



## **Observation of Teaching Scheme**

**June 14**

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## **What is the observation of teaching scheme?**

The aim of this Observation of Teaching Scheme is to promote excellence in teaching, learning and assessment and to enhance continual professional development of academic staff at the Royal Veterinary College.

This scheme is designed to allow excellence in education to be recognised and rewarded in the same way that research contributions are recognised and rewarded.

In most cases the observation of teaching scheme will build upon the experiences of a Postgraduate certificate in education course, but all staff are eligible to have their teaching observed and obtain feedback under this observation of teaching scheme.

## **Relationship to PG Certificate courses**

All probationary staff involved in teaching are required to complete the RVC's Postgraduate Certificate in Veterinary Education (PGCert Vet Ed) if they do not already possess a PGCert in education. Most PGCert in education courses include a requirement for students to have their own teaching observed summatively as part of the assessment for the course.

The RVC observation of teaching scheme is designed to build on these existing assessments to allow Probationary Lecturers to demonstrate progression in their teaching beyond the PG Certificate.

## **Probationary Lecturers**

Probationary Lecturers will be observed by an assessor during the third-year of their probationary period (the "assessed observation"). The assessor will either be the HOD or a nominee (for example the second advisor or a tutor on the PGCert Vet Ed course).

The purpose of the assessed observation of teaching is to provide evidence to the probation board of the staff member's contribution to learning, teaching and assessment in the same way that publications provide evidence of contribution to research. Probationary lecturers select the session that they wish to be observed and agree this well in advance with their HOD or nominee.

Probationary Lecturers can also be observed formatively by a peer, at any time. Although this is optional, it is highly recommended as it enables academic staff to reflect upon their own teaching skills with a colleague and to explore and share ideas with each other in order to improve the learning opportunities provided to their students. To gain maximum benefit from these formative observations the teacher may want to select a session which is new, difficult or in need of a change. These formative observations are to help the probationary lecturer to prepare for their assessed observation and so do not form part of the formal submission towards probation boards. See "Guidance of Observing Teaching" below.

Ideally, the observations in the PG Certificate and the third year of probation should demonstrate different educational approaches, teaching in different environments or development of outcomes from a previously observed session.

## **Relationship to the appraisal process**

As part of the RVC appraisal process, the HOD or second advisor will meet with the Probationary Lecturer at least once a year to discuss and record progress against agreed teaching objectives. This meeting should include planning for observation of teaching and discussion of the outcomes of the process.

HR will hold a record of lecturers that are required to enter the Observation of Teaching scheme and notify the staff member and their Head of Department in advance of their September appraisal meeting. Return of the completed observation of teaching form and appraisal forms to HR will enable the college to keep track of the progress of the scheme.

## **Guidance for Observing Teaching**

The process of Observation of Teaching can be broken down into three separate stages:

1. Pre-observation briefing
2. Observation session
3. De-briefing session

### **Step 1: Pre-observation briefing**

Prior to the pre-observation briefing, the member of academic staff being observed should provide the observer with the intended objectives of the observed session, select an educational framework for observation (see Imperial's observation guides<sup>1</sup>) and provide any resources intended to be used in the session. The pre-observation briefing meeting can then be used to establish any ground rules, set the scene, focus the Observer and to decide on practical issues.

As well as the overall objectives of the observation, the following should also be considered:

- specific issues the observed member of staff would particularly like feedback on;
- any new or experimental parts of the session where feedback would be valuable;
- where the Observer will sit/stand during the session and whether it is appropriate to interact with the students (perhaps to gain feedback after the observation session);
- how the observation will be explained to the students and how their permission was obtained;
- arrangements for the subsequent de-briefing session (see Step 3 below).

The Observer will record decisions made in the pre-briefing on the appropriate form (Appendix 1) *prior to* the observation of teaching.

### **Step 2: The Observation Session**

When observing a teaching session it is important to distinguish between events and interpretations. This allows the Observer to report a factual account of what they observed as well as what might have been interpreted by it. For example, saying "You seemed impatient at the beginning" is an interpretation and can confuse the recipient. Saying "You were tapping your fingers on the desk at the beginning. I thought you were feeling impatient with the students, is that how you felt?" allows

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/edudev/cedresources/peerobservationofteaching#observation>

the recipient to agree or disagree and highlights how actions may be interpreted. A time-log review page divided into two columns with events on the left and interpretations on the right (Appendix 2) allows the observer to record these events and interpretations.

To maximise the benefits of the session, the Observer should assess the teaching in relation to the educational framework that the staff member being observed has provided.

### **Step 3: The De-briefing**

Feedback should be given as soon as possible after the observed session. It is advisable to ask the observed member of staff to comment on how they felt the session went first, allowing them to say what they felt went well, and where the session could have been improved.

When the Observer is giving feedback, emphasis should be placed on the strengths identified, as well as sharing ideas for how the student experience might be improved. The feedback given should be constructive, i.e. focussed on behaviours and actions exhibited by the observed member of staff as evidenced by specific examples from the Observation Session. Generalisation should be avoided.

The Observer should be selective in offering feedback on areas for improvement. More than a few items of negative feedback can be de-motivating, reducing self-esteem and self-efficacy.

If, from the discussions, general points arise about the content of a module, the member of staff being observed should feed these back to the Module Leader.

The Observer should keep a record of the de-briefing and the outcomes agreed on the de-briefing form (Appendix 3). The pre-briefing, observation and de-briefing notes can then be used to complete the summary of observation form (Appendix 4).

A signed record of the pre-briefing form and the signed summary of the observation form should be forwarded to HR, within two weeks of the de-briefing taking place.

### **Training requirements for scheme**

All observers are required to attend the staff development course "Observation of teaching" (or have evidence of attendance at an equivalent training course) before observing any teaching session.

Training for formative (peer) observation is strongly recommended.

## **References**

Mackinnon, M. (2001). Using observational feedback to promote academic development. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 6(1), 21-28.

## **Status of this document**

SMG meeting 2008: Peer Review of Teaching Scheme early draft

Input from Stephen May and Paul Probyn

22/04/09: Final Draft Circulated by Ian Darker

28/04/09: Discussed at Academic Teaching Meeting

12/05/09: KW Circulated comments re summative/formative combination

18/05/09: Meeting to discuss implementation - discussion of above comments (KW and RC to re-draft in light of discussion

12/06/09: First draft (Version 3.0) of "Observation of teaching Scheme" discussed by KW/RC

22/06/09: Next draft (Version 3.1) of "Observation of teaching Scheme" discussed by KW/RC

09/07/09: Draft version 3.2 after KW/RC further edits.

16/08/12: Modifications in relation to RVC's PGCert Vet Ed and the new UK HEA PSF

## Appendix 1: Template for pre-observation session (for discussion)

Pre-observation form		
<b>Lecturer:</b>		<b>Date:</b>
<b>Observer:</b>		
<b>Intended objectives of the observed session:</b>		
<b>Educational framework chosen:</b>		
<b>Specific issues the observee would particularly like feedback on:</b>		
<b>Any new or experimental parts of the session where feedback would be valuable:</b>		
<b>Where the Observer will sit/stand during the session and whether it is appropriate to interact with the students:</b>		
<b>How the observation will be explained to the students and how their permission was obtained:</b>		
<b>Arrangements for the subsequent de-briefing session:</b>		
<b>Signatures</b>	<b>Observer:</b>	<b>Lecturer:</b>

*Please return completed and signed form to HR*

## Appendix 2: Template for recording an observed session

Observation time-log		
Lecturer:		Date:
Observer:		Page No:
Time	Event	Notes



### Appendix 3: De-briefing meeting (Observer only)

De-briefing form	
Lecturer:	Date:
Observer:	
What did the academic staff member feel went well?	
What areas/aspects do they think could be improved?	
What did the observer consider to be strengths?	
Selected areas/aspects for improvement:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
Discussion about how the academic staff member could address areas/aspects for improvement:	

## Appendix 4: Observation of Teaching Summary (Observer use only)

Summary of Observation of Teaching		
<b>Lecturer:</b>	<b>Observer:</b>	
<b>Date of Observation:</b>	<b>Department:</b>	
<b>Duration of Observation:</b>	<b>No. of students/trainees:</b>	
<b>Type of teaching observed:</b>		
<b>Briefing before session:</b> please comment on candidate's briefing (including supplied copies of resources etc):		
<b>Observed teaching session:</b> please comment on the strengths of the observed session and potential areas for development.		
<b>Strengths:</b>		
<b>Areas/aspects to develop:</b>		
<b>Debrief:</b> <i>please comment on the candidate's ability to critically appraise the observed session.</i>		
<b>Has the candidate demonstrated achievement of requisite criteria to pass the observed teaching element?</b> (see Appendix 6)		
<b>Any comments on the observation process/scheme:</b>		
<b>Signatures</b>	<b>Observer:</b>	<b>Lecturer:</b>

*Please return completed and signed form to HR*

## **Appendix 5: An example educational framework for observation**

Further frameworks for various teaching modalities are available from:

<http://www3.imperial.ac.uk/edudev/cedresources/peerobservationofteaching#observation>

### ***Teaching and Learning Strategies and Management***

- Identifies and responds to individual learning environments and student populations and sets appropriately demanding expectations for learning performance
- Establishes and effectively manages a good learning environment that motivates and sustains students' involvement and interest
- Plans and employs a wide range of teaching strategies (including the use of groups, individual lectures, lab work, clinical situations) appropriate to the level, experience, context and learning outcomes stated for each session
- Uses a variety of learning resources including learning/teaching technologies where appropriate
- Demonstrates knowledge of particular methodologies and procedures necessary for effective teaching of the subject/topic/discipline being taught
- Can justify the teaching methods used
- Able to demonstrate continuity and progression within the learning context and environment

### ***Communication Skills***

- Demonstrates effective communication skills
- Provides clear learning objectives which students recognise and understand in relation to the individual session and also the overall course
- Subject knowledge and understanding in the subject well conveyed to students and discussed
- Challenges and inspires high achievement
- Provides and stimulates high quality questioning
- Uses time and resources effectively
- Makes good use of support staff (practical sessions only)

### ***Assessment and Evaluation***

- Demonstrates understanding and awareness of different methods of assessment as appropriate to monitoring student progress and understanding
- Provides student with feedback in a constructive manner fostering motivation and self-esteem
- Critically reviews own teaching and takes account of student evaluation and feedback
- Demonstrates an understanding of the application and utilisation of monitoring processes to facilitate student progress and understanding.

### ***Subject Knowledge and Subject Application***

- Demonstrates understanding appropriate to the demands of the subject/discipline for the relevant level of student, of the knowledge, concepts and skills being taught
- Plans sessions within teaching programmes, which make appropriate linkages to other parts of the course and recognise the research-teaching nexus
- Shows awareness of potential areas of learning difficulty within the subject/topic/discipline
- Shows awareness of ethical issues and professional values relating to learning and teaching

## Appendix 6: Overall Assessment Guidance

### To achieve the threshold 'pass' judgment candidates should demonstrate

- that students (and clients where appropriate) were aware of (and had agreed / consented to) the observation taking place
- that they have met the prior 'briefing' requirements
- appropriate and effective design and implementation of at least one prepared teaching/ supervision session which is likely to enable most students to achieved the intended outcomes<sup>2</sup>
- appropriate professional values and behaviours<sup>3</sup>
- the ability to provide a considered rationale for the approach(es) adopted and to analyse and critique<sup>4</sup>:
  - a. the characteristic features of the observed learning environment;
  - b. the teaching /supervision approach(es) selected;
  - c. student engagement and / or responses to the session;
  - d. their own performance and identify and discuss ways in which they might enhance future performance

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*You will be expected to demonstrate the activities, knowledge and values expected of Registered Practitioners and Registered Associate Practitioners of the Higher Education Academy's UK Professional Standards Framework ([www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf)):*

#### <sup>2</sup> Areas of Activity

- Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study
- Teach and/or support learning
- Assess and give feedback to learners
- Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance
- Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices

#### <sup>3</sup> Professional Values

- Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities
- Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners
- Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development
- Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice

#### <sup>4</sup> Core Knowledge

- The subject material
- Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme
- How students learn, both generally and within their subject/ disciplinary area(s)
- The use and value of appropriate learning technologies
- Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching
- The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching