



## WC33 - Teaching Observation Policy

College Policy	
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## Introduction

This document sets out the Westerfield College policy and procedure for the observation of teaching.

## Purpose

This policy will be used by senior staff or line managers as part of an academic's professional development cycle and as part of a college's peer review procedure to share good practice. It is recommended that teaching staff have at least one observation as part of their initial probation period and thereafter, once per year with additional frequency of observation at the discretion of the College Director/Principal. The observation will be based on but not exclusively on student feedback and module reviews.

## Procedure

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

### Pre-Observation Stage

Prior to observation, the observer and the observee (teacher) will arrange to meet to discuss and agree on 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 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 before 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 it clear that the observer is not there to observe them. During the observation, the observer should:

- always be discreet and unobtrusive, 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, 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 of the form), 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. Both observer and observee must 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 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 positives 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 with 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. Academic Board unless there are internal or legislative changes necessitating an earlier review.

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## Version History

No	Revised on	Version	Changes	Approved by	Date of Approval	Revised by