



University of South Wales

Reflection and Observation of Practice Scheme 2018 - 2021

Staff Handbook

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Policy Statement

The Reflection and Observation of Practice Scheme has been created to support academic staff development in all aspects of learning, teaching and assessment.

The Scheme has been approved by the University Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee and as such it is a mandatory element of academic staff development that must be appropriately resourced by Faculties, and engaged with by all staff eligible to participate. The resources committed to the Scheme are:

- Appropriate allocation of staff time¹ for all those eligible to participate as Observees and Observers
- The role of the Faculty Head of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience (HoLTSE) associated with the Scheme in the facilitation of pairing, monitoring and reporting of engagement
- The role of CELT in providing staff development and training and maintaining appropriate Scheme guidance

¹ Within the time allocated for Professional Duties in the Academic Workload Model

Aim of the Scheme

The aim of the Reflection and Observation of Practice Scheme is to facilitate the sharing of critical reflective practice between colleagues as part of their staff development activity. The Scheme has been designed to provide staff teaching USW academic content to participate in an open and honest reflection of their practice in a shared, confidential, space. The Scheme promotes collegiality and respect while providing staff who teach on USW courses the opportunity to reflect on their practice. It also contributes towards evidence for recognition and remaining in good standing for current and aspirational Fellowships.

Staff Participating in the Scheme

The Reflection and Observation of Practice Scheme (ROPS) applies to all staff in the University of South Wales Group who deliver any element of the Group's academic portfolio. The scheme includes staff on full time, part time, fractional and hourly paid contracts but does not extend to those providing expert lectures, seminars or other expert tuition as guests of the University or its partner colleges.

Confidentiality

The Reflection and Observation of Practice Scheme (ROPS) is a partnership between the observer and observee which operates within a professional environment, taking a mutually respectful, confidential approach. Whilst the content of conversations (in all formats) between observees and observers remain confidential, there are situations when confidentiality may be extended for the protection of students or staff in line with the requirements of employers to demonstrate a duty of care. These are:

- If either the observer or observee has concerns that either is at risk of harm to themselves or others
- If either the observer or observee believes that students are at risk if they do not raise concerns about behaviour or activities

Prior to raising concerns that may lead to confidentiality being extended, and for further guidance, please discuss your concerns with your Faculty HoLTSE.

Pairing of observers and observees

Observees will select a colleague as their peer observer, from across the University group. Observers will be required to undertake development in advance of carrying out any observations. Recruitment to the role of observer will be open to all HE academic staff working for the University group. The pairing will be facilitated by the Faculty HoLTSE/RWCMD Head of Learning and Teaching.

The observer needs to be able to give appropriate advice and/or guidance regarding the practice with which the observee wishes to engage as the topic of their ROPS observation.

Observers will be staff who are appropriately experienced to engage with the observee on their chosen activity. Observer development is facilitated through CELT. Line managers will not act as observers unless specifically invited to do so by an observee. Where this is the case, the relationship will be one of mutual reflection on practice and not of hierarchical dominance. Observees are free to choose observers from outside their immediate School or Faculty if this would facilitate their reflection and observation.

The Faculty HoLTSE or RWCMD Head of Learning and Teaching will assist colleagues in identifying suitable observers where appropriate.

Themes for reflection and observation

The breadth of activities included in the scheme is one of its strengths. Colleagues are encouraged to reflect critically on any aspect of their academic practice and how this relates to their practice in relation to teaching and/or supporting learning. The scheme is intended to cover all types of teaching-related activity, and not only classroom or laboratory-based sessions. All methods of delivery, for example face to face, online, team-teaching and blended-learning, where appropriate, are fully covered by the scheme.

Activities may include

- planning and conceptualisation of the learning opportunity (including teaching programmes, module plans and student handbooks)
- development of assessment models and marking practices
- development of learning and teaching materials designed to address inclusivity in the curriculum
- lectures, tutorials, practice based workshops or seminars
- delivery offered via the online learning environment (including the use of online discussion groups, blogs, wikis, and other social networking tools).

Where observation takes place in a taught class (at least once in each two-year cycle) observers and observees will agree any specific elements of teaching practice on which the observee requests specific feedback whatever approach is taken in the taught session. Critical reflection (whether in discussion or as part of a taught class observation) should address the following five strands underpinning the USW Student Experience Plan:

- Learner engagement
- Inclusive and accessible practice
- Learning resources (to include physical and digital resources)
- Relevance to the local context of the learners
- Use of research to inform teaching

How often reflection and observation takes place

The ROP Scheme operates on a two year cycle with colleagues expected to engage each year. Colleagues will be observed in a taught class setting at least once in each two year cycle.

Pre-meeting arrangements

Observees and observers will agree the date and time for the observation and reflection to take place.

It is suggested that that a pre-meeting takes place in order that the observee and observer can discuss practical arrangements for the main observation and reflection. This is particularly advised where observation will take the form of the observer being present in a taught class. Whilst the content of the pre-meeting is not determined by the scheme, the best examples of such meetings include the opportunity for the observee to articulate what drives their passion for learning and teaching (often referred to colloquially as ‘what makes me tick as a teacher?’). Framing this early conversation in a deeply reflective, meaningful articulation of practice can also bring out aspects related to remaining in good standing as referred to by the AdvanceHE (formerly the Higher Education Academy) Code of Practice <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/Fellowship%20Code%20of%20Practice.pdf>

Scheme paperwork

There are three elements to the paperwork associated with the scheme:

Observee feedback sheets (Form 1 Parts 1 & 2) which remain confidential between the observee and observer

Observer list of staff observed (Form 2)

Aggregated Observer summary of staff development activities that the Faculty and/or CELT are requested to facilitate (Form 3)

Sharing the outcomes of reflection and observation

As part of their development, observers will ensure that the outcomes of the ROP scheme are not divulged outside of the interaction between the observer and observee². The outcomes form the core of the Scheme in recognising that it is designed to facilitate open and honest reflection of practice. As such, the Scheme is to enable staff development and is not a measure for monitoring staff in the detail of their teaching practice. The detail of the observation is therefore confidential to observee and observer and remains so unless the observee chooses to share their feedback with others

In order that the Scheme can function efficiently, the Faculty HoLTSE/RWCMD Head of Learning and Teaching are required to maintain a register of staff engagement with the scheme such that they can provide an annual report to the University Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee (LTEC) about the extent to which staff have engaged with the scheme, and the type of activity they have chosen e.g observation of a taught class or a critically reflective conversation about practice. The report by the Faculty HoLTSE/RWCMD Head of Learning and Teaching is anonymised and reflects information about the numbers of staff observed and the generic activities undertaken.

CELT use these reports to identify themes for staff development activities.

Examples from past schemes led to:

- CELT seminars on specific topics such as the use of online marking systems, and creating links between teaching, research and scholarship
- Specific CELT projects to identify sector practice and feed this back into University learning and teaching development
- Schemes across the USW Group for reward and recognition

² Within the boundaries of confidentiality as set out earlier in this document

Form: 1 Part 1 – Observee feedback sheet completed by observer (confidential to both observee and observer) for use with activities other than classroom observation

Name of observee:	
Name of observer:	
Date of activity:	Time from () to ()

Pre-observation agreement

Notes of the agreed activity to be observed: (for example, preparation of a teaching session, online materials, curriculum development, assessment design)*

Notes during observation

Examples of good practice drawn from the observation

Notes post-observation

Suggested areas for the post-observation reflective conversation:

Other comments:

*Further guidance concerning useful prompts when observing a range of activities will be available on the CELT website

Form 1 Part 2 Observee feedback sheet completed by observer when observing taught class activity (confidential to both observee and observer)

During the observation

The bullet points below are offered as suggested prompts rather than a series of prescriptive questions to be used during the observation. You may also be interested in using an ethnographic approach to recording classroom interactions. CELT will be providing opportunities to learn more about this highly relevant and adaptable technique.

Introduction:

- Were the objectives of the session made clear to the class?
- Were the anticipated learning outcomes for the session identified?
- Did the class begin/end on time?
- Was the structure of the session clear?

(Please indicate if not applicable)

Content:

- Was the session pitched at the appropriate level for the students present to enable inclusive and accessible learning?
- Were examples included?

Was the content research informed?

(Please indicate if not applicable)

Learner Engagement:

- Were students invited to participate?
 - How was participation managed?
 - Did the tutor check the students' understanding of the material/approach?
- (Please indicate if not applicable)

Use of Learning Resources to include spaces, physical and digital learning resources:

- Were they clear and understandable by the audience?
 - Were different types of resources used?
 - Did the students have opportunities to used appropriate blends of resources?
 - Did the resources effectively support the student learning experience?
- (Please indicate if not applicable)

Post-observation notes to support the reflective conversation:

Form 2 – List of staff who have been observed and dates when observation took place

Once complete, this form to be emailed to the Faculty Head of Student Experience/College Head of Learning and Teaching

Form 3 - Observer anonymised aggregated³ report to Faculty HoLTSE/RWCMD Head of Learning and Teaching and CELT

Brief description of the activities observed

Examples of good practice

Suggested topics for staff development seminars/resources

Once complete this form to be emailed to the Faculty Head of Student Experience/College Head of Learning and Teaching.

³ Where only one observee has been observed, Observers are required to ensure anonymity by compiling an aggregated report by joining together with other Observers