

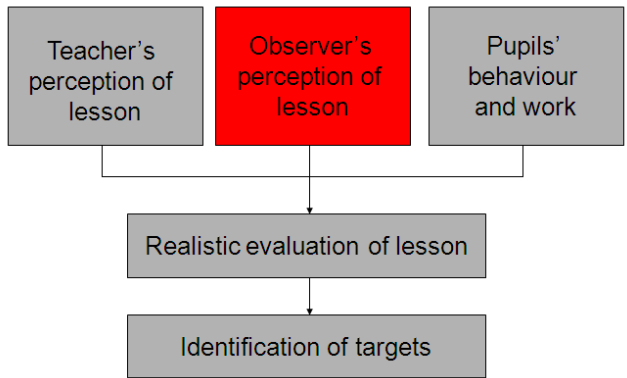
# PGCE LESSON OBSERVATIONS

Teachers in secondary schools often get involved in lesson observations when there are PGCE students in their department. This short leaflet explains the requirements and offers advice about how to make your observations effective. The leaflet was devised by school mentors and university tutors during a partnership day at the university in 2011.

## Thinking about the place of observation

The process of lesson observations and feedback is at the heart of school based training. In the PGCE course two thirds of students' time is spent in school and this is where they learn the craft of the classroom. Often students learn from watching good practice and trying to emulate it, but they also work out their own solutions and develop their own teaching style.

Observing and feeding back provides a powerful mechanism for identifying what is working well, what needs to improve, and identifying next steps. The diagram on the right illustrates how important the observer's role is, but it also reminds us that eventually the observer has to withdraw from the process of self-improvement entirely. By the end of the training year, most student teachers should be able to engage in planning for improvement without the need for an external observer to tell them how the lesson went, or to point out things they did not see or hear themselves.



It follows that in the early stages of the PGCE (SE1 and early in SE2) students may be quite dependent on the observer to help them reach a realistic evaluation of their lesson. Towards the end of the year, the observer will be mainly concerned with checking that the student's understanding is broadly accurate.

## Stage 1—pre-observation discussion

Because the role of observation is to help the student teacher to improve, it is important to start from where they are. The pre-observation meeting might be formal and take 30 minutes, but it might also be informal and quick. The purpose is to identify a focus for the observation. The student teacher should be clear what is being observed and what the focus is. The observer should have a clear view of what they are looking for and how this is going to help the student to improve.

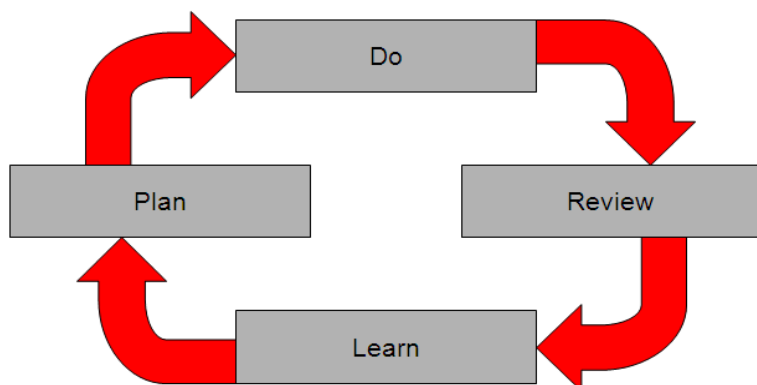
It is possible on occasion to do a 'general' observation, but these quickly become repetitive because strengths and weaknesses rarely change quickly. As well as discussion about the precise focus, you should also agree how

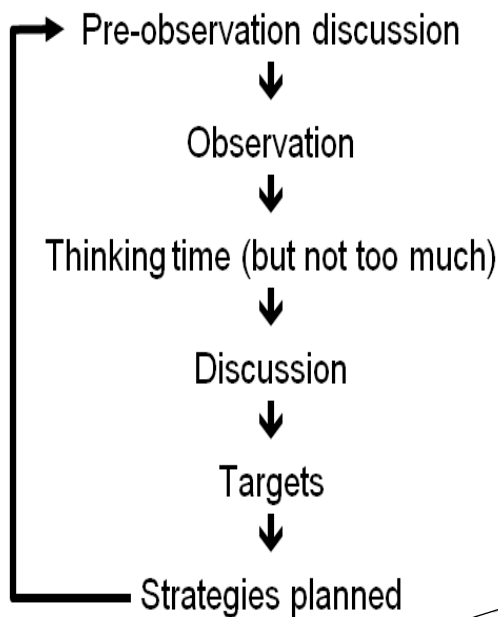
- the observation is going to happen.
- Will the observer participate in the lesson, e.g. through supporting pupils?
- Will the observer step in if problems occur?
- Will the observer be a non-

participant whatever happens?

It is important to agree:

- What** the focus is, and
- How** the observation will be conducted, as well as
- When** the de-brief meeting will happen.





## Stage 2— Observing the lesson

During the lesson it is useful to keep notes, especially in relation to the agreed focus. Think about what the student may not be able to see, e.g. note who is working, who is talking about the task, and of course who is not. This is especially helpful if the student is not yet very good at scanning the room.

You can hand these notes over to the student teacher at the end of the de-brief

meeting, but it is important not to feel you have to read through them all during the meeting afterwards.

The best de-brief meetings tend to focus on one or two aspects of the lesson, so as not to risk overloading the student with everything.

The first form is just for your notes—the ‘commentary’.

Form 1  
Write comments as you go...

Form 2  
A more reflective and focused summary

**“Arriving at one goal is the starting point to another.”**

John Dewey

## Using the pro-forma

As noted above, the first form is just to record the comments you scribble down during the lesson. The second form, the ‘standards sheet’ is intended to be a more reflective summary of the conversation you have after the observation.

There is not much space and so it is important to focus on the most important issues arising. It is also helpful if you have a

tight focus for the observation, so the comments you make on this form relate to the focus. This is then helpful as a form of evidence for the student teacher to demonstrate their achievements, and also to record the targets they need to work on for the next lesson.

Even if you are making informal notes, it is important to focus your

final comments on the overall judgment. It is not always clear from the lists of points we make during a lesson what we intend the main focus to be.

As a rule of thumb you should have form 1 ready at the end of the lesson and form 2 should be completed after the de-brief discussion.

## Stage 3— the de-brief

It is important for student teachers to receive timely feedback on lessons they have taught. This is essential to help them to effectively 'review' the lesson and identify what to do next. We recommend the following:

(1) Provide feedback as soon as possible after the lesson.

(2) Always let the student explain what went well and what didn't work so well first; the observer should respond to their explanations.

(3) Do not rush to suggest targets and future actions. Give the student time to think how they might change their prac-

tice. The observer might contribute suggested strategies during the discussion about practical next steps, but should not impose them.

(4) Feedback can be formally recorded on London Met paperwork, but this is only required once a week. Informal feedback can be captured in notes, or even just discussed in a de-brief.

(5) The mentor should be aware that student may receive different feedback and therefore different advice from teachers—this requires some moderation in weekly mentor meetings to ensure clarity is maintained.

## Strategies for the de-brief

### Questions

Most of the time starting with simple questions is the most effective way to manage the de-brief, e.g.

Can you explain why you ignored that question...

I noticed you extended the time for task 1, can you explain why...

Explain the learning objective to me...

How successfully do you think the pupils met the objective and what is your evidence...

### Observations

At other times, it is helpful to share specific points you observed and ask the student for a response, e.g.

There were two boys who didn't get their books out...

Some pupils didn't seem particularly interested...

Those girls spoke over you...

### Listening

The most important part of the de-brief is what the student says. If they are given space to say how things went and they summarize it accurately, you do not need to go over your notes, you can simply agree, note their strength in self-evaluation and move on to talk about something else.

### The Standards

**“An impossible set of demands which properly exemplified would need the omniscience of Leonardo de Vinci, the diplomatic expertise of Kofi Annan, the histrionic skills of Julie Walters, the grim determination of Alex Ferguson and the saintliness of Mother Teresa compiled with the omniscience of God.”**

Colin Richards  
(2000) TES

## Targets and strategies

Every de-brief should end with agreement on what the agenda is for future improvements. One way to think about this is to differentiate between a broad area for development, a target, and a specific strategy the student is going to try.

Target	Strategy
Work on your behaviour management	Devise a new seating plan with the tutor and implement it next lesson. Compare the number of incidents before and after.
Use AfL	Devise an activity for the pupils to practise self-assessment and evaluate the impact.
Use better questions	Plan a series of questions related to the learning objectives, identify level 4, 5 and 6 responses and specific pupils to ask.

# Lesson observation prompt sheet

This prompt sheet is based on the Standards for QTS. The questions have been written to help observers think about how a lesson observation might relate to the Standards. There is no expectation that all these should be used in a single observation.

## KNOWLEDGE FOR TEACHING

Q3 Is there evidence that the student teacher (ST) is aware of and trying to implement school policies? Are they wholly successful in this?

Q10 Does the ST demonstrate knowledge of a range of approaches to teaching and learning? Does the ST understand different strategies for behaviour for learning?

Q14 Does the ST demonstrate sound subject knowledge relating to this lesson? Are explanations and responses during the lesson clear and accurate?

Q15 Is the lesson clearly linked to the National Curriculum requirements?

## RELATIONSHIPS

Q1 Does the ST demonstrate they have high expectations of learners? Is the ST building good relationships with the class? How?

Q2 Is the ST acting as a good role model in this class? How?

Q4 Is the ST communicating clearly and effectively with all learners?

## REFLECTION

Q7,8 Is there evidence that the ST has reflected on their previous teaching and adapted this lesson to address weaknesses? Is this lesson better in significant ways than previous lessons?

Q9 Has the ST incorporated advice / feedback in this lesson?

## ASSESSMENT

Q11,12,13 Is this lesson appropriately linked to NC attainment targets or exam specifications? Does the ST understand appropriate methods for assessing learning? Is the ST aware of relevant targets for learners and does the lesson reflect this?

Q26,27,28 Does the lesson include appropriate assessment strategies? Does the ST have good assessment records for this class? Is the lesson pitched at an appropriate level for this class? Is there evidence that the ST has provided helpful feedback to learners, through marking or in the class? Do the learners reflect on their own attainment and progress?

## INCLUSION AND WELL BEING

Q18 Does the ST understand the needs of the learners in the class?

Q19 Does the lesson meet the needs of learners with EAL? Does the lesson meet the needs of learners with SEN?

Q21 Does the ST ensure learners are safe at all times?

## PLANNING AND TEACHING FOR CHILDREN'S LEARNING

Q22 Does the lesson / medium term plan include clear progression? Does the planning incorporate effective learning sequences?

Q23 Does the lesson include opportunities for learners to develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills?

Q24 Has the ST planned homework or other out-of-class work?

Q25 Does the lesson observed:

- Include a range of teaching strategies and resources?
- Take practical account of diversity and promote equality and inclusion?
- Build on prior knowledge?
- Develop concepts and processes?
- Enable learners to make progress?
- Enable learners to meet learning objectives?

Does the ST:

- Adapt their language to suit the learners they teach so they introduce new ideas and concepts clearly?
- Use explanations, questions, discussions and plenaries effectively?

Q30 Does the ST establish a purposeful and safe learning environment?

Q31 Does the ST establish a clear framework for classroom discipline to manage learners' behaviour constructively? Does the ST promote learners' self-control and independence?

Partnership documents are available on-line at:

[www.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/does/partnership/partnerships\\_home.cfm](http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/depts/does/partnership/partnerships_home.cfm)