



**Higher Education Services
Teaching Observation
Policy**

July 2025

DOCUMENT INFORMATION AND VERSION CONTROL

Name of policy/procedure: Higher Education Services Teaching Observation Policy

Document owner: Director of Academic Affairs

Date of creation: 28th July 2025

Equality Impact Assessment date and reference: 28th July 2025

Date of last review: 28th July 2025

Reviewed by: Prof. Dr Alison Watson

Date of next review: 28th July 2026

Related documents: Academic Annual Development Plan

Version	Author	Date	Brief summary of changes
1	A. Watson	28/07/25	Original version

Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	4
2.0 Aims.....	4
3.0 Principles.....	4
4.0 Definitions of Observations.....	4
5.0 Criteria for Developmental Observation.....	4
5.1 Areas of Activity.....	5
5.2 Core Knowledge.....	5
5.3 Professional Values.....	5
5.4 Process.....	5
6.0 Criteria for Collaborative Observation.....	6
6.1 Voluntary.....	6
6.2 Agreed Purpose and Focus.....	6
6.3 Pre-Observation Conversation.....	6
6.4 Respectful Presence.....	6
6.5 Constructive Feedback.....	6
6.6 Reciprocal Roles.....	6
6.7 Confidentiality and Trust.....	6
7.0 Frequency.....	6
8.0 Impact.....	6
9.0 Monitoring of the Policy.....	7
Appendix.....	8
Developmental Observation Form 2025-2026.....	8
Developmental Observation (Supervision) Form 2025-2026.....	11

Higher Education Services Teaching Observation Policy

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The policy provides an outline on FutureLearn's commitment to fostering teaching excellence and supporting continuous professional development through structured teaching observations. Its primary aim is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, creating a holistic and enriching educational experience that leads to positive outcomes for all students. It also ensures full alignment with the Office for Students (OfS) regulatory requirements and upholds academic standards while actively promoting the development and enhancement of teaching practices to deliver a high-quality educational experience.

2.0 Aims

2.1 The policy aims to promote a culture of continuous improvement in teaching practice, taking a learner-centred approach.

2.2 The policy outlines the minimum expectations of lecturers when teaching and provides guidance informing development through observation.

2.3 The policy contributes to FutureLearn's quality framework and processes.

3.0 Principles

3.1 Identify and document examples of effective practice to enable broader sharing and adoption across the institution.

3.2 Recognise and address areas of lower performance by facilitating constructive support, professional challenge, and tailored development opportunities.

3.3 Highlight outstanding practitioners with potential for further growth. This may include supporting applications for the Advance HE fellowships or inviting their contributions to staff development through CPD workshops, conferences, and Learning and Teaching initiatives.

3.4 Demonstrate clear evidence of quality assurance to regulatory bodies such as the OfS, and relevant PSRBs, affirming FutureLearn's ongoing commitment to enhancing learning, teaching, assessment, and all aspects of the student experience.

4.0 Definitions of Observations

4.1 Collaborative Observation takes place where lecturers learn from each other through reciprocal observation of synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods.

4.2 Developmental Observation is undertaken by line managers and provides lecturers with feedback aligned to the teaching observation criteria shown in the appendix.

5.0 Criteria for Developmental Observation

The criteria has been developed based on the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).

5.1 Areas of Activity

- A1 Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study.
- A2 Teach and/or support learning.
- A3 Assess and give feedback to learners.
- A4 Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance.
- A5 Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.

5.2 Core Knowledge

- K1 The subject material.
- K2 Appropriate methods for teaching and learning in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme.
- K3 How students learn, both generally and within their subject/ disciplinary area(s).
- K4 The use and value of appropriate learning technologies.
- K5 Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching.
- K6 The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching

5.3 Professional Values

- V1 Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities.
- V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.
- V3 Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development.
- V4 Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice.

5.4 Process

5.4.1 The [developmental observations](#) are conducted by line managers or experienced staff. They can include observation of:

- Online seminar sessions.
- [1-2-1 supervisory meetings](#) (dissertations, projects or study skills).
- Discussion forum posts and engagement.
- Authorship of content.

5.4.2 Observations will last no longer than one hour and remain confidential unless there is a safeguarding or health and safety risk.

5.4.3 The line manager will inform the lecturer of their observation five days before the observation is conducted. The line manager and lecturer will agree on a focus for the observation, this could include a general full observation or a focus on a particular area, for instance the use of technology to engage learners.

5.4.4 During the observation the line manager will complete the observation form and record areas of good practice and areas for development.

5.4.5 The line manager will debrief the lecturer using the recorded form as a source of information and note the response from the lecturer. Any professional development actions will be agreed upon.

5.4.6 The completed form will be sent to the Academic Quality Team Lead and stored on file for a maximum period of 24 months.

6.0 Criteria for Collaborative Observation

6.1 Voluntary

Participation is optional and based on mutual interest. Observations are viewed as a joint professional development opportunity, not a judgmental exercise.

6.2 Agreed Purpose and Focus

Lecturers agree on what aspect of teaching to focus on (e.g. managing group work, encouraging participation, integrating technology).

6.3 Pre-Observation Conversation

A relaxed chat beforehand to share lesson context, learning outcomes, and any elements the lecturer would like feedback on.

6.4 Respectful Presence

The observer remains discreet and non-disruptive.

6.5 Constructive Feedback

A friendly debrief shortly after the session highlights effective strategies, engaging moments, and thoughtful questions. Reflections are shared with empathy, focusing on insights and ideas rather than critique.

6.6 Reciprocal Roles

Where possible, both lecturers observe each other, creating a culture of mutual growth and shared expertise.

6.7 Confidentiality and Trust

Observations and feedback remain between participants unless both agree to share learnings more widely. A safe space is preserved for honest reflection and experimentation.

7.0 Frequency

7.1 The frequency of the developmental observation is annual unless there are concerns raised with regards to the standard of teaching and/or support.

7.2 Collaborative observations are encouraged annually as good practice and for all new faculty.

8.0 Impact

8.1 The impact of the observation policy will be monitored against module performance statistics, learner feedback and overall programme data.

9.0 Monitoring of the Policy

9.1 A report summarising the observation process will be submitted to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee annually, recording good practice, areas for individual development and themed areas for directorate-wide development.

9.2 The policy will be reviewed annually by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee.

Appendix

Developmental Observation Form 2025-2026

Name of Lecturer:	
Name of Observer:	
Module Name:	
Title of Observed Session:	
Session Learning Outcomes:	
Date / Time of Observation:	
Number of Students:	

The comment boxes have been based around the **Areas of Activity** criteria in the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF):

- A1 Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study.
- A2 Teach and/or support learning.
- A3 Assess and give feedback to learners.
- A4 Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance.
- A5 Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.

When commenting on these criteria you should also make explicit reference to where the relevant UKPSF Core Knowledge criteria has been demonstrated and identify which Professional Values criteria underpin the participant's academic practice:

Core Knowledge

- K1 The subject material.
- K2 Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme.
- K3 How students learn, both generally and within their subject/ disciplinary area(s).
- K4 The use and value of appropriate learning technologies.
- K5 Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching.
- K6 The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching.

Professional Values

- V1 Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities.
- V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.
- V3 Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development.
- V4 Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice.

Focus of observation: (agreed in advance could include a full observation of the module or a focused area, e.g. technology)

Design and planning of learning activities (UKPSF A1)
(for example, learning outcomes shared, logical selection of content, appropriate activities and discussions)

Teaching and/or supporting student learning (UKPSF A2)
(for example, tone of the session is appropriate to the level or learner, methods and activities are engaging, delivery and pace keeps learners on track)

Assessment and giving feedback to learners (UKPSF A3)
(for example, effective opportunities in synchronous sessions to check knowledge, assessment of learning through discussion posts)

<p>Developing effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance (UKPSF A4)</p> <p>(for example, use of the VLE and engagement shown, technology enhanced teaching and learning activities, meeting the needs of individuals learners)</p>
<p>Other comments and things to consider for the future</p> <p>(overall summary of the session and benchmarking against the UKPSF Professional Values, areas of good practice, areas of development and professional development needs identified)</p>
<p>Response from the lecturer</p> <p>(for example, feelings, opportunities for development, any changes noted to practice moving forwards)</p>

Developmental Observation (Supervision) Form 2025-2026

Name of Lecturer:	
Name of Observer:	
Module Name:	
Title of Observed Session:	
Session Learning Outcomes:	
Date / Time of Observation:	
Number of Students:	

The comment boxes have been based around the **Areas of Activity** criteria in the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF):

- A1 Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study.
- A2 Teach and/or support learning.
- A3 Assess and give feedback to learners.
- A4 Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance.
- A5 Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.

When commenting on these criteria you should also make explicit reference to where the relevant UKPSF Core Knowledge criteria have been demonstrated and identify which Professional Values criteria underpin the participant's academic practice:

Core Knowledge

- K1 The subject material.
- K2 Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme.
- K3 How students learn, both generally and within their subject/ disciplinary area(s).
- K4 The use and value of appropriate learning technologies.
- K5 Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching.
- K6 The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching.

Professional Values

- V1 Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities.
- V2 Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners.
- V3 Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development.

V4 Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice.

Focus of observation: (supervision meeting)

Design and planning of learning activities (UKPSF A1)

(for example, evidence of the supervisor knowing at which point the student is at in their project and planning accordingly. This could include preparing and sharing best practice, pre-reading draft work and planning questioning and knowledge checking).

Teaching and/or supporting student learning (UKPSF A2)

(for example, tone of the session is appropriate to the level or learner, discussions are engaging, delivery and pace keeps learners on track)

Assessment and giving feedback to learners (UKPSF A3)

(for example, effective opportunities to check knowledge and progress of the project and ethical approvals)

Developing effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance (UKPSF A4)

(for example, use of virtual engagement technology, supervision, coaching and/or mentoring techniques shown thus meeting the needs of individuals learners)

Other comments and things to consider for the future

(overall summary of the session and benchmarking against the UKPSF Professional Values, areas of good practice, areas of development and professional development needs identified)

Response from the lecturer

(for example, feelings, opportunities for development, any changes noted to practice moving forwards)