

**Teaching Observation**

**Participants Handbook**

**2019-2020**

# Introduction

***In light of the changes expected in the auditing and monitoring of quality within Higher Education, the gathering importance of TEF and the expectation that staff will be qualified within the UK Professional Standards Framework and maintain their CPD, the University of West London has introduced a unified, annual teaching observation policy.***

Whilst the information gathered from teaching observation will be used to help inform appraisals and various external reports, the process is designed to be developmental in nature so that we can recognise and record outstanding performances, to enhance the practice of individuals and ensure our student’s success.

This handbook gives you a brief guide to the process from the participants perspective.

# Terminology

Observer – one who is carrying out the observation, usually a member of the School/College senior management team who has received formal training from the ExPERT Academy

Participant – the individual being observed.

# Who is observed?

**All staff who teach** will be observed each year through the teaching observation scheme unless

1. They are registered on the Academic Professional Apprenticeship programme

The APA is extremely detailed and so will meet the needs of the annual observation.

# Who does the observing?

*The Vice Chancellors Executive Group decided that this should be led by the senior management team of each School/College.*

For teaching observation, it makes sense that this observer should be someone who knows the candidate and their subject area. Part of the role of the observer will be:

* ***to ensure that the candidate is keeping their subject matter up to date and at the forefront of the discipline concerned***.

# Who allocates participants?

Ultimately this is the decision of the Head of School/College as to who is allocated which participants. However, each school/college may take a different approach to this process and provided it makes sense locally, that is perfectly acceptable.

# Contact from your observer

As soon as you have been allocated to an observer, he/she should contact you to arrange a pre-observation meeting. This is an opportunity to get to know your observer if you do not already and to perhaps raise things upon which you would appreciate feedback and guidance. This may be something you consider to be innovative or outstanding or indeed, something with which you struggle.

The first meeting should be for about an hour and you should agree which session(s) will be observed (you may want advice about an activity, or to showcase some innovations). Observers also need to understand who your students are, how many times you have delivered the class etc. Your observer **MUST** complete an online form- [**Teaching Observation initial meeting**](https://uwl.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/teaching-observation-initial-meeting-2019-2020) which requests all the required information. You may suggest additional areas on which you would value advice and guidance and should ensure that this is noted.

Your observer will also want to understand more about your academic practice such as are you:

* a strong researcher who does not focus on teaching,
* an hourly paid contractor,
* teaching subjects outside your immediate area of expertise.
* In receipt of any special support (e.g. a personal mentor) or would you appreciate/benefit from it.

Once =the session to be observed is agreed, you and your observer MUST book at least an hour immediately after the observed session to do the debrief. Sometimes this is really difficult but if necessary, ***change the observed session*** because doing the ***debrief whilst everything is fresh in everyone’s minds is really important!!***

# Observation

Generally, your observer will only attend for an hour but if they have not completed the online form they need to complete, they may stay longer. You should deliver your session as normal.

Observers are encouraged to introduce themselves at the start of the teaching session, for example: ***‘Good morning everyone I’m XXXXX and I’m here today to share your learning experiences’.***

Your observer will either complete a questionnaire on line or on paper and subsequently transcribe it online. Which ever approach they use they will share a copy with you. You must be prepared that there may be critical comments on this form – it is designed to stimulate conversation and to help you become aware of the standards expected. It is not meant to be discouraging but to encourage you to see how you can enhance your standards even more. Remember even the best aren’t perfect and there is always room for improvement and this process is designed to help you be the best you can be.

# Debriefing discussion

The debriefing and discussion session should be arranged immediately after the teaching session observed. This should be taken into consideration when arranging the observation in the first place.

The debriefing session should be delivered in such a way to encourage you to reflect on your performance ‘What did you do?’ ‘What stood out for you in the session’ (positive and negative?’ ‘What could you do to be even better?’, ‘How do you intend to change your performance to achieve outstanding practice?’

You can ask your observer for advice and guidance or sell aspects of your practice as outstanding.

If the observation was straightforward, your observer may expand the conversation to explore your career aspirations and discuss other areas such as the use of technology, designing courses/assessment and providing feedback. **You will be encouraged to think about your practice holistically.**

After everything noted has been discussed, you should agree a development plan with your observer who will complete the online form-[**Teaching Observation Developmental Engagement Plan**](https://uwl.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/teaching-observation-developmental-engagement-plan-2019-). ***We do not expect to receive forms which suggest no excellent practice was observed or no developmental support is needed.***

The report will include commendations (where the appraisal indicates you have exceeded expectations), conditions (where the appraisal indicates you may benefit from some support or continuous professional development (CPD)courses) and recommendations (where you meet expectations but might still benefit from CPD).

If you have many conditions, your observer may deem that you would benefit from a further classroom observation once you have completed any required/recommended developmental activity.

Dates for this follow-up observation should be agreed during the debriefing meeting.

Having completed the online form, your observer will download a copy and provide a copy to you and your line manager to inform your appraisal.

# After the debriefing

After the debriefing meeting you are required to complete the online form to record your reflections on the experience – [**teaching observation participants reflections**](https://uwl.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/teaching-observation-participants-reflections-copy)**.** When you have completed the form, you should download it and keep it for your records as it may be useful in making a UKPSF or promotion application. It will also help us improve the process.

# When things go wrong

Some people may see teaching observation as a destructive rather than constructive activity, but it is rapidly becoming a process which is likely to be mandated by OfS/QAA and Advance HE in various situations. This means that sometimes, you may find yourself in a challenging or confronting situation.

***What do I do if my observer does not engage with me.***

All observers and participants are required to engage with the process and if they do not, this should be reported to the Head of School/College.

Where issues arise, you should maintain copies of any correspondence with the observer (date and time, records of emails, phone calls) to demonstrate their lack of engagement. Depending on the nature of the difficulty, you can be reassigned to another member of the observation team.

***What do I do if there is a clash of personality between myself and my observer***

As a member of your school executive your observer should be experienced at managing people effectively. However, there are always exceptions. Where you believe that your observer will not take an appreciative and developmental approach to your observation owing to personal differences, contact your Head of School/College in the first instance to discuss the situation. Where it is deemed the situation requires it, you will be assigned a different observer.

***My observer has not completed/shared the required forms.***

The process depends on the observers completing the forms and sharing them. If you find this has not happened within an appropriate period (the observation form must be shared before the debriefing) then contact your observer and remind them. It may be necessary to delay the debrief to allow them to do this but do not allow the delay to last too long. If the observer does not provide the forms within the time agreed, report to your line manager or the Head of School/College.

***My observer and I do not agree on the developmental plan required.***

If you disagree with the development plan the observer proposes, you should discuss this with them and try to reach a consensus. If not, the mentor submits their form but you should send your copy with your suggestions and arguments for them to your line manager.

Remember that no development is wasted and so being required to engage in some CPD is not detrimental. Indeed, the annual appraisal process requires individual to reflect on CPD they have undertaken in the last year and so this helps you meet those requirement.