

Observations of Learning and Teaching Policy

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External reference points	HE Sector agreed Principles under UK Quality Code for Higher Education 2024 Partner Institutions policies on teaching observations
Audience:	Academic Staff

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1 Introduction

The following policy provides the key information that academic staff require to understand and implement the College's policy on the observation of learning and teaching. This policy explains all the steps taken to ensure that the observation process is transparent, fair, supportive and constructive in terms of enhancing the quality of learning and teaching at the College.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to explain the process of observation of learning and teaching at the College. All higher education Academic Staff will be observed at least once per academic year. Familiarity with this policy will allow all Academic Staff to know what to expect and what is expected of them, so they can be fully prepared and equipped to meet (and exceed) the threshold quality standards expected by a provider of education.

The main purpose of lesson observations is to enable academic staff at the College to gain fair, transparent, and impartial feedback from a trained and experienced observer, to help them improve and enhance their learning and teaching practice. Lesson observations also allow senior staff to monitor the quality of learning, teaching, and assessments practices so they may identify what additional support or guidance may be needed to enhance quality and achieve optimal student outcomes.

3 Scope

This policy may be referred to for the observation of learning and teaching of all Academic Staff at the College as well as any partner-specific requirements on teaching observations.

All Academic Staff can expect to be observed at least once per year, except for new Academic Staff. They should expect to be observed within the first semester within their probationary period, as well as a formal teaching observation in the same academic year. The College may also be subject to observations from external inspectors and visitors which may fall beyond the scope of this policy.

4 Aims and Objectives

4.1 The aim and objectives of this policy are:

- To provide all Academic Staff with clear information and guidance on what to do before, during and after an observation of learning and teaching.
- To provide programme leaders, module leaders and any other members of the staff who might observe lessons with clear information and guidance on what they are required to do before, during and after the observation.
- To ensure that all observations of learning and teaching are conducted fairly and consistently and that all Academic Staff are provided with the same degree of support and guidance throughout the process.
- To ensure the standard and quality of learning and teaching is equivalent in all campuses and for all programmes.
- To assist the College in implementing and monitoring the effective implementation of its overall strategy and policy on learning, teaching, and assessment.
- To provide an opportunity for academic staff to reflect on their teaching practice.
- To identify and disseminate good teaching practice.
- To identify academic staff teaching development needs and link these to strategic improvements in learning and teaching through continuous professional development workshops.
- To provide evidence of the College's commitment to improving the quality of learning opportunities.

5 Type of Observation

There will be two types of observation carried out at the College. There are **Peer Observations**, where Academic Staff observe their colleagues. There are **Formal Lesson Observations** carried out by senior academics at the College, who may be the **Campus Deans, Programme Leaders, and/or Programme Coordinator**. In some pre-arranged cases, Partner Universities may jointly observe an OBC Lecturer as part of the Universities own quality assurance processes.

6 Peer Observations

Peer observation is a valuable tool for academic staff as it provides an opportunity to receive feedback from a trusted colleague on their teaching methods and classroom management. Through peer observation, academic staff can identify areas for improvement and gain new insights into their teaching practices. It can also foster a sense of community and collaboration within the academic department and promote professional development. The college has adopted this approach to lead to a more effective and engaging learning experience for students, as academic staff continuously strive to enhance their teaching skills.

At the start of the academic year the Programme Leaders or their delegate create a schedule of peer observations for staff they are responsible for. This will be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) before the start of the academic year. Academic Staff should observe each other for 45 minutes and give feedback to colleagues they observe using the College's Peer Observation Form in Appendix 5.

The completed peer observation form which may have names redacted will be sent to the Program Coordinators who will then send to the Programme leaders. The Programme Leader will then send the forms to the CAO who will review the comments with help from the academic quality Manager in the Peer Observation feedback forms and develop CPD workshops based upon themes that emerge.

7 Formal Teaching Observations

The formal teaching observation process is a useful tool for evaluating and improving teaching practices. By following this structured process, both the observer and the teacher can identify strengths and areas for improvement in the lesson. It provides an opportunity for feedback and discussion, which can lead to reflection and professional development for the lecturer. The observation process also ensures consistency and fairness in evaluating teaching across the institution, and it can help to identify any trends or issues that need to be addressed. A formal teaching observation process can contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in the institution.

8 The Formal Teaching Observation Process

8.1 Pre-observation meeting

Before an observation, there is a pre-observation meeting arranged by the observer. Typically, this may be an email sent to the lecturer to arrange a time and date to carry out the observation, and to get some information about the lesson and students.

8.2 Learning Outcomes

In most observed teaching sessions, Academic Staff will be preparing students to pass assessments when they complete a course unit or module. In most cases, the assessments will be coursework based upon an assignment brief. In a few cases they may be examinations. Academic Staff will need to demonstrate that the lesson being observed is related to one or more of the learning outcomes that will be assessed for the unit or module they are teaching.

8.3 Scheme of Work

The lecturer must provide the observer with a scheme of work or a time plan showing how the individual lesson fits into the overall syllabus of the unit or module.

8.4 Planning

Academic Staff should complete a lesson plan for their lessons when they are being observed using the template provided in appendix 3, which should include the following:

- Learning Objectives.
- Timed stages of the lesson (15 minutes).
- Activities of each stage including interactions.
- Relevant information on assessment.
- Relevant information on differentiation.
- Resources used for each stage.

The plan should include clear aims linked to the learning outcome(s) and the stages and activities of the lesson should reflect these. The Lecturer should email the lesson plan to the observer at least one day beforehand. Arrangements for this should be made during the pre-observation meeting.

8.5 During the Lesson Observation

Academic Staff can expect to be observed for about 45 minutes, but it may not actually be that long. Some observers enter and leave at will and the lecturer is supposed to ignore their presence unless called upon for any reason. Make sure there is a spare table and chair for the observer on the day of the observation if it is being conducted in a physical classroom, with a copy of the scheme of work, lesson plan and any hard copies of materials being used. When being observed, it is essential to provide a lesson plan. Academic Staff should explain to students that the lesson is being observed and the observer may wish to engage with them during the lesson. The lecturer should carry on with the lesson as planned regardless of when the observer enters or leaves the lesson.

The observer will expect to see the lesson proceed according to plan. However, there may be good reasons for the lecturer to veer from the lesson plan. For example, students may ask questions that require the lecturer to respond with explanations or even by doing some activities that were not predicted in the plan. The observer will take this into consideration when giving feedback.

8.6 Types of Evidence the Observer Looks for

The evidence that observers look for below has been designed to show how well the college LTA strategy has been implemented. Observers look to evidence the following five themes:

1. Evidence of effective planning
2. Evidence of students becoming independent learners
3. Inclusive engagement and participation
4. Expert subject knowledge
5. Development of higher-level thinking

8.6.1 What evidence is there of effective planning?

Effective planning in teaching is demonstrated through the meticulous alignment of the lesson plan with the scheme of work and the assignment brief. This ensures that the planned activities and learning objectives are consistent with the overall curriculum design. The lesson plan is structured logically, with well-staged and appropriately timed activities that guide students through a coherent learning journey. Additionally, the plan provides sufficient detail and clarity regarding the activities to be undertaken, and the resources required, allowing both the lecturer and students to engage effectively.

The integration of learning objectives within the lesson plan further ensures alignment with intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria. This alignment supports a targeted approach to teaching, ensuring that all activities are purpose-driven and measurable. Evidence of effective planning is also seen in the lecturer's anticipation of the diverse needs of students. Strategies are embedded within the plan to accommodate a range of learning styles and abilities, fostering inclusivity

8.6.2 What evidence is there of independent learning?

Independent learning is a critical indicator of teaching effectiveness and is evidenced when students are challenged to think critically and engage with the subject matter beyond superficial understanding. A student-centred approach facilitates this independence, placing learners at the centre of the educational process and encouraging them to take ownership of their learning journey.

Students are often observed working unassisted, demonstrating the ability to apply

prior learning to current tasks. Evidence of deeper learning emerges when students ask insightful questions that extend beyond the scope of the immediate learning objectives, reflecting a proactive approach to knowledge acquisition. This independent enquiry not only reinforces existing knowledge but also cultivates intellectual curiosity and critical thinking skills.

8.6.3 Is there inclusive engagement and participation by students?

Inclusive engagement is fundamental to effective teaching, as it ensures that all students are actively involved in the learning process. This is evidenced by high levels of student engagement, where learners remain focused and participative throughout the session. Equal opportunities are provided to all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities, fostering an inclusive learning environment.

The lecturer's ability to make the subject matter interesting plays a pivotal role in engagement. Through the use of innovative teaching methods, students are encouraged to interact with the material in ways that facilitate active participation. This inclusive engagement ultimately supports the achievement of intended learning outcomes, as students collaborate and contribute meaningfully to the learning process.

8.6.4 How effective is the teaching of subject knowledge and skills?

The effective teaching of subject knowledge and skills is marked by the lecturer's confidence and command over the subject matter. This includes the ability to respond accurately and comprehensively to student questions, demonstrating expertise and academic rigour. Reliable and up-to-date information is consistently presented, reflecting the lecturer's commitment to maintaining academic standards at appropriate levels.

Relevant examples are incorporated to illustrate complex concepts, making the subject matter relatable and easier to understand. Additionally, digital technologies are employed to enhance both teaching and learning experiences, supporting diverse learning styles and fostering engagement through innovative tools.

8.6.5 How effective is the teaching of higher-level thinking skills?

Higher-level thinking skills are integral to developing students' intellectual capabilities and employability. Evidence of effective teaching in this domain is seen in students' ability to critically evaluate concepts and apply theoretical frameworks

to practical scenarios. Through carefully designed activities, students are encouraged to make informed judgements, analyse data, and synthesise information from multiple sources.

Furthermore, teaching strategies foster the development of employability skills, encouraging students to reflect on their performance and identify areas for improvement. This reflective practice not only enhances learning outcomes but also equips students with the skills needed to thrive in professional environments. By cultivating these higher-level thinking skills, lecturers prepare students for academic success and future career challenges.

8.7 Lesson Observation Feedback

After the observation, the lecturer will be given written feedback on the following:

- Evidence of effective planning.
- Evidence of independent learning.
- Inclusive engagement and participation by students.
- Effective teaching of subject knowledge and skills.
- Effective teaching of higher-level thinking skills.
- Any other criteria the observer and lecturer agree upon before the lesson observation.

Observers can comment on any other criteria they wish e.g., the use of IT, but this should first be agreed with the lecturer before during the pre-observation meeting.

The observer will indicate with a tick on the lesson observation form (Appendix 1) which of the agreed criteria have been met by the lecturer. The observer must also write comments to justify the decision of why the lecturer has met the criteria. The following concluding judgements and feedback will be used to provide the Lecturer with a guide to the outcome of the lesson observation.

Finally, the observer will provide the lecturer with an action plan (Appendix 2) containing some recommendations that will help the lecturer to improve their teaching practice.

Lecturer Feedback

After feedback by the observer, Academic Staff must complete a form (Appendix 4)

expressing their views about the process and outcomes of the observation.

9 Quality Assurance and Reporting

To ensure continuous improvement and accountability within the College's academic programmes, the following section outlines the expectations for the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) analysing programme performance and discussing this at the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) where actions may be developed and monitored.

9.1 Programme Performance Analysis

The CAO will be responsible for the comprehensive analysis of programmes performance, focusing on key areas such as teaching quality, student outcomes, and feedback from teaching observations. This analysis should include both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a holistic view of the programme's strengths and areas for improvement. The CAO is required to report their findings to the AQSC as required by the committee for deliberations and where required also submits a report to the Academic Board.

9.2 Continuous Improvement

The AQSC will review the reports and provide feedback to Programme Leaders. This feedback will be used to:

- Enhance Teaching and Learning: Continuous Professional Development (CPD) will be structured around recurring themes identified in the reports
- Resource Allocation: Guide the allocation of resources to areas identified as needing improvement, ensuring that the necessary support and materials are available to enhance teaching quality.
- Policy Development: Develop and refine policies and practices that support academic excellence and address identified challenges, ensuring they align with the College's strategic goals.
- Implementation Tracking: Regularly monitor the implementation of recommendations from the reports, ensuring that proposed strategies are being enacted effectively.
- Impact Assessment: Evaluate the impact of improvement strategies over time, using both qualitative and quantitative data to assess their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments.

- Ongoing Review: Continuously review and update CPD themes and professional development initiatives based on new findings and evolving educational needs.

9.3 Reporting to the Academic Board

The programme-level reports will be consolidated into an organisational level report on the quality of teaching and learning, authored by the CAO who chairs the AQSC. This report will provide a comprehensive overview of teaching and learning quality across the College. The organisational level report will be presented to the Academic Board at the end of each academic year. This presentation will:

- Inform Strategic Planning: Ensure that the Academic Board is informed of the current state of teaching and learning quality and the effectiveness of implemented strategies.
- Support Decision Making: Provide the Academic Board with the necessary insights to make informed decisions about resource allocation, policy development, and strategic initiatives.
- Facilitate Accountability: Hold Programme Leaders and academic staff accountable for maintaining and improving academic standards.

Appendix 1 Lesson Observation Feedback Form (LOF)

Teaching Observation: Appraisal of Academic practice

Obersver:		Participant:	
Module:		Course Title:	
Module/Course Leader:		Time:	
Date:		Academic Level:	
Number Students:		No. of others teaching module:	
No. times session taught previously:			

This form is designed to help you explore your participants teaching practice. Part of the form will relate to things that you will see during a classroom observation but some of them will act as question prompts for your pre or post -observation meetings, to help you understand how your participant sees their academic practice.

Some criteria may not apply to your participant and where this is the case you should just indicate that with N/A

Observers look to evidence the following five themes:

- Evidence of effective planning

- Evidence of students becoming independent learners
- Inclusive engagement and participation
- Expert subject knowledge
- Development of higher-level thinking

Oberevers MUST justify with in each section the resason for there decision. This should align with the requirements of the Learning Teaching and Assessessment as outlined in the Learning Teaching and Assessessment Polciy and Section 7 of the Observation of Learning Teaching and Assessessment policy.

TEACHING PRACTICE – to be completed by the Observer

Category	Exceeds expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Needs development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of effective planning			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good alignment of the lesson plan with the scheme of work and assignment brief. <input type="checkbox"/> • Logical, well-staged and well-timed plan. <input type="checkbox"/> • Good level of detail and clarity provided for the lesson activities and the resources needed. <input type="checkbox"/> • Learning objectives integrated and aligned to learning outcomes and assessment criteria. <input type="checkbox"/> • Good consideration of the different needs of students and how they will be accommodated. 			

Category	Exceeds expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Needs development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of students becoming independent learners			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students challenged • Student centred approach used • Students able to work unassisted • There has been prior learning beyond the scope of the learning objectives • Students asking good questions to assist learning 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		

Category	Exceeds expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Needs development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusive engagement and participation			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are engaged • Students are given equal opportunities 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lecturer has made the subject interesting • Teaching methods help to facilitate engagement • Participation supports achievement of intended learning outcomes 	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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Category	Exceeds expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Needs development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expert subject knowledge			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students developing the ability to critically evaluate • Students developing the ability to apply theory in practice • Students developing the ability to make effective judgements 	<input type="checkbox"/>		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students developing the ability to analyse and synthesise information • Students developing employability skills and self-reflection on performance 	<input type="checkbox"/>		
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Category	Exceeds expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Meets expectations	<input type="checkbox"/>	Needs development	<input type="checkbox"/>
Development of higher-level thinking			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of effective planning. • Evidence of independent learning. • Inclusive engagement and participation by students. • Effective teaching of subject knowledge and skills. 	<input type="checkbox"/>		

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective teaching of higher-level thinking skills.			
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SUMMARY OF LESSON OBSERVATION

Category	Exceeds Expectation	Meets Expectation	Needs Development
Evidence of effective planning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Evidence of students becoming independent learners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Inclusive engagement and participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expert subject knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Development of higher-level thinking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overall Judgement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Summary Feedback



*A copy of this document should be given to the participant and **to the Programme Leader**. The information contained hereing should be used to inform the Programme level teaching and learning, strengths and areas for improvement. Programme level anlaysis will be reported to AQSC, and should in form the design of annulaised CPD plans for the programme.*

Appendix 2 Development Plan Agreed

▪ Teaching Observation: Developmental plan

Obersver:		Participant:	
Module:		Course Title:	
Module/Course Leader:		Time:	
Date:		Academic Level:	
Number Students:		No. of others teaching module:	
No. times session taught previously:			

This form is designed to record the commendations, conditions and recommendations agreed between you and the participant immediately after their classroom observation. A copy should be provided to the **participant, the participant's line manager (where that is not you) and the Programme Leader.**

Teaching Observation: Developmental Plan

The Developmental Plan agreed between you and your participant must be the result of open, non-judgmental discussions. Your participant may ask you for your expertise and opinion.

The plan is informed by the views of both you and your participant of their professional practice and by the appreciative inquiry that occurs at the debriefing session.

The completed, plan is **sent to the participants line manager (where that is not you) and the Programme Leader.** An anonymised version must be sent to the Chief Academic Officer for the development of all staff CPD.

It is the **responsibility of a participant's line manager** to ensure the development plan is completed.

Teaching Observation Developmental Plan

Staff Name		Please remove before sending to Chief Academic Officer
Observer		

	Issue	Proposed Action	Rationale	Others involved	Indicative Timescale
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

Any additional notes should be provided below:

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Is further observation needed	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>			
If the answer is Yes, the observer and participant must arrange the following:	Date of next meeting:	Click or tap to enter a date.	Date of next Observation	Click or tap to enter a date.

I confirm that this is an accurate record of the agreed conditions, recommendations and commendations discussed in the debriefing session:

Observer signature:		Participants signature:	
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Date completion	of	<input type="text" value="Click or tap to enter a date."/>
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Appendix 3 Oxford Business College HE Lesson Plan

Course:		Subject:	Level:		
Course Week No:		Date:	Time:	Duration:	
Module Lecturer:		Number on register:			Room:
Topic of lesson:		Lesson Aims:			
Materials, equipment, and resources required:					
Class Profile:					
	Lesson Outline				
Duration	Subject matter/content	Activities	Assessment (how learning will be recognised)	Differentiation (addressing all learners' needs)	Resources
Homework / Tasks:			Evaluation / Review:		

Appendix 4 Lecturer's Feedback to the Observer

Lecturer's Feedback to the Observer (
Thank you for your cooperation with the lesson observation procedures at the College. Please provide your comments below and then email this to the observer.	
Lecturer's Name	
Date of Observation	
Observer's Name	
Observer's email	
Do you feel that the observer's feedback is fair?	
YES/NO Please say why	
Do you think that you will change any of your teaching practices because of the feedback?	
YES/NO Please say explain	

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Lecturer			
Observer			

Appendix 5 Record of Engagement in Peer Observation

Date of Observation:					
Format of Observation (Tick)					
Online		Paired Observation		Team Observation	
Lecture		Seminar		Other	
Participants involved (Optional)					
Name of observer					
Name of observer					
Programme and class level					
Partner institution					
Points of Interest:					
Please summarise any interesting points arising out of this observation, this should include examples of best practice as well as aspects that would benefit from further development or both.					
Best Practice					
•					
•					
•					
•					
•					
Areas for further development					
•					
•					

•
•

Please send this form to the respective Programme Leader