

Procedure Number	:	OP-B-2
Title	:	CSM Classroom Observation Policy and Guidelines
Category	:	Teaching and Learning
Effective	:	1 January 2009

1. POLICY PURPOSE

This policy intends to make clear the process of Classroom Observation for academic staff at Curtin Sarawak Malaysia (CSM) in implementing a system for observation of teaching that will enhance the quality of teaching practice and thereby improve students' learning.

2. APPLICATION

This Policy applies to all academic staff of the Campus.

2.1 New Academic Staff on Probation

For staff new to CSM, Classroom Observation is crucial during the entire probationary period. The approach taken will be Supervision by a super-ordinate and will be evaluative in nature. The Classroom Observation is to be conducted by suitably qualified staff identified by the Dean of School.

2.2 Annual Performance Review

Classroom Observation can be a vital part of staff annual performance. The Classroom Observation can take the form of Mentoring, which is developmental in nature, or Peer Assessment, which is intended for self assessment.

2.3 Application for Promotion

Classroom Observation also can be a vital part in the process of application for promotion. An academic makes a determination of the type of Classroom Observation in which they wish to be involved.

2.4 Management of Poor Performance

Classroom Observation will be mandatory for staff identified with poor performance and will be conducted by a Head of Department or Dean of School.

3. EXCEPTIONS

Nil

4. DEFINITIONS

Classroom Observation

A process by which an academic (supervisor/a peer) and by arrangement, observes another academic while delivering instruction in the classroom. The purpose of the process is to see how the dynamics of the teaching and learning process unfold in the interest of high quality instruction.

Supervision

Supervision in educational settings is a management process aimed at evaluating teaching quality. Supervisors play a key role in the monitoring and facilitating of quality teaching for academics. Feedback to an academic will be provided using the protocol in Attachment 1.

Mentoring

Most academics do not demonstrate a varied repertoire of teaching skills and strategies mostly due to their limited observations of good teaching. Mentoring by a colleague with recognised discipline expertise is a strategy that can support an academic's continuous professional development in teaching. The process of feedback is determined by the academics involved in the mentoring process.

Peer Observation

Peer observation of teaching is a strategy for gaining feedback from a peer, usually with the same discipline background, to improve one's teaching skills. In a collegial partnership, each observes the other's teaching and each supports one another in developing improvements in their respective teaching repertoires. The process of feedback is determined by the academics involved in the peer observation process.

Management of Poor Quality Teaching

Academic staff who have completed their probationary period and at some future time experience continued and prolonged feedback from supervisors, peers or students about the quality of their teaching performance, will be placed on a performance management plan (see Attachment 2).

The performance management plan will be within the University's definition of a *reasonable time* or *reasonable number of observation and review sessions*.

For definition purposes, *reasonable time* may be defined as four to twelve weeks of contact hours which include teaching, laboratory work and supervision during a teaching semester.

A *reasonable number of classroom observations* and review sessions is defined as accumulative reviews and observations, separately or in combination, up to three times within the reasonable timeframe.

Mentoring and Self Assessment Process

The process helps to identify aspects of an academic's teaching performance which can be planned for improvement. The process should be conducted through mutual arrangements and agreements between an academic staff member and a suitably qualified peer.

5. POLICY STATEMENT

5.1 Classroom Observation

The fundamental purpose of implementing a system of observation of teaching at CSM is to enhance the quality of teaching practice and thereby improve students' learning. It is a CSM Teaching and Learning operational initiative that teaching schools establish teaching observation as a strategy to improve and enhance teaching quality.

Classroom Observation of teaching performance (termed Supervision in this policy) is mandatory for academic staff on probation but it can include all lecturing staff for the purpose of professional development (Mentoring) and self assessment (Peer Review).

The observation of teaching performance can be used by academic staff as part of their annual performance evaluation or promotion. All observation of teaching is underpinned by the planning for the observation, conducting the observation, and providing feedback about the observation.

The ethical guidelines espoused at CSM underpin the whole process of Classroom Observation. Figure 1 provides a schematic for the various forms of classroom observation encouraged at CSM.



Figure 1: Model of Classroom Observations Approaches Supported at CSM

This policy is intended to make clear the process of Classroom Observation for academic staff at CSM. Classroom Observation supports teaching practice to enable academic staff to maintain and promote safe, high quality standards of student care, teaching, and learning by encouraging reflection on practice.

Reflection on teaching practice develops the scholarship of teaching and addresses the teaching research nexus. Overall, Classroom Observation contributes to the enhancement of an academic’s teaching skills, knowledge and professional values, supports career development and promotes lifelong learning.

The process will involve the following stages for Supervision, Mentoring and Peer Assessment.

5.2 Supervision

Before the Classroom Observation, the parties involved, the observer and the lecturer to be observed, will meet to discuss the objectives of the observation. The intentions of the Classroom Observation may include reviewing the intended student learning for the session; the context of the session within the overall course; the learning experiences designed for the students; or any issue that the lecturer is particularly concerned about or interested in receiving feedback on. A mutually agreeable time should be arranged for all Classroom Observations.

For academic staff on probation, the Observation Protocol (see Attachment 1) will be discussed and used to record the observations made in the classroom.

5.3 Mentoring

During Classroom Observation the observer will not be obstructive to the classroom teaching and take a position in the classroom to easily observe the teaching and learning that occurs. However, if the observed academic wishes to involve the observer in any class activity this is possible.

This type of involvement should be arranged during the pre-observation meeting. The observed lecturer should introduce the observer and inform the students that observer is there to observe the teaching and the learning in the classroom.

The observer should remain in the classroom long enough to make informed, reliable judgments about the observed lecturer's quality of teaching.

5.4 Peer Assessment

After Classroom Observation the observer will conduct a debriefing session with the observed as soon as possible following the Classroom Observation period. The debriefing is necessary for staff on probationary as this stage is crucial to provide the probationary academic feedback about teaching strengths and areas for improvement.

The debriefing in the Mentoring or Self Assessment process is determined by the academic under observation.

For staff using an observer for promotion purposes or peer observation as a lead into action research, the debriefing and further action should be part of the initial debriefing session.

6. LIST OF SCHEDULES

6.1 Plan for Classroom Observation

The plan below is based on the 'action research' format.

- (A) The problem statement (or statement of reflection)
- (B) Planning for the semester: What to do? Why? How to do it – Strategies and pedagogy?
When it is to take place?

Dean of School/Head of Department (commence here for probationary staff)

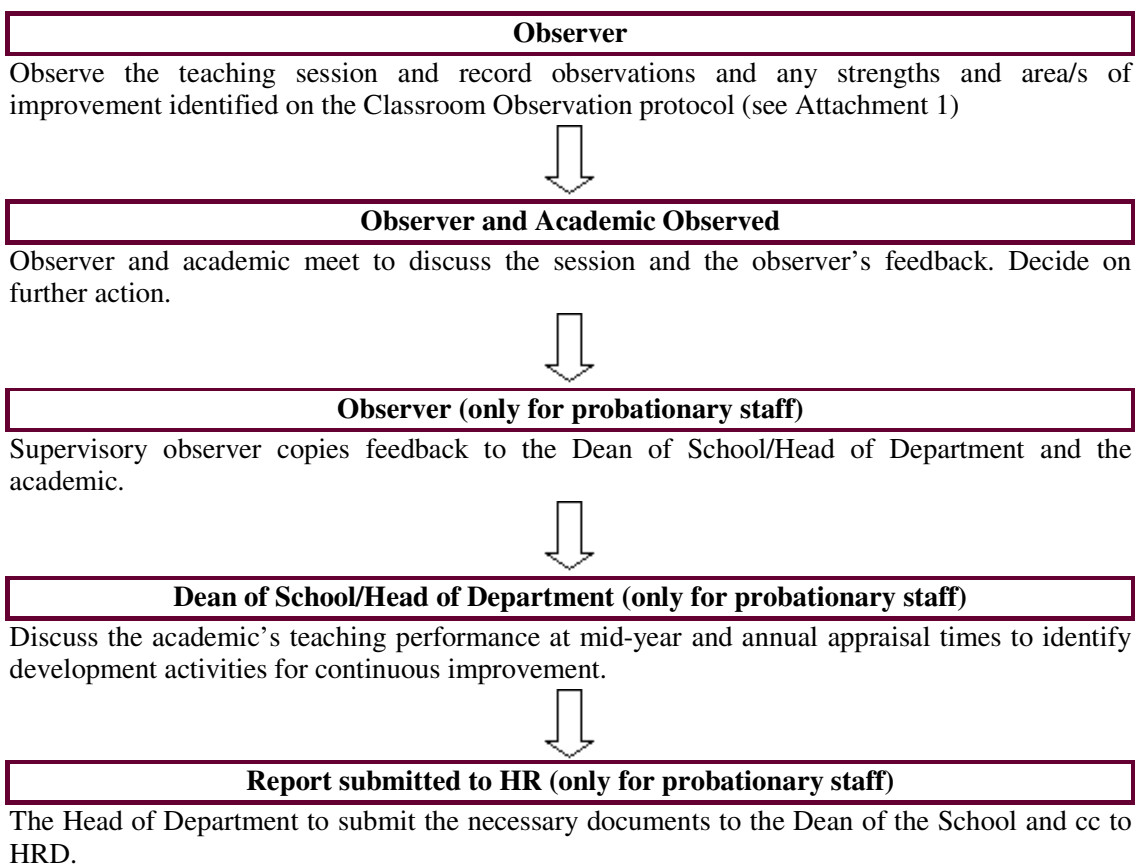
Dean of School and Head of Department approve the process for Classroom Observation for staff delivering programmes within the responsibility of the School. At the start of the academic year, and in accordance with the School Operating Procedures, ensure that a schedule for Classroom Observations is agreed upon to take place during the academic year.



Observer and Academic to be Observed (commence here for non-probationary staff)

Observer meets with the academic for briefing on the aims, outcomes and content of the classroom observation session.





6.2 Record Keeping

All Classroom Observation should be indicated in an academic's Work Plan. An observer will need to provide a report on the Classroom Observation of academic staff on probationary (see Attachment 1).

For any other form of classroom observation, the way in which feedback is provided to the observed by the observer should be negotiated in the initial "before Classroom Observation in the classroom" meeting. Where Classroom Observation is used for improvement or promotion, evidence (e.g. documents) should be included in the academic Professional Teaching Portfolio to support claims of improved teaching quality or strategies to improve or enhance teaching.

6.3 Classroom Observation Frequency

For staff on probation, Classroom Observation is required at the end of the first six month and the last six month of the probationary period. If the observer is entirely satisfied with the teaching quality of the probationary staff member at the end of the first six months, a follow-up observation may not be deemed necessary.

When Classroom Observation is used for the other purposes such as observation for promotion, annual review or action research, the number and frequency of the classroom observations are to be negotiated between the observers and observed.

The frequency of meetings should be based on a pre-meeting and post-meeting for each classroom observation. The number of Classroom Observations is to be negotiated. However, if at any time an academic wishes to consult with his or her classroom observer, this can be done with the agreement from both parties.

The classroom observation should be conducted in stages – early in the semester and mid semester. The frequency of the classroom observation will depend on the academic’s progress.

6.4 Who can be the Classroom Observer?

The following academics are appropriate members of staff to conduct classroom observation.

- i. Dean of school or nominee for probationary staff and any staff identified with poor teaching performance.
- ii. Dean of School for probationary staff, academics seeking promotion and any academic identified with poor teaching performance.
- iii. Head of Department for probationary staff, academics seeking promotion and any academic identified with poor teaching performance.
- iv. Any peer chosen by an academic for mentoring, peer observation and action research.

7. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

This policy may only be amended with the approval of the Steering Committee. Schedules to this policy may be amended by the Teaching and Learning Committee and the updating of position titles, where there have been approved changes, may be amended by the Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor.

8. FORMS, WORK INSTRUCTIONS AND SCHEDULES

Appendix 1: Classroom Observation Protocol

Appendix 2: Procedure for Managing Poor Performance

RESPONSIBILITIES (all sections required)	
Responsible University Officer :	Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor
Contact Officer :	Professor Dr Joan Gribble
Telephone :	085-443800
E-mail :	j.gribble@curtin.edu.my
Responsible Office :	Teaching and Learning
Approval Authority :	Steering Committee
Review Date :	3 years from date policy approved

REVISION HISTORY: Required *(to be completed by Responsible University Officer)*

Revision Ref. No.	Approved/ Rescinded	Date	Committee/ Board	Resolution Number	Document Reference
	Approved	Mar 2009			
	Rescinded	Sep 2008			

ATTACHMENT 1

Classroom Observation Protocol

Academic Staff Member :
Time :
Date :
Room :
Unit and Topic :
Mode :
Number of Students :

Planning and Scholarship

Are the learning objectives clear? (clarity of the objective for the session, and what the lecturer expects students to gain from being there) Is the session well planned and organized?

Content Knowledge and Relevance

Is the content current, accurate, suitable and illustrated with examples?

Communication and Interactions

Are the delivery and the pace appropriate? (language, pace, audibility, effective use of support materials, personal communication skills: enthusiasm, confidence, warmth and creativity.

Instructional Strategies

Are the teaching and learning methods appropriate? (how appropriate they are in terms of the objectives)

Learning Experiences

Is best use made of classroom environment and learning resources? Are the students engaged in learning?

Management of Student Behaviour

Student behaviour and student encouragement (student involvement- rapport, interaction, responsiveness, opportunity, and encouragement for participation, use of students' contribution)

Curriculum Monitoring and Review

Is the academic involved in reflection on the units/course taught (communication with Bentley UC)

STRENGTHS

ASPECTS FOR IMPROVEMENT – Create an Action Plan for Change

Probationary Staff Member Name:

Observer Name:

Signed:

Signed:

Date:

Date:

ATTACHMENT 2

Management of Poor Quality Teaching

With continued evidence, reports, or witness of an academic's poor teaching quality (including inappropriate behaviour towards students) a management plan will be established by the Dean of school with the academic. The plan will be a course of action within a reasonable period of time or agreed time frame based on identified areas of concern, to be progressed, and evidence provided that improvements have been achieved. In the beginning, the academic will be provided with the opportunity to be supervised by a Head of Department or Dean of School but with continued inability to show improved teaching performance, the plan of action will be managed by the Dean. In this context it is important to ensure the level of support offered in the management plan is provided because if it is not, it will become a barrier to the academic's ability to improve.

INFORMAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Preliminary

As soon as there are concerns about an academic's teaching quality, these concerns must be discussed with the academic. In an informal meeting, both parties are able to have a support person or representative or a witness present. It is important to:

1. Notify the academic that there will be a meeting to discuss some teaching performance issues/concerns.
2. Advise the academic that he/she is able to have a witness present and allow enough time when scheduling the meeting for the academic to organize a support person.
3. Prepare for the meeting by making notes about the issues to be raised with the academic but the academic has the right of response and that no decisions should be made until both parties have discussed the issues openly.

Initial Meeting

In the initial meeting:

1. Communicate to the academic the way in which teaching performance is not meeting expectations and illustrate this by using recent examples.
2. Allow the academic to respond to the issues and give his/her reasons for the poor teaching performance.
3. Be clear about the expectations and how the staff academic can work towards meeting these expectations (keeping in mind the academic's response).
4. Set measurable teaching performance goals and allow reasonable and mutually agreed timeframes to be allocated for improvement.
5. Provide the necessary support and training to assist the academic to improve teaching performance;
6. Set a review date and classroom observations;
7. Keep a record of the meeting and what was agreed. Ask the academic to sign a record of the meeting and the agreed outcomes.
8. Explain to the academic that if teaching performance under the informal process does not improve then a formal teaching performance management process may be undertaken.
9. Inform the academic that he or she has access to Counselling Services. It may be helpful for the academic to speak to someone independent of the process.
10. Let the staff know that the University's action during the informal stage may necessarily become a formal one if the performance or efficiency level is unacceptable.

Review Meeting/s and Classroom Observation/s

It is possible that a number of regular teaching performance review meetings and classroom observations will need to take place. It is important that the dates for review and classroom observations that have been agreed are adhered to. If it is necessary to cancel, then ensure that the meeting or classroom observation is re-scheduled as soon as possible. Ensure that a record is kept of the dates of meeting with the academic and the classroom observations made, what was discussed, and the agreed actions and outcomes.

Outcome

There are two possible outcomes from an informal teaching performance management process.

1. The teaching performance of the academic improves to the required level within a reasonable period of time as defined by the University.
2. The academic is to be notified that the teaching performance is at the required level and further review meetings and classroom observations are not required. However, the academic should be reminded that should the teaching performance be poor or non-effective in the future an informal or formal process will be initiated.
3. The teaching performance does not improve at all or not enough to be at the required level within the agreed reasonable period. Prior to initiating a formal teaching performance management process, the informal teaching performance management process must be exhausted:
 - The required improvement in teaching performance was communicated clearly to the academic and was understood by the academic.
 - A reasonable number of review meetings and classroom observations were held in order to assist the academic improve his/her teaching performance. This will depend on the nature of the poor or non-effective teaching performance and the support that was required.
 - The support that was promised in order to assist the academic improve his/her teaching performance was provided (including training).
4. The academic should already be aware of what the consequences may be if the teaching performance has not improved to the required level during the informal process, as this should have been discussed at the initial meeting.
5. The academic will be advised in writing that a formal teaching performance management process will be undertaken and will also be advised of the consequences of teaching performance not improving under the formal process.

FORMAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

It is essential that this process involve a Human Resource Consultant.

Preliminary

Where there has been no significant improvement to the teaching performance during the informal process a formal teaching performance management process will be initiated. The academic will be advised in writing that this process will commence, the consequences of teaching performance not improving under the formal process, and that any documentation arising from the formal teaching performance management process will be retained on the academic's personal file in the Human Resources Department.

Procedure

The procedure for formal teaching performance management begins where the informal process ended. That is, the unsatisfactory teaching performance needs to be communicated to the academic and a teaching performance improvement plan undertaken. Note that both parties are able to have a support person/representative or a witness present at any meetings. The procedure for a formal teaching performance management process is similar to that undertaken in the informal process. In particular:

1. Communicate to the academic the way in which teaching performance is not meeting expectations and illustrate this by using recent examples.
2. Allow the academic to respond to these issues and give his/her reasons for unsatisfactory teaching performance.
3. Be clear about expectations and how the academic can work towards meeting these expectations (keeping in mind the academic's response).
4. Set measurable performance goals and allow reasonable and mutually agreed timeframes to be allocated for improvement.
5. Provide the necessary support and training to assist the academic to improve teaching performance.
6. Set a review date.
7. Keep a record of the meetings and classroom observations and what was agreed. Ask the academic to sign a record of the meeting and classroom observation protocols and the agreed outcomes.
8. Explain to the academic the consequences of teaching performance not improving under the formal process.
9. Remind the academic that he/she has access to Counseling Services.

Outcome

There are two possible outcomes from a formal performance management process.

1. The teaching performance of the academic improves such that it is at the required level within the agreed period. The academic is informed that the teaching performance is at the required level and further review meetings and classroom observations are not required. However, the academic is advised that should the teaching performance be poor/non-effective or unsatisfactory in the future a formal process will again be initiated.
2. The teaching performance has not improved at all or not enough to be at the required level within the set period.
3. A formal report is made to the PVC that the teaching performance of the academic is unsatisfactory. The report will detail the aspects of teaching performance deemed unsatisfactory and the record of attempts to remedy the problem.
4. The Executive Dean/Area Head will discuss the report with the manager of Human Resources and determine an appropriate course of action.
5. The academic will be provided with a copy of the report and 10 working days in which to submit a response.
6. The academic will be advised that if unsatisfactory teaching performance is substantiated, a penalty may apply. The letter should set out what these penalties could be.
7. After receiving the response and consulting the Human Resources Department, the PVC shall decide whether to take any further action, refer the matter back to the supervisor with a requirement for a particular action, or impose a penalty.
8. The academic will be advised in writing of the outcome.