



BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
NEW UNIVERSITY

EST. 1891



Teaching Observation Policy



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Purpose

- 1 This policy incorporates and expands the remit of the former Peer Observation Policy to include formal developmental/evaluative teaching observations.
- 2 The purpose of the policy is to promote a culture of continuous improvement, collaboration, and learner-centred teaching via effective observation and review of teaching practice.
- 3 This policy sets out the guidelines for observation and includes guidance on minimal expectations for what constitutes effective teaching and a teaching observation rubric to help inform the developmental and evaluative teaching observation process.
- 4 The benefits of teaching observations and their contribution to the growth and development of academic staff are supported by a significant body of research and it is a common practice for Universities to have a formal process of observation and review of teaching in a range of learning environments (including online and virtual settings).
- 5 The policy will contribute to institutional quality frameworks and processes, such as probation and PDR.

Applicability and Scope

- 6 Buckinghamshire New University's (BNU) Teaching Observation Policy takes a proactive approach to the support and development of staff to provide a high-quality educational experience in line with OfS, Ofsted and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies' (PSRB) expectations.
- 7 The teaching observation process will be inclusive, transparent and aligned with the University's formal institutional frameworks and mechanisms for performance management with a focus on enhancing the learner experience.
- 8 There are 4 widely recognised approaches to teaching or peer observation that are utilised within Higher Education (HE):
 - a. *Open Door*: Learn from conversations generated by watching others teach.
 - b. *Collaborative*: Learn from conversations generated by reciprocal observation of teaching.
 - c. *Developmental*: Develop teaching by responding to feedback aligned to criteria.
 - d. *Evaluative*: Skilled reviewers conduct criteria-based summative teaching evaluations
- 9 The policy notes the benefits of open door/collaborative and developmental/evaluative approaches within their given contexts.
- 10 Teaching observations can be used to:

- a. Identify and record good practice for wider dissemination.
 - b. Identify and record poor practice and facilitate its improvement through opportunities for support, challenge, and professional development.
 - c. Identify excellent practitioners with potential for further professional development. This might include developing applications for National Teaching Fellowship and/or soliciting their input to the development of other staff through delivery of CPD workshops and contribution to staff conferences and Learning and Teaching events.
 - d. Provide evidence of robust quality assurance to the OfS, Ofsted and other external agencies, including PSRBs, of the University's commitment to enhance learning, teaching, assessment, and other practices linked to students' learning experience.
- 11 The focus of the policy is on creating a strong University-wide culture of teaching observation that both identifies/shares good practice, identifies/records poor practice and supports the performance review and development of all staff engaged in teaching.

Policy

- 12 This policy sets out the processes and responsibilities relating to the implementation of teaching observation as part of staff development and quality assurance and enhancement across the University.
- 13 The policy specifies that all staff with teaching responsibilities will be expected to have at least one teaching observation per academic year.
- 14 The policy also expects that all teaching staff on probation should have at least one teaching observation as part of the University's probationary review process.

Teaching Observation

- 15 Teaching observations are formal activities that provide opportunities for colleagues to have their teaching practice observed by trained observers and/or experienced senior members of staff, who will identify good practice and provide feedback and guidance for ongoing development.
- 16 It is noted that observation processes also form part of requirements for staff development via the Advance HE accredited CPD-based Fellowship Scheme and taught programmes (e.g., PGCAP).
- 17 Teaching observations should be conducted using the University's teaching observation form and supported by the associated documentation and rubric (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3).
- 18 The Indicators for Effective Teaching document and Teaching Observations Rubric in the appendix provide a guide to support the teaching observation process. They are indicative

rather than exhaustive. They are primarily focused on classroom-based on campus teaching activities.

- 19 Teaching activities and observations that are online, asynchronous or virtual should be adapted accordingly to meet the needs of the learning environment. Teaching activities that involve dissertation supervision or thesis development – for undergraduate and postgraduate teaching sessions – should also be adapted accordingly.
- 20 The teaching observation process should include a pre-meeting between the observer and observee to discuss the teaching session – including a consideration of the learning environment and level of the learning experience – so that the approach to observation can be tailored to meet the needs of the teaching session, observee and observer. Details of this meeting should be recorded on the Teaching Observation Form.
- 21 Completed observation forms should be sent to the relevant School Director of Education for the purposes of determining training and development needs within their School.
- 22 In the event that the observation identifies an area or areas of particular concern, the School Director of Education and Academic Practice and Curriculum Development (along with the Head of School if appropriate) will work together to identify training needs for the colleague concerned, agree developmental actions and produce an action plan over an agreed period of time. At the end of this period, the colleague will undergo a further observation to ensure that appropriate progress has been made. Where the concern has been addressed, no further action is required. If there are still concerns about the colleague's practice, then the Head of School may refer the matter to the University's Employee Capability Policy.
- 23 School Directors of Education are required to report on observation activities within their School as part of their annual observation report to Academic Practice and Curriculum Development, who use this information to inform future staff development priorities.

Responsibilities

- 24 Colleagues with teaching responsibilities are responsible for:
 - a. Engaging with the teaching observation process and sending completed observation forms to their School Director of Education.
 - b. Participating in teaching observation, acting on any development needs and actions arising from the observation process.
- 25 Academic Practice and Curriculum Development (APCD) have oversight of the Teaching Observation Policy and are responsible for ensuring the teaching observation scheme is managed effectively and that documentation is kept up-to-date and readily available. They are responsible for:
 - a. Providing any training associated with the observation schemes.
 - b. Conducting observations as trained observers.

- c. Compiling yearly reports on the University’s observation scheme for the purposes of identifying priorities for future staff development and enhancement needs, and for sharing with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education as part of the University’s ongoing commitment to enhancing the quality of learning, teaching and assessment.

26 School Directors of Education are responsible for:

- a. Managing observation related activities within their Schools.
- b. Collating and producing termly reports on observation activities, which should be sent to APCD to inform future staff development and enhancement needs.
- c. Undergoing observer training and participating in teaching observation activities within their Schools.
- d. Identifying and nominating suitably qualified and experienced staff within their Schools for the role of observer.

27 Observers should be Fellows (D2) with experience of substantive teaching within higher education who have undergone formal training in conducting observations. They are responsible for:

- a. Undergoing appropriate observer training and maintaining currency as observers.
- b. Conducting teaching observations as outlined in the University’s observation policy.

Table of Definitions

Observer	Refers to the individual undertaking the observation of a colleague’s teaching practice.
Observee	Refers to the individual who is being observed.

Appendix 1: Indicators for Effective Teaching

Establishing a purposeful environment for learning	The lecturer is in the teaching space on time, ready to start with resources available, including in the VLE where relevant	Modelling professional behaviour helps communicate expectations to students. Having handouts and other resources ready, the space organised appropriately (e.g., to promote group work) helps create a calm, orderly and purposeful environment for learning
	The lecturer engages with students as they come in	Establishing rapport is a key aspect of promoting an effective learning relationship between lecturer and students
	Attendance is taken at the outset	Monitoring student attendance provides a basis for checking engagement and identifying students who may be at risk
Intent	The intention of the session is shared at the beginning of the session	The intention of the session is its purpose. What is this session for? How does it relate to previous/forthcoming sessions/learning activities and assessments?
	Session outcomes are shared at the beginning of the session Session outcomes are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant • Achievable • Measurable • Level appropriate (i.e., framed around appropriate task verbs) 	Establishing clear learning goals for the session is fundamental in focusing student learning appropriately (and provides the basis for effective formative assessment of learning at the end of the session). Student perceptions of the relevance of the learning outcomes for the session promote engagement.
	Make explicit links to previous and forthcoming sessions	Establishing clear links between sessions makes for a coherent learning journey and encourages students to make their own connections
Implementation	Use of a variety of evidence-based, active learning strategies of relevance to session intent and content	The session provides opportunities for a range of learning beyond traditional acquisition of knowledge (i.e., via listening, watching, reading) to include active learning approaches (e.g., collaboration, discussion, investigation, production, practice/application) which provide opportunities for students to meet session outcomes
	Learning resources reflect current thinking in the professional/disciplinary context, demonstrate good academic practice and model disciplinary and professional expectations	For example, resources are up-to-date, appropriately referenced and model good practice in relation to academic integrity and professional standards (e.g., confidentiality)
	Learning strategies are challenging and inclusive and accessible to all	Measures are taken to ensure <i>all</i> students can engage with their learning at the appropriate level to ensure they are able to progress beyond existing knowledge and skills
Impact	Use of a variety of ways of checking in-class progress and learning, e.g., via student activity, effective questioning, etc.	For example, use of relevant digital tools, gamified approaches (e.g., quizzes, games, etc.), student production activities (in hard copy or using technology), collaborative tasks, etc.
	Session learning outcomes are used as a basis for checking student learning and progress	Closing the constructive alignment loop is fundamental for effective learning – the outcomes were shared at the outset, how well have students achieved them at the end?
	Where relevant, links to future activities are made explicit, e.g., forthcoming sessions, post-class activities, summative assessments, etc.	Establishing clear links between sessions makes for a coherent learning journey and encourages students to make their own connections

Appendix 2: Teaching Observation Rubric

Rating	N/a	Requires improvement	Developing	Effective	Excellent
Purposeful learning environment		The lecturer is late. Resources are not fully prepared and available.	The lecturer is on time. Resources may not be fully organised	Well-established routine to ensure sessions start on time. Promoting expectations.	Strongly established and efficient start to sessions, reinforcing expectations.
		Little or no rapport in evidence, reducing the effectiveness of the learning experience.	Attempts to establish a rapport, but not always successfully. Satisfactory levels of student engagement.	Clearly established rapport, students respond well with good levels of engagement and focus ready to learn.	Highly skilled use of rapport to create a positive atmosphere that promotes high levels of engagement conducive to a productive learning environment.
		Attendance not taken	Attendance process not effectively managed	Attendance process effectively managed	Attendance process effectively managed
Intent		Some awareness of the need for an intention but is not clearly articulated.	Partially developed intention, no clear relationship between sessions, this is shared to some extent.	Fully formed intention and how this links to the session which is shared at the beginning of the lesson.	Intention is clearly embedded within the course and students are fully aware of how the session fits with the wider context.
		Learning outcomes are ambiguous, not constructively aligned, and not shared with students.	Session outcomes beginning to show constructive alignment, are shared but may lack clarity or engagement	Session outcomes demonstrate constructive alignment are shared at the beginning of the session.	Skilfully embedding constructive alignment in learning outcomes that are clearly articulated to students and are used to support learning.
		No links to previous or future sessions	Some links to previous or future sessions	Effective use of links made to previous and future sessions	Sustained comprehensive links made to previous and future sessions.
Implementation		A lack of engagement, and learning activities are not matched to the level of the students' needs. There is no evidence of active strategies, approach is exclusively didactic	Teaching strategies used create some student engagement. Few active learning strategies in evidence that are relevant to session intent and content, but approach is predominantly didactic	Tasks are challenging and match most students' needs to enthuse and motivate. Effective use of a variety of evidence-based, active learning strategies of relevance to session intent and content	Challenging tasks which match the students' needs accurately. Well-judged and imaginative evidenced-based active learning strategies are used to create high levels of engagement.
		Learning resources are not current and/or do not reflect good academic practice and do not model disciplinary and/or professional expectations	Learning resources, including digital, are current, show development in good academic practice and model disciplinary and professional expectations, but may lack consistency	Learning resources, including digital, are current and consistently reflect good academic practice and model disciplinary and professional expectations	Exceptional use of learning resources, including digital, demonstrating excellent research-informed subject knowledge and academic practice and model disciplinary and professional expectations to a high standard.
		Limited use of learning strategies that are inclusive or accessible	Developing inclusive practices to create an inclusive environment.	Good use of learning strategies and resources to create an inclusive environment.	Well established inclusive, student-centred learning environment. making excellent use of resources to support students' needs.
Impact		Assessments will not provide evidence that students have met the intended learning outcomes.	Assessments will partially help the teacher to know that students have learned the intended learning outcomes	Assessments have been used throughout the session and provide timely and valuable information of learning related to the intended learning outcomes.	Students have an opportunity to demonstrate mastery of the content through multiple flexible assessments.
		Superficial use of session outcomes for checking student learning and progress	Sufficient use of session learning outcomes for checking student learning and progress	Good use of session learning outcomes for checking student learning and progress	Well-established and skilful use of learning outcomes to determine progress in the session and uses this to adapt practice.
		No links to future activities	Some links to future activities and bridge to the next session	Where relevant, links to future activities are made explicit, e.g., forthcoming sessions, post-class activities, summative assessments, etc.	Use of links to future activities embedded and well-established, used successfully to promote future learning.



Appendix 3: Teaching Observation Form

Observee:	
Observer:	
Observer level of Fellowship: e.g., D2, D3	
Module code, name, and Level:	
Title/topic of session:	
Type of session:	In-person, online, lecture, seminar, practical, etc.
Session learning outcomes:	
Date/time of observation:	
Number of Students:	
Pre-session meeting between Observer and Observee	
Date/time:	
Details of discussion at pre-meeting:	

Observer's comments and feedback

Please provide comments in the following sections with relevant evidence.

Establishing an effective and purposeful learning environment

(E.g., establishing rapport, timekeeping, preparation and availability of resources, well-established routines and expectations for learning, etc.)

Intent

(E.g., sharing of session outcomes, evidence of constructive alignment, links to previous/future sessions and summative assessment tasks as relevant, etc.)

Implementation

(E.g., teaching strategies, student engagement, use of learning resources, including technology where appropriate, inclusivity and accessibility of approach, etc.)

Impact

(E.g., formative assessment strategies, checking of in-class progress, links to session outcomes, links to future sessions, etc.)

General comments

Please provide a summary of effective practices, identifying areas of good practice and providing clear suggestions for enhancement and/or dissemination of good practice.

Please also indicate where you feel there are areas for concern.



Outcome

Rating (please highlight)	Priority action to improve	Developmental action to enhance	Effective practice	Excellent practice
Description	Evidence of area(s) for concern	Evidence of developing practice with areas for improvement	Evidence of effective practice overall	Evidence of excellent practice
Action	Refer to School Director of Education	Action plan and follow up recommended (see developmental action plan below)	Suggestions for further enhancement.	Recommendations for dissemination of practice

Observer's signature and date:

Observee's signature and date:

Developmental action plan to enhance practice

Action	Strategies to support development	Timeframe	Actions met

Appendix 4: Equality Impact Assessment

An EqlA helps us to reach better evidenced outcomes first time. They analyse how all our work might impact differently on different people.

1. What is changing and why?				
The change is focused on a move from a peer observation policy to a teaching observation policy which continues to be valued as a collegial and supportive CPD opportunity, but also including formal developmental and evaluative observation as a means of driving teaching quality and enhancing the student experience and outcomes. This change is in keeping with the changing quality landscape in HE in which the OfS and Ofsted will be engaging in observation of teaching as part of their inspection and quality assurance activities. It also provides a means via which the University can evidence development of teaching staff as a means of demonstrably and meaningfully fulfilling the OfS B Conditions via effective staff development.				
2. What do you know?				
Observation is a well-established aspect of staff development and quality assurance in other educational sectors and already features as a component of the University's Advance HE accredited routes to Fellowship. The benefits of observation as a means of developing staff, enhancing practice and driving teaching quality are well evidenced in the literature (e.g., Hatzipanagos and Lygo-Baker, 2006; Atkinson and Bolt, 2012; Fletcher, 2018).				
3. Assessing the impact				
	Could benefit	May adversely impact	What does this mean? <i>Impacts identified from what you know (actual and potential)</i>	What can you do? <i>Actions (or why no action is possible) to advance equality of opportunity, eliminate discrimination, and foster good relations</i>
a) How could this affect different ethnicities? <i>Including Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>For students: inclusivity forms a central aspect of expectations for effective teaching. Improvement in teaching quality arising from the observation regime may have beneficial impact upon the experiences of students from different ethnicities and other groups of students with protected characteristics.</p> <p>For staff: It is acknowledged that some staff, including those with protected characteristics, may feel anxiety about formal observation processes. However, this is an issue for all</p>	<p>For students: To avoid disruption of learning, students should, where at all possible, be informed that a session will be observed prior to the session</p> <p>For staff: A respectful, inclusive approach to observation, requiring prior arrangement of observation, developmental discussions prior to and following observation and a focus on the observation as a developmental tool should ensure that due attention is paid to any particular reasonable adjustments required to ensure an appropriately inclusive experience for</p>

			colleagues and is not felt to disadvantage any particular groups.	the observee. At the same time, however, there is an expectation that teaching will be delivered in accordance with minimal expectations of quality.
b) How could this affect cisgender and transgender men and women (including maternity/pregnancy impact), as well as non-binary people?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above
c) How could this affect disabled people or carers? Including neurodiversity, invisible disabilities and mental health conditions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above
d) How could this affect people from different faith groups?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above
e) How could this affect people with different sexual orientations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above
f) How could this affect different age groups or generations?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above
g) How could this affect those who are married or in a civil partnership?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above

h) How could this affect people from different backgrounds such as: socio-economic disadvantage, homeless, alcohol and/or substance misuse, people experiencing domestic and/or sexual violence, ex-armed forces, looked after children and care leavers.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above	
i) How could this affect people with multiple intersectional experiences?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See above	See above	
4. Overall outcome					
No major change needed <input type="checkbox"/>	Adjust approach <input type="checkbox"/>	Adverse impact but continue <input type="checkbox"/>	Stop and remove <input type="checkbox"/>		
5. Details of further actions needed					
6. Arrangements for delivery and future monitoring					
7. Completed by:	Ben Brabon	Head of Learning and Teaching Excellence	Date	17/01/2024	
8. Signed off by:	Name	Position	Date	Click or tap to enter a date.	



High Wycombe Campus
Queen Alexandra Road
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP11 2JZ

Aylesbury Campus
59 Walton Street
Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP21 7QG

Uxbridge Campus
106 Oxford Road
Uxbridge
Middlesex
UB8 1NA

BNU based at
Pinewood Studios

Pinewood Studios
Pinewood Road
Iver Heath
Buckinghamshire
SL0 0NH

Missenden Abbey
London Road
Great Missenden
Buckinghamshire
HP16 0BD

Telephone: 01494 522 141

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