



**Birmingham City University International College**  
**NPR QS5 Teaching Observation**  
**Version 2023/01**

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## Introduction

This document sets out the Birmingham City University International College policy and procedure for the observation of teaching. It also includes the recommended Teaching Observation Form to be used in all observations in Appendix A.

## Scope

This policy and form may be used by senior staff or line managers as part of an academic's professional development cycle, or it may be used as part of a College's peer review procedure to share good practice.

It is recommended that academic teaching staff (labelled in this policy as 'teachers') have at least one observation as part of their initial probation period, while peer observations should take place at least once per year. Thereafter, the frequency of observation will be at the discretion of the College Director/Principal and will be based on a multitude of factors such as student feedback and module outcomes.

## Observation Process

The observation process has three stages: pre-observation, observation and post-observation.

### Pre-Observation Stage

Prior to an observation, the observer and the observee (teacher) will arrange to meet to discuss and agree the following:

- The location, date, time and duration of the session to be observed
- The aims and objectives of the session to be observed
- Any potential difficulties anticipated by the observee
- Any aspects of the session on which the observee would welcome feedback
- The time and date for the post-observation meeting

After the pre-observation meeting, the observee should record the details of the session on the *Teaching Observation Form (Section A)* and provide a copy for the observer along with any supporting documentation such as a lesson plan and handouts to be used during the session. The observer should read these closely prior to the observation, paying particular attention to any requests for specific feedback.

### Observation Stage

The observer should arrive before the start of the session. At the start of the class, the students should be introduced to the observer, making clear that the observer is not there to observe them.

During the observation the observer should:

- be discreet and unobtrusive at all times, sitting behind students wherever possible

- try to experience the session from the students' perspective as well as from that of a teaching colleague. This may include circulating the teaching space during student-based activities.
- take notes recording areas of good practice and areas which they feel could be enhanced.

During the observation the observee should:

- teach as usual, as if they were not being observed
- refrain from involving the observer in the lesson

As part of the observation, the observer should complete the *Teaching Observation Form (Section B)*, detailing any areas of good practice observed, and areas which could be improved. These observations should be expressed in objective and constructive terms together with suggestions for improvement whenever possible. This form should then be provided to the observee prior to the post-observation meeting.

### **Post-Observation Stage**

Shortly after the session, the observee should complete the *Teaching Observation Form (Section C)*, reflecting on the observed session.

Within a week of the observation, the observer and the observee should meet to debrief. They should ensure there is sufficient time given to thoroughly discuss the observed session. It is vital that both observer and observee treat this as a positive and developmental process, focusing on elements of good practice and constructive feedback.

The main objectives of the post-observation meeting are:

- for the observee to gain feedback on their teaching practice
- for the observee to ask the observer to explain any comments made on the *Teaching Observation Form (Section B)*
- for the observer and observee to agree on areas of good practice and how these could be disseminated to other teaching colleagues
- for the observer and observee to agree on areas for development and how these could be addressed

At the end of the post-observation meeting, the observer and observee should jointly complete the *Teaching Observation Form (Section D)*. Both observer and observee should:

- Ensure that they reflect on the best ways to share good practice with other colleagues. Some suggestions are:
  - Invite other colleagues to also observe teaching
  - Offer to give a demonstration of good teaching practice to other colleagues. This could be especially useful if the good practice is based on using technology in the classroom
  - Propose to lead a session at a professional development workshop
  - Create a short handout to send to other academic staff
- ensure that they agree on concrete action points for how the observee can continue to develop their teaching. Some suggestions are:

- Concentrate on certain areas for improvement and consciously change teaching tactics in class
- Concentrate on building new / different activities into lesson plans
- Speak to other colleagues to give suggestions
- Ask whether they can observe other colleagues teaching
- Attend professional development workshops at the University Partner and/or at the College

## Guidelines for Feedback

The observer should:

- *listen to the observee* – first give the observee opportunity to talk about the observed session, what they felt went well, what they felt did not go so well, and how they felt about the comments made by the observer on the *Teaching Observation Form (Section B)*
- *be positive* – focus on giving positive feedback first, emphasising aspects of good practice. Even if there were negative elements, try and focus on the positive first. If the observee is new to teaching, it is particularly important to focus on the positive in order to build up confidence
- *be specific* – give concrete examples from the observed session and try not to generalise. For example, instead of saying “You are good at giving explanations”, say “When you explained XX theory, the students clearly related to the examples you gave”
- *be constructive* – approach areas for development in a constructive manner, having regard to the observee’s opinions, and highlighting practical ways in which these areas can be addressed
- *be realistic* – do not provide commentary on every minute aspect of the observed session. Even if you do observe many areas for improvement, choose one or two areas for the observee to work on and give realistic and practical suggestions on how they can improve
- *be objective* – always focus on process rather than personality. For example, try to avoid saying “If I were you, I would have done XX activity like this.....”. Instead, acknowledge that the observee may have a different teaching style and make sure your comments are sensitive to this.

The observee should:

- treat the post-observation meeting as a discussion rather than a summative assessment of their teaching
- try to avoid being defensive about what happened during the observed session
- value the opportunity to have an in-depth discussion about their teaching from a colleague who may be able to suggest ways of improving
- appreciate that the observer will also have learned from observing the session and be willing to explain their approach and teaching methodology

## Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the Birmingham City University International College unless there are internal or legislative changes that necessitate earlier review. The policy was last reviewed on 10 January 2023 and approved as a Chair's action on behalf of the UPE Academic Board.

## Appendix A: Teaching Observation Form

(see overleaf)

## Pre-Observation

### Section A

This section should be **completed by the observee (teacher)** prior to the observed session and should be given to the observer before the session commences.

Teacher Name			
Session Topic			
Module Name / Code			
Study Programme			
Study Level	Foundation	1 <sup>st</sup> Year Degree	Pre-Master's
Session Type	Lecture	Seminar	Small Group Tutorial
			Lab Session
Overall Aims / Learning Objectives of the Session			

## Observation

### Section B

This section should be **completed by the observer** during the session.

Observer Name			
Observer Position / Status			
Observation Type	Probation / Performance Review / Peer (amend as apt.)		
Semester		Observation Date	
Week of Semester		Observation Time	
Session Duration		Observation Duration	
Number of Learners Present		Total Number of Registered Students	

## Aims and Learning Objectives

Considerations for Comments:

- *The overall aim of the session is clear and appropriate*
- *Learning objectives support the overall module outcomes*
- *Learning objectives are communicated clearly throughout the session*

## Planning and Organisation

Considerations for Comments:

- *The lesson plan is clear and sufficiently detailed*
- *The lesson plan is appropriately structured and realistic in terms of time management*
- *The teacher is punctual and organised*
- *Time is well-utilised and a good pace is maintained throughout the session*
- *The session is placed within the broader context of the module / programme (linked to previous teaching sessions)*
- *The classroom and learning resources are used effectively (e.g. writing on the whiteboard is clearly set out, presentation slides are clear and appropriate)*

## Teaching Methods and Content

Considerations for Comments:

- *A variety of teaching methods are used to promote learning*
- *The teaching methods used are appropriate for the level of the module, with differentiation displayed to account for varied student abilities*
- *The teacher emphasises and summarises key points*
- *The teacher checks understanding effectively and uses student mistakes constructively to facilitate learning*
- *The teacher encourages high standards of effort, accuracy and presentation in students*
- *The teacher shows a thorough knowledge of the subject content covered in the session*
- *The content is made interesting and supports the achievement of the learning objectives*

## Delivery

Considerations for Comments:

- *The teacher speaks clearly – appropriate volume, pace and language grading (for international learners)*
- *The tone and style used are appropriate*
- *The teacher shows enthusiasm and maintains learners' interest throughout the session*
- *The teacher maintains eye contact and uses appropriate body language*

## Student Participation and Engagement

Considerations for Comments:

- *The teacher maximises student interaction and participation (e.g. encouraging participation from non-contributing students, providing opportunities for students to ask questions and feedback)*
- *The teacher praises students regularly for effort and achievement*
- *The teacher maintains an appropriate level of class control and takes prompt action to address poor behaviour*
- *The teacher has a good rapport with students*



### Additional Comments

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## Post-Observation

### Section C

This section should be **completed by the teacher** following the observed session.

What do you feel went well during your session?

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If you were teaching this topic/session again, what changes would you make?

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Are there any other comments you would like to make about the observed session?

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### Section D

This section should be **completed and agreed upon by the observer and the teacher** at the post-observation meeting.

#### Good Practice Points for Sharing

*Highlight any ways in which good practice observed during the session could be shared with other colleagues*

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#### Action Points

*Highlight any ways in which the teacher could continue to develop their practice*

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Teacher Signature

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Date

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Observer Signature

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Date

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