for students
* A synchronous webinar as part of a larger learning unit
* A pre-recorded video or audio presentation

As a consequence, whilst face-to-face observation are usually limited (to the length of a class or part thereof) an online observation risks being open-ended. It is essential therefore that the pre-observation meeting identify clearly:

* The extent of the learning activity being observed
* An agreed duration for the observation(s)
* A clear understanding of how and where the learning activity will be accessed.

Online peer observation can sit alongside existing face-to-face observation processes as part of blended provision.

## Part B: Template for Stage One - Pre-Observation meeting

The observer should make a note of the following information gathered from the pre-observation meeting.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Observee:** | ***Name of Observer:*** |
| * Nature of the Pre-Observation meeting (make a note of when and where this meeting took place, was it via Skype, telephone, webinar etc.) |  |
| * Date of Pre-Observation meeting |  |
| * What aspects of the teaching would the tutor wish to have specific feedback on? * Specify the form the observation takes? (is it synchronous or asynchronous, around specific learning engagements or the broader e-learning context in a VLE etc.) * What is the scope of the observation – how much time is allocated, has the observer already been introduced to the online context |  |
| * What are the specific learning objectives or outcomes for this session (e.g. knowledge and understanding, key (transferable) skills, cognitive skills and subject specific, including practical/professional skills)? * What is the teaching approach being adopted, the anticipated student activities, the planned structure and the approximate time plan for the session or learning engagement? * What is the ‘place’ of this session in the curriculum? |  |
| * How will the observer be introduced to the class, or why that is not thought appropriate? * How will you give feedback (have you agreed a time and place for after the session) * How will you document any particular concerns either party has about the observation process. |  |

## Part C: Template for Stage Two – Online Observation

### The Learning Activity being observed

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| School / Division: | Degree/Qualification: | Level (FHEQ) |
| Observer: | Observee (Member of faculty/ External): | Module/ Course / Paper |
| Duration of Observation: | Date(s) of Observation: | Mode (FT/PT) |
| Number of students engaged with observation context: |  |  |
| VLE / Online context (Adobe connect, stand alone media, VLE course): | Type of activity  (e.g. lecture, seminar, tutorial, resource, activity) | Subject/Topic of Learning Activity to be Observed: |

**Introduction**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Were the objectives or outcomes of the learning activity made clear to the class?  Were the anticipated learning outcomes for the session identified?  Was the learning activity available to students as agreed?  Was the structure of the learning activity clear? |  |

**Structure**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Was the learning activity clearly related to previous sessions and set in the overall context of the Unit/Module?  Was the learning activity structure clearly evident and linked to the learning outcomes where appropriate?  Did the learning activity appear to be well planned and organised?  Did the tutor make appropriate links to employability skills and relevance to practice contexts?  Did the tutor provide appropriate guidance as to how the session related to assessment practices? |  |

**Methods/Approach**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Were the methods/approach taken suitable to achieve the learning objectives set?  What other alternative approaches could have been taken? (please feel able to suggest how enhancements could be made) |  |

**Delivery and Pace:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Did the pace and delivery seem appropriate for the students?  Were any aspects, in your view, dealt with too briefly/with too much elaboration?  Did the learning activity seem rushed/too drawn out? |  |

**Content**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Was the learning media used in the activity engaging and motivating?  Were examples, illustrations or scenarios given?  Was the learning activity pitched at the appropriate level for the intended students?  Did the content match the needs of the students?  Where you feel qualified to make comment, did the content seem accurate, up-to-date? |  |

**Student Participation** *(in each case if the answer is ‘no’ and you can see how this learning activity might be run differently please make suggestions)*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Were students invited to participate?  How was participation managed?  Did it appear to be carefully planned?  Did participation enable the tutor to check the students' understanding of the material/approach?  Did students have the opportunity to engage with each other?  Did students have the opportunity to contextualise their learning with professional or social contexts? |  |

**Use of Learning Resources**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What was the range of learning resources used to support the learning activity (visuals, audio, text)?  Were visuals used well, or how might they be improved?  Were they professionally produced and free from error?  Were they clearly produced and in a suitable font size?  Could the students download or print resources as ‘take-away’ (if appropriate)  Did the resources contribute to the session or detract from it? |  |

**Use of Online Learning Context**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Was the online learning context or platform suitable for the learning activity?  Did the tutor make good use of the functionality of the online context?  Could they have used the functionality differently?  Was the online ‘space’ accessible, easy to navigate and supportive of learners?  Did you identify any particular accessibility concerns? |  |

**Learning activity style and ambience**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Was the tutor visibly and/or audibly present to students (asynchronously/synchronously)?  Did the tutor appear confident in their delivery of the learning activity?  Did the learning activity appear to be delivering value to the students?  Did students take opportunities to engage with the learning activity?  Did the tutor have appropriate presentation skills?  Did the tutor seem sensitive to the "mood" of the students? |  |

**Audio-Visual sessions (Webinars, Skype, Lecture Cast, etc.)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Did the tutor convey enthusiasm?  Did the tutor vary the tone of their delivery?  Was the tutor clear and audible (if appropriate)?  Was there good rapport with the students?  Were students attentive/ bored?  Was the style of delivery or facilitation engaging for students?  Was there good eye contact with students/camera?  Did the tutor take the opportunity to engage and provide feedback to students |  |

**Summary**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Summarise the main points which you wish to feed back to the tutor.  Think about this in terms of the guidance YOU would want. Peer observation is a supportive developmental process, be positive and be honest.  Identify in particular key strengths  Note specific areas that would benefit from enhancement (make positive suggestions to discuss in the post-observation meeting).  Are they aspects of the learning activity you observed that you think will benefit YOUR online learning and teaching practice. What will you ‘take-away’ from this observation? |  |

Sign and date your observation notes so the observer knows they are complete:

## Part D: Stage Three - Post Observation Reflections and Action Plans for Observee and Observer

Name of Observee:

Name of Observer:

Brief description and date of Observation:

### Observee Reflections

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What three aspects of the session represent strengths to build on: 1  2  3 | Programme for development objectives: Specify here, in as much detail as possible, what actions are to be taken by the faculty member (this might be further reading, planning, consultation, attendance at development or training events or advice to be sought). |
| **Identify aspects of the session were less successful?**  1  2 |
| Identify areas for further development: |
| Identify Support and Resources required: |

### Observer Reflections

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| What three aspects of the session represent examples of good teaching and learning practice? 1  2  3 | Perceived Enhancements: What aspects of the teaching session, either examples of good practice or areas for improvement, have you identified that will benefit your own teaching and learning practice. How do you propose to integrate lessons learnt into your practice? |
| **If the Observee disclosed their development goals for the session at the pre-observation meeting, to what extent do you think these were successfully met and what enhancements would you recommend?** |

## Part E: Further Reading to support Observers

### Further Reading

Bennett, S. and Barp, D. (2008) Peer Observation – a case for doing it online. Teaching in Higher Education, 13 (5), pp.559-570.

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Swinglehurst, D., Russell, J., and Greenhalgh, T. (2008) Peer observation of teaching in the online environment: an action research approach. Journal of Computer Assisted Learning. 24, 383–393.

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