**Observing trainee teachers: some brief guidance notes**

*These guidelines are intended to provide useful information about the process of observation and feedback for trainee teachers on the University of Huddersfield Initial Teacher Education programmes for Lifelong Learning*

In general, it should be a trainee’s responsibility to ensure that the required observations are completed. Mentors and observers may also be proactive in making arrangements to observe trainees. Trainees require **at least four successful observations** of teaching in each of the two professional teaching practice-based module ie. **8 in total.** Observers will need to take account of the stage of development of the trainee they are observing. For example, trainees in the early stages of their development may be focussing their efforts on the ‘basics’ such as planning, communication etc, particularly if they have no previous experience of teaching. The teaching portfolio as a whole, however, should show that trainees are able to address all relevant elements of their practice.

Trainees should be observed by:

* experienced observers (eg. teacher educators, college observers)
* university approved tutors
* mentors
* other subject specialist teachers

The combination of observers may vary according to the organisation but typically might include for each of the two teaching practice modules:

* Three observations by a teacher educator/personal tutor
* One from a subject specialist teacher (usually, but not exclusively, the mentor)

An observation would normally last at least an hour or the duration of the lesson if less than an hour.

**Before** the observation trainees should:

* Provide a lesson plan and copies of resources for the observer.
* Complete form O1: Preparation for Teaching Observation

**Form O1 Preparation for Teaching Observation**

O1 shows progress in a trainee’s development as a teacher and should:

* Include development points from previous observations and what has been done to address these in the current observation.
* Give information about the context of the planned lesson, the learners in it and any other issues which might be relevant.
* Indicate if there is something the trainee is trying out or wants the observer to particularly comment on
* Show knowledge of teaching and learning by the way the trainee explains the rationale for the lesson structure content and activities, assessments and differentiation strategies and how they will support literacy and numeracy in the lesson.

**Completing the observation form**

The observing tutor should complete form O3 Tutor Feedback on Teaching Observation (there is only one form for all observers).

**Form O3 Tutor Feedback on Teaching Observation**

* The strengths and development points section on the first page of the O3 Observation Form is intended to be a summary of key points made in the observation as a whole. **This should be individual to the trainee in the specific lesson observed.**
* The comments space on the next page is provided for observers to make narrative and/or discursive notes while the lesson is in progress, although some observers also use this space to provide a more summative commentary.
* The Subject Specialist feedback section is for mentors to provide specific subject specialist

feedback. Specific development points relating to subject specialist development can also be recorded in strengths and development points.

Statements in the boxes on the O3 Observation Form:

* refer only to the session being observed and not to a trainee’s general abilities as a developing teacher.
* are provided to support the standardisation of feedback from different observers.
* give trainees an explicit general indication of what they might do to improve their practice.
* are intended as suggestions of the sorts of evidence observers might take into account when making judgements about a trainee’s teaching and should not be taken as exhaustive.

Comments boxes are provided below each row to add further information, although observers should not feel compelled to write comments in each one. **Subject specialist mentors, for example, may want to focus specifically on the subject specialist element of the teaching.**

It is not a requirement for each of the rows to be completed in every observation.

Where sections are not completed, it would be helpful for the observer to indicate the reason in the comments box below the relevant section, for example:

* For pedagogic reasons eg. because it was not relevant or appropriate
* Because it was omitted or overlooked by the trainee

**After** the observation:

Observers should endeavour to give some verbal feedback as soon as reasonably possible after the observation.

Some tutors prefer to take the handwritten form away and type up; others may leave their notes with the trainee to refer to immediately.

Trainees should reflect on the lesson using Form O4 Reflections on Teaching Observation.

**Form O4 Evaluation and Reflection of Teaching Observation**

Form O4 should be completed by the trainee and will help the trainee to:

* consider the feedback received and how it might be used to develop their practice before the next observation
* complete relevant sections of the e-portfolio/PDP and grading documents

**Observations and Grading**

Individual lessons are not graded.

* The feedback provided by the observer on the O3 Observation Form is used by trainees and Personal/Module Tutors to inform the judgements about the progress towards learning outcomes and the professional standards of each of the teaching practice modules as a whole, along with other evidence provided by trainees in their teaching practice file which trainees submit for each of the two practice-based modules.

* When each practice-based module is completed, trainees self-assess against the 2022 ETF Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers. It is recommended that this process is supported by mentors. The Personal/Module Tutor will assess the Teaching Portfolio and this, along with the self-assessment including mentor feedback, forms the basis of a discussion with the trainee to determine the overall grade for the module.

**Weak or inadequate observations: what to do**

Teaching and learning are not always predictable and lessons do not always go according to plan. Where an observation is considered weak or inadequate or has not met acceptable standards for the stage of development or for the course, trainees should be given the opportunity to be re-observed as soon as possible. If, following the re-observation, there are still concerns about the practice of a trainee, the Personal Tutor for the trainee should be informed as soon as possible after the re-observation. The Personal Tutor should:

* discuss the issues with the trainee
* arrange for the trainee to be observed by a different observer

Where observers have any concerns about the practice of a trainee teacher, either in an observed lesson or more generally, they should contact the relevant teacher training team/personal tutor as soon as possible.

**Joint observations**

During the course of the trainee’s teaching practice, a joint observation between the mentor and the University approved tutor is recommended for professional development and quality assurance purposes. Where a mentor is new to the role it would be advisable that this should take place in the early stages of the trainee’s teaching practice.

**Further information about observation and mentoring can be found at:**

[**https://www.hud.ac.uk/the-university/teacher-training-partnerships/mentoringitelifelonglearning/**](https://www.hud.ac.uk/the-university/teacher-training-partnerships/mentoringitelifelonglearning/)