

Cambridge Ruskin International College

CPR QS5: Teaching Observation

Version 1.14

1. Introduction

This document sets out the Cambridge Ruskin International College policy and procedure for the observation of teaching. The procedures apply in all Navitas UK colleges. The forms referred to in this document may be downloaded from the Navitas SharePoint Learning and Teaching folder. There are two types of teaching observation: Management Observation and Peer Observation.

2. Management Observation

- 2.1 Management Observation is the observation by a member of the College management team of a teaching session delivered by newly appointed members of academic staff during their first semester of teaching in CRIC.
- 2.2 The purpose of Management Observation is to monitor the teaching practice of new staff as part of their probation and mentoring process. Every new member of academic staff will have at least one Management Observation during their first semester of teaching.
- 2.3 Management observations are conducted by the College Director/Principal (CDP), or nominee from the College Academic Services team.

3. Peer Observation

- 3.1 Peer Observation is where a teaching session delivered by a member of academic staff is observed by one of his/her peers.
- 3.2 The purpose of Peer Observation is to help academic staff reflect upon, evaluate and improve the effectiveness of their teaching, and to benefit from observing the teaching practices of their peers. All teaching staff, no matter how experienced, are required to take part in peer observation.
- 3.3 All members of academic staff will be peer observed no less than once each year.
- 3.4 See Appendix One for further understanding of Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) - Guidelines for Academic Teaching Staff.

4. Observation Process

- 4.1 At the start of each academic year the DASS will ensure that each member of academic staff is paired with another for the purposes of Peer Observation, and the pairings will be distributed to Academic Teaching Staff via email. In successive years, the pairings will not be the same.
- 4.2 If any member of staff objects to the observation partner he/she has been allocated, this must be raised with the DASS within two weeks of publishing the list of pairings. The DASS will make arrangements to change the pairings as necessary.
- 4.3 The observation process, whether Management or Peer, has three stages: pre-observation, observation and post-observation. At each of these stages it is crucial that the observer and observee fully understand and appreciate the aims and objectives of the process.
- 4.4 Forms are provided by Navitas UK for both Peer and Management Observation. It is important that in Peer Observation, the process is confidential between the observer and observee, except for the final summary of outcomes on Form QS05.2, which is lodged with the DASS or delegate.

4.5 Pre-Observation Stage

- 4.5.1 Prior to an observation, the observer and the observee will arrange to meet (a face-to-face meeting is preferable, but the meeting may be conducted via phone or email) to discuss and agree 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 specific aspects of the session upon which the observee would welcome feedback;
 - The time and date for the post-observation meeting.
- 4.5.2 After the pre-observation meeting the observee should record the details of the session on Form QS05.01 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 prior to the observation, paying particular attention to any requests for specific feedback.
- 4.6 Observation Stage
- 4.6.1 The observer should arrive before the start of the session. The observer should sit in a position which is least intrusive but where he/she can observe the students. This will normally be towards the back of the room. At the start of the class the students should be introduced to the observer, making clear that the observer is not there to observe them.
- 4.6.2 During the observation the observer should:
- be discreet and unobtrusive at all times;
 - refrain from making any comments (even if he/she knows an answer or disagrees with something the observee says);
 - try to experience the session from the students' perspective as well as from that of a teaching colleague;
 - take notes recording areas of good practice and areas which he/she feels could be improved.
- 4.6.3 During the observation the observee should:
- teach as usual, as if they were not being observed;
 - refrain from involving the observer in the lesson.
- 4.6.4 Shortly after the observation the observer should complete Form QS05.1 detailing any areas of good practice observed, and areas which could be improved. These observations should be couched 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.
- 4.6.5 The observee should complete Form QS05.1 Part 1, reflecting on the observed session.

5. Post-Observation Stage

- 5.1 After the observation, the observer and the observee should meet at the agreed time in a quiet location for a de-briefing meeting. They should allow 30 minutes to an hour for this meeting. It is vital that both observer and observee treat this as a positive and developmental process, focusing on elements of good practice and constructive feedback. For Peer Observation the meeting should take the form of a conversation about teaching practice, whereas for Management Observation it will be a formal feedback session. It is not recommended to have the meeting immediately after the observation as this gives little time to reflect, however the meeting should take place up to a week after the observation.
- 5.2 The main objectives of the post-observation meeting are:
- for the observee to gain feedback on his/her teaching practice;
 - for the observee to ask the observer to explain any comments made on Form **QS05.2** Part 2;
 - for the observer to ask the observee to explain more about certain aspects of the session;
 - 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;
 - in the case of Management Observation, for the observer to be satisfied that the observee is a capable teacher as part of the probation process.
- 5.3 At the end of the post- observation meeting, the observer and observee should jointly complete Form QS05.2 Part 2. This is the only documented part of the process which will constitute a public record. 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 give out/ send to other academic staff.
- Ensure that they agree on concrete action points for how the observee can continue to develop his/her 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 partner university and/or at the college.
 - Research different teaching methods in journals/ on the internet.

6 Guidelines for Feedback

Giving and receiving feedback on teaching practice can be stressful for the observee, especially in the context of a Management Observation, but also for the observer in a Peer Observation context. To make this process easier the following guidelines should be observed:

The observer should:

- LISTEN TO THE OBSERVEE - first give the observee opportunity to talk about the observed session, what he/she felt went well, what he/she felt did not go so well, and how he/she felt about the comments made by the observer on Form QS05.2 Part 2.
- 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 positive 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”. Instead of saying, “You focus too much on the strongest students” say, “During XX activity, I noticed that only Student A and Student B answered your questions. Why is that?”
- BE CONSTRUCTIVE - approach areas for development in a constructive manner, having regard for 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 his/her teaching;
- try to avoid being defensive about what happened during the observed session;
- value the opportunity to have an in-depth discussion about his/her teaching from a colleague who may be able to suggest ways of improving;
- appreciate that the observer will also have learned from him/her, and be willing to explain his/her approach and teaching methodology.

Appendix One - Understanding Peer Observation of Teaching (POT) / Guidelines for Sessional Academic Staff

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