



**Charles
University**



TEACHING OBSERVATION: WHAT IT IS AND HOW TO IMPLEMENT IT

Guidelines for faculty members, TLCs employees and academic decision-makers

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//00. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are designed for university teachers, TLCs employees and academic decision-makers, emphasizing that the implementation of teaching observation requires strategic alignment with institutional priorities and policies, as well as a strong commitment at the organizational level, rather than relying solely on individual initiatives.

Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of teaching observation practices at the university level, exploring their role in faculty development, teaching improvement, and overall teaching quality. By describing various approaches and teaching observation models, these guidelines aim to identify best practices, potential challenges, and opportunities for integrating teaching observation at Charles University. The ultimate goal is to support the development of sustainable teaching observation practices that foster a culture of reflective practice and continuous improvement among faculty members.

This goal is closely aligned with Pillars 4 (Reflective teaching and teacher professional development) and 5 (Professional cooperation) of Charles University's [Framework for Effective Teaching](#), which emphasize the importance of teachers engaging in thoughtful self-reflection and constructive dialogue with colleagues. Teaching observation, when approached collaboratively, enables teachers to critically examine their own practices, share pedagogical insights, and engage in meaningful peer feedback—all of which are key to developing professional competence and enhancing the student learning experience.

Furthermore, these efforts directly support the University's long-term commitment to excellence, autonomy, and freedom of teaching and research, as outlined in its [strategic plan](#). By embedding reflective and cooperative teaching observation practices into the academic culture, Charles University strengthens its mission to uphold the highest standards of educational quality, while contributing to the broader societal goals of knowledge development, cultural advancement, and international academic cooperation. **In this way, not only does teaching observation become a tool for individual growth, but it also represents a vital component**

of the University's responsibility to sustain and evolve its historic role as a leading institution within both the Czech Republic and the European Higher Education Area.



Document Structure

The guidelines begin with an overview of teaching observation practices, including definitions, goals, and classifications according to different observation models. This is followed by an exploration of the benefits and challenges of implementing teaching observations, with a focus on professional growth, alignment with institutional teaching and learning strategies, and impact on learning outcomes. The guidelines also discuss the implementation of effective observation strategies and the integration of teaching observation into faculty development programs, concluding with several recommendations for establishing robust, reflective observation practices. Finally, case studies and practical examples from various academic contexts are presented to illustrate the adaptability of teaching observations across institutions.



The guidelines have been enriched with insights and findings from activities proposed to Charles University faculty members who participated in the event "Teaching Observation: What It Is and How to Implement It" (03. 12. 2024). The integration of these insights provides a more comprehensive perspective on the benefits and impacts of teaching observation at different levels, reflecting both theoretical considerations and practical experiences shared during the session.

//01. WHAT IS TEACHING OBSERVATION

This section defines teaching observation, outlining its different forms (peer observation, formative vs. summative observations, self-observation, etc.) and its role in university teaching enhancement.

Defining teaching observation and its purpose

Teaching observation at the university level is a tool that is an integral part of faculty development and the professionalization of teaching. It serves multiple purposes, including improving teaching quality and practices, fostering reflective practice, and contributing to professional growth. Various models and approaches to teaching observation have been explored in the literature, each with its own set of definitions and implications for practice.

Classifying teaching observation models

We can identify different classifications of academic teaching observation experiences; let us now focus on the one that uses the observer as the classification variable.

PEER OBSERVATION



OBSERVATION BY COLLEAGUES

Academic faculty members observe each other's teaching. This model could foster collaborative development and reflective discussions. The "peer" may come from the same, but more often from a different disciplinary area, department, or faculty.

EXPERT OBSERVATION



OBSERVATION BY EXPERTS

Senior educational developers (or academic developers, according to the labels used in different universities), instructional designers or experienced teachers conduct teaching observations.

SELF-OBSERVATION



TEACHERS OBSERVING AND REFLECTING ON THEIR OWN TEACHING

Self-observation involves teachers critically reflecting on their own teaching practices, often supported by video recordings or other self-monitoring tools (this could represent a further step after a peer or an expert observation).

The following table summarises some **pros and cons** for each of these models.



PEER OBSERVATION

Less human resources dependent → Since teachers observe each other, this approach does not require external experts, making it easier to implement within institutions.

High number of participants achievable → More teachers can engage in observation simultaneously, increasing participation without major logistical constraints.

Teachers can learn both as observers and as observed → Observing colleagues provides insights into different teaching approaches, while receiving feedback helps to refine one's own practices.



PEER OBSERVATION

Observers need to be trained → To ensure effective practices, teachers need guidance on observing lessons and – even more relevant - providing constructive feedback.

Risk of focusing on content instead of methods → Without clear guidelines, there is a tendency to assess what is being taught rather than how it is being taught (this can happen particularly in cases where faculty members belong to the same or related disciplines).

Sensitivity of the feedback moment → Providing and receiving feedback among peers can be delicate, as it may be perceived as critical rather than constructive.

Observations must follow a structured training phase → A preparatory phase is necessary to ensure that participants approach observations with the right mindset and skills.

The feedback might not be as valuable as expert feedback → While peer feedback can be insightful, it may lack the depth or structure provided by an experienced external observer.

Time-consuming for teachers → Participating in observations and feedback sessions requires extra time, which can be challenging alongside other responsibilities.



EXPERT OBSERVATION

Experts are able to facilitate the launch of the experience in contexts without a tradition of teaching observation → In institutions where teaching observation is not yet established, expert involvement can help introduce and legitimize the practice.

Experts are able to facilitate the development of reflective practices → Experts provide structured feedback, guiding teachers toward deeper and more meaningful self-reflection.

Experts are perceived as a neutral third party → External observers are often seen as more objective, avoiding potential biases that may arise in peer evaluations.

It can serve as a first step to introduce observation as a stable practice. → Expert-led observation can create a foundation for later self- and peer-observation models.



EXPERT OBSERVATION

An achievable number of participants is constrained by human resources → Since only a limited number of experts are available, fewer teachers can receive direct observation and feedback.



SELF-OBSERVATION

Consolidating reflective practices → Encourages teachers to develop a habit of self-reflection, gradually strengthening their ability to assess their own teaching methods.

High number of participants achievable → Since it does not require external resources, self-observation can be practiced widely across an institution.

Observations can begin right away → Teachers can immediately engage in self-reflection without waiting for external support.



SELF-OBSERVATION

Developing reflective practices takes time and is not guaranteed → Without external support, the process of developing reflective skills may be slower or even unsuccessful.

GUIDELINES 10 TEACHING OBSERVATION

Let us now shift our attention to another type of classification, one that focuses on the objectives of the observation, focusing, therefore, on the "why and for what purposes" the observation is conducted. Here, we refer to a well-known classification in the relevant literature, that of Gosling (2002), who identifies three models of teaching observation: the Evaluation Model, the Developmental Model, and the Peer Review Model.

EVALUATION MODEL

FOCUSED ON ASSESSING
TEACHING PERFORMANCE

This model involves senior staff (or, less frequently, educational experts) conducting observations with the goal of assessing and ensuring the quality of teaching.

DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL

AIMED AT TEACHER
DEVELOPMENT
AND GROWTH

In this model, the observers focus on developing pedagogical competencies, with an emphasis on professional growth.

PEER REVIEW MODEL

COMBINING PEER
FEEDBACK WITH EXTERNAL
INSIGHTS

The peer review model involves academic faculty members observing each other's teaching. This model promotes reflective discussions and collaborative improvement of teaching practices.

The classifications presented above provide a framework for understanding different levels at which an observation experience can be structured. However, these classifications inevitably simplify complex realities. This is particularly true for the classification based on objectives, which should therefore be understood as a flexible guide rather than a rigid or prescriptive structure.

To focus on one last variable that can impact the observation experience, let us now examine how different observation settings influence the process. Teaching observations can take place in various educational contexts, including traditional classrooms, online environments, and hybrid formats, each presenting unique challenges and opportunities.

	POINTS OF ATTENTION
FACE TO FACE CLASS	It is possible to obtain a complete picture of the teaching and learning scenario (including students' "hidden" behaviors)
ONLINE CLASS	The observer's point of view coincides with the one of the students. There is no possibility to observe what the students are "really" doing during the class.
HYBRID CLASS	At least 2 observers are needed (one in class and the other one online). Both observers should be properly trained to cooperate and gather relevant data from various points of view.

Promoting reflective teaching through observation

According to the [Framework for Effective Teaching at Charles University](#), "reflective teaching" is a process in which teachers critically examine their teaching practices to evaluate their effectiveness and improve them. It involves not only assessing whether learning objectives have been met but also exploring the underlying reasons for students' difficulties. Moreover, reflective teaching requires a continuous examination of teachers' fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning, ensuring that these beliefs remain consistent and aligned with their actual teaching practices in the classroom.

Within this broader perspective, teaching observation is one of the key tools for fostering reflective practice. While it provides valuable insights through structured feedback, its full potential is realized when it is integrated with other strategies that support teachers in critically engaging with their instructional approaches.

Stephen Brookfield (2017) offers a complementary perspective on reflective teaching, emphasizing the importance of critically analyzing one's practice through multiple perspectives. In the second edition of *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, he refines his framework by identifying four key lenses that educators can use to examine their teaching: *students' perspectives, colleagues' feedback, theoretical literature, and personal experience*. According to Brookfield, "the central assumption of critical reflection is that we all bring unexamined assumptions to our teach-

ing, and these assumptions shape our instructional choices, often in ways we do not realize" (Brookfield, 2017, *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, 2nd ed.). By engaging with these different lenses, teachers can systematically challenge their assumptions and refine their pedagogical approaches.

Within this framework, teaching observation serves as a powerful mechanism for professional development, but it should not be seen in isolation. Instead, it is most effective when combined with other reflective practices, such as:

The diagram consists of a top box with text, four arrows pointing down to a larger box containing four columns of text, and four colored bars at the bottom of the columns. The columns are: 1. Microteaching (light blue bar), 2. Reflective Teams (medium blue bar), 3. Teaching Portfolios (dark blue bar), and 4. Learning Diaries (darkest blue bar).

MICROTEACHING

where teachers record and analyze short teaching sessions to refine their delivery and engagement techniques.

REFLECTIVE TEAMS

in which small groups of teachers engage in peer discussions, collaboratively reflecting on their teaching experiences and sharing insights.

TEACHING PORTFOLIOS

which document teaching experiences, student feedback, and reflective narratives to track professional growth over time.

LEARNING DIARIES

where teachers systematically record and analyze their experiences to foster continuous self-improvement.

Institutions can create a more holistic and sustainable approach to faculty development by embedding teaching observation within this wider ecosystem of reflective practices. Rather than being an isolated evaluative tool, observation becomes part of an iterative process that promotes self-awareness, collaborative learning, and continuous pedagogical refinement.

Providing key motivations to introduce teaching observation

This section explores the motivations behind teaching observation, focusing on its impact on professional growth, teaching quality, and institutional development.

Teaching observation represents an important tool for enhancing teaching quality. This chapter explores the motivations for the introduction of systematic observation practices in university classrooms. The benefits of teaching observations vary significantly depending on the perspectives of different stakeholders involved in the process. We will now focus on four perspectives: that of the observed teacher,

that of the observer, that of the students and that of the institution. Below is a summary table outlining potential benefits identified based on different roles and/or perspectives.

Benefits and Impact of Teaching Observation



TEACHERS

- develop reflective skills by analyzing their teaching choices and the coherence between theory and practice.
- identify areas for improvement in their pedagogical competencies through structured reflection on observed practices.
- enhance teaching self-awareness by receiving constructive feedback and reflecting on the ability to integrate it.



OBSERVERS

- gain a deep understanding of specific teaching methods used within the institution.
- learn to provide improvement suggestions that are relevant and contextualized, avoiding actions perceived as "distant" or "standard."
- develop skills in analyzing and providing constructive feedback on teaching practices.
- reflect on their own teaching practices by engaging in the observation process within the peer observation model.
- compare and contrast different teaching approaches observed in teachers to enhance personal insights.



STUDENTS

- experience enhanced learning outcomes due to more effective teaching.
- learn a constructive approach to providing feedback when involved in teaching observation processes, moving beyond traditional student surveys that may risk focusing too much on a customer satisfaction approach.



INSTITUTIONS

- demonstrate their commitment to maintaining high educational standards.
- gather tangible evidence of efforts to improve teaching quality (essential for accreditation and quality assurance processes).
- enhance the relevance of faculty development to its members.

Table 3: Pros and cons according to the different actors of the teaching and learning process

//02. HOW TO IMPLEMENT EFFECTIVE TEACHING OBSERVATION

The focus now shifts to different phases of the observation process, highlighting how each stage contributes to a structured and reflective approach to teaching development.

The process typically follows a structured cycle that remains consistent regardless of the observer's role. This generally includes a pre-observation meeting to clarify observation objectives and criteria, the actual observation phase, and a post-observation discussion where feedback is shared and/or the observed class is reflected upon. The cycle is then completed with the identification of potential redesign actions to enhance teaching practices.



While this general structure is widely adopted, specific approaches may vary depending on contextual factors. Key differences include the number of classes observed and who determines which classes to observe—whether the observer or the observed teacher. When the observer selects the sessions, the process tends to have a more evaluative focus. When the choice is made by teachers, the emphasis is typically more developmental, fostering reflective practice and professional growth.

Clarifying objectives

This section examines an approach in which the observed teacher selects the class to be observed. In this model, effective teaching observation begins with the teacher's voluntary participation, allowing them to choose a class based on their specific developmental goals. This might include sessions where they use traditional methods, experiment with new techniques, or engage in co-teaching. The crucial element, however, is the clear definition of objectives for the observation, ensuring alignment with the teacher's professional growth.

The same principle applies when participation is not voluntary, such as when teaching observations are integrated into training programs for new faculty members or required for career advancement in certain countries. In some cases, teachers may not have clearly defined goals at the outset. This is not a limitation. Instead, it is important to establish in advance which aspects of teaching will be observed, providing a structured framework for further analysis. The post-observation discussion then serves as a reflective space where teachers can identify areas of interest or recognize aspects for further development.

Rather than being a prerequisite, goal-setting can emerge naturally from the observation process. Through reflection on their initial experience, teachers can refine their focus for future observations, making the process more meaningful and targeted to their professional needs.



Defining objectives can also be facilitated; it can be prompted by open-ended questions and closed multiple-choice questions. Below you will find a few examples of such questions.

Open-ended questions (examples):

Have you noticed any changes in student behavior or activity that you would like to explore further?"

Is there any aspect of your class that you would like to observe from an external perspective?"

What techniques or strategies are you going to use in this class, and would you like to assess their effectiveness?

Are you more interested in observing student engagement or their understanding of the content?

Would you prefer to focus on a variety of teaching activities or the effectiveness of communication?

Multiple-choice questions (example):

What would you like to explore in this observation?

- ↘ Time management
 - ↘ Use of teaching resources
 - ↘ Adaptation to student needs
 - ↘ Assessment strategies
-

These types of questions help guide teachers in defining objectives, offering flexibility to suit various teaching contexts and allowing teachers to reflect on specific aspects they wish to focus on.

Objectives can be either **prescriptive** or **adaptable**. Prescriptive objectives are typically established by institutional needs, while adaptable objectives arise from the teacher's personal goals. The more the observed teacher can work towards their own goals, the more virtuous path of reflective practice can be triggered. Here are some possible scenarios to illustrate these concepts:

In a training program for new faculty members, a **prescriptive objective** may require a focus on the effectiveness of time management during a class. The observation would then assess how the teacher allocates time for various activities to optimize class flow, ensuring adherence to institutional standards.

A more experienced teacher might instead choose an **adaptable** objective, such as improving their ability to engage students during in-class discussions. In this case, the observer would 1. provide targeted feedback on how the teacher encourages active participation and 2. suggest techniques to enhance interaction, aligning the feedback with the teacher's individual goals.

A teacher experimenting with a new technological tool for the first time may seek feedback on how the technology supports or hinders learning goals. Here, the observation would focus on the tool's impact on the learning experience and potential improvements for its use, reflecting the teacher's initiative to innovate and improve their practice. This is also an **adaptable** objective.

This distinction emphasizes that while **prescriptive** objectives are driven by the institution's requirements, **adaptable** objectives are centered on the individual teacher's professional growth and aspirations.

Using observation grids effectively

The observation method should be tailored to the specific needs and context of the teacher. This may involve using a customizable observation grid, which is a structured tool developed collaboratively by the observer and the teacher. The grid organizes and focuses the observation by including various categories, variables, indicators, and scales—such as time management, teaching techniques, and student interaction—that the observer monitors during the lesson. Parts of the grid may be formulated before, during, or after the observation, depending on the specific questions to be addressed and the type of information to be collected. This grid is essential for guiding the observation process and prompts the teacher to reflect on the chosen class.

In teaching observations, various types of grids can be employed, each tailored to different observational goals and contexts.

Checklist grids are commonly used for structured observations, listing specific behaviors or techniques the observer notes as present or absent, which is ideal for evaluating adherence to established teaching standards.

The teacher raises the level of student attention:

- ▣ by **INVOLVING STUDENTS** in the narration
 - ▣ by allowing **STUDENT INPUT** to direct portions of the lesson
 - ▣ by talking **TO** individual students
 - ▣ by talking **ABOUT** specific students
 - ▣ by referring to places/locations/people/topics **OF INTEREST TO STUDENTS**
-

Figure 1: Extract from checklist for observing a foreign language classroom, adapted by Bryce Hedstrom, original by Susan Gross.

Rating scales, on the other hand, allow observers to assess performance on a continuum, which can capture nuances in teaching practices, such as the degree of student engagement or the clarity of explanations.

GUIDELINES 18 TEACHING OBSERVATION

1 = not effective 2 = needs more emphasis 3 = accomplished 4 = accomplished very well

Organization - Overall Judgment	1	2	3	4	
1. Presented introduction to the lesson.	1	2	3	4	N/A
2. Presented topics in a logical, well paced sequence.	1	2	3	4	N/A
3. Related lesson to previous material.	1	2	3	4	N/A
4. Summarized major points and left students thinking.	1	2	3	4	N/A

Figure 2: Extract from Quantitative observation form, Center for Faculty Development and Excellence, Emory University

Open-ended grids provide space for qualitative notes and are suited for exploratory observations where the focus is on capturing detailed feedback on less predictable aspects, like classroom dynamics or teacher-student interactions.

Areas for Observation:

Communication (directions and procedures, oral language, written language):

Questions/Discussion (quality of questions, discussion techniques, students participation):

Figure 3: Extract from Qualitative observation form, Center for Faculty Development and Excellence, Emory University

Additionally, **customized grids** can be designed to reflect particular pedagogical models or goals, such as active learning or inclusive teaching, enabling observers to give feedback aligned with specific institutional priorities or individual needs.

What specific aspect(s) of your teaching practice do you think need developing and you would like feedback on?

What is the reason for your focus on this aspect (e.g. from student feedback, analysis of assessment performance, personal reflection)?

Figure 4: Extract from Record of observation of teaching, University of Leicester

GUIDELINES 19 TEACHING OBSERVATION

Choosing the right type of observation grid is essential, as it shapes the focus of the observation and greatly affects the quality and depth of feedback given to the teacher. Different grids are designed for different purposes, so it's important to select one that fits your goals.

Feel free to modify any of the sample grids provided in the table below. They are saved in .doc format, making it easy for you to adapt them to suit your specific needs. For example:

IF YOUR PURPOSE IS TO...

evaluate adherence to established teaching standards	assessing performance change through time (longitudinal)	take qualitative notes	reflect particular pedagogical models or institutional goals	take notes with maximum flexibility
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YOU CAN CONDUCT A(N)...

structured observation	descriptive observation	exploratory observation	exploratory observation	fully context-specific reflection on teaching
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YOU CAN USE...

Checklist grids sample	Rating scales sample	Open-Ended grids sample	Customized grids	No grids
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POTENTIAL DOWNSIDES

May oversimplify teaching as they focus primarily on predefined criteria. Can overlook subtleties such as tone, improvisation, or spontaneity in teaching practices.	While capturing more nuances than checklist grids, it may introduce subjectivity. Observers may differ in interpreting scale points.	May be time-consuming to analyze, potentially inconsistent across observers.	Developing a meaningful customized grid demands a solid understanding of both pedagogy and teaching observation practices. Inexperienced observers may struggle to identify what to include, how to phrase criteria, or how to align the grid with teaching goals.	No specific grid may lead to overlooking some important aspects of teaching and learning.
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We need to note here that the table above is just a recommendation and should not be construed as an absolute or universally applicable solution in all scenarios.

The effectiveness of the observation experience is closely tied to the tools and processes employed. The selection of observation grids not only guides the focus of the assessment but also shapes the nature of the feedback received by the teacher. Therefore, a thoughtful choice of grid can enhance the overall outcomes of the observation, fostering a more impactful and constructive reflective practice for educators.



It is also suggested to pay particular attention to implicit meanings: the more structured a framework is (especially with rating scales), the more it conveys an evaluative dimension of the process. Conversely, the more the observed individual is given the opportunity to “co-construct” (even partially) the observation grid (or template, or protocol), the more the process will be perceived as a genuine opportunity for reflection on their practice with the aim of improving it.

In [Annex II](#) you can find a few examples of grids employed in different universities.



To find out what Charles University teachers said the key elements to focus on during teaching observations are, you [can click HERE](#).

Preparing observation grids

Good practice in the use of observation grids involves a thoughtful structure that can be adapted to the specific context of each observation. While flexibility is key in allowing the grid to reflect the unique goals and needs of each observation, it is important to maintain consistency within the institution or project to ensure that the observation process remains coherent and purposeful across different instances. This balance between flexibility and consistency allows for meaningful observations while maintaining a standard framework. An observation grid can be divided into several sections, which can be customized depending on the specific objectives of a class and the needs of a teacher. The following sections outline key components that are

commonly included in a well-structured observation grid:

- 1. Informational Section:** This part provides essential details about the lesson's characteristics, such as the lesson topic, objectives, duration, and the specific context in which the teaching occurs. For example, it may note whether the lesson is part of a larger unit, the grade level of the students, or any particular challenges faced during the lesson.
- 2. Customizable Focus Areas:** In this section, the observed teacher can identify specific areas of focus they wish to enhance or aspects they prefer to exclude from feedback. For instance, a teacher might highlight their intention to improve student engagement during discussions or indicate that classroom management techniques should not be the focus of this particular observation.
- 3. Variables to be Observed:** This section lists specific variables that could be monitored, accompanied by relevant descriptors to guide the observer. For example, variables might include "student participation" with descriptors such as "level of interaction" "quality of contributions" or "diversity of student voices". The observed teacher can assign a weight to each variable, indicating its importance to their professional goals, which assists in tailoring the observation and feedback to their specific needs and preferences.

By structuring the observation grid in this way, one can make it a more effective tool for enhancing teaching practices through focused and relevant feedback.

Furthermore, both parties are recommended to hold a pre-observation session. During this session, the participants in the observation process can define the objectives, discuss the tools, and clarify any questions. In [Annex I](#) of these guidelines, you will find a document outlining key discussion points for a pre-observation meeting. This resource is intended to support a structured yet flexible conversation, helping participants clarify objectives, discuss tools, and address any questions before an observation takes place. It is imperative to emphasize that it is not a pre-observation meeting protocol. Additionally, [Annex II](#) is an important resource as it contains several examples of grids that are actively used in different institutions. These grids serve as real-world references, providing practical insights into various approaches to structuring observation processes.



Depending on whether one is in a context with an established 'tradition' of teaching observation or introducing it as a new practice, it may also be beneficial to hold a meeting with all faculty members participating in the initiative for, say, the following semester. Such events help lay the groundwork for building a community of practice, which is invaluable for establishing routines of informal exchange and collaboration among faculty members interested in enhancing teaching practices.

Conducting an observation

The observed classes can consist of one or more sessions of the same course, as decided by either the teacher or the observer. Here, we refer to the case of a single observed class chosen by the teacher being observed. During said observation, it is recommended to let the observed teacher decide whether to introduce the observer to the class and explain the reasons for their presence. There are no specific recommendations in this regard, other than allowing the teacher to choose the option that makes them feel most comfortable. The observer may be advised to position themselves at the back of the classroom, behind the students, to have a comprehensive view of what is happening in the room (including student behavior).

During the lesson, the observation takes place according to a customized grid and rules agreed upon by both the observer and the observed teacher. The observer may choose to use a timer, decide whether or not to record the class; the important thing is that the observed individual has been informed of these choices.

Providing feedback

After an observation, a feedback meeting should be held promptly. Effective feedback is carefully calibrated to the observed class segment, focusing on specific aspects without extending to broader unwanted evaluations. It requires that the observer also actively listens to the teacher and perceives their reflections. The observer must balance addressing areas for improvement with focusing on aspects that the teacher perceives as possible to develop and that are relevant to their professional growth. The feedback session serves as a critical moment for fostering self-reflection, where the teacher is encouraged to engage in a reflective dialogue about their teaching practices. This dialogue is essential for identifying strengths and areas for improvement,

as well as for enhancing the teacher's reflective competencies, which are crucial for ongoing professional development. For this process to be effective, the observer must be properly trained and should avoid delivering feedback in an improvised manner or relying solely on their own teaching experience.

The feedback session is a critical component of the teaching observation process, and its success relies on how the conversation is initiated and guided. It is essential to create an environment conducive to open reflection and growth. Here are some recommendations for structuring the feedback session effectively:

STARTING THE FEEDBACK SESSION

Begin the conversation in a neutral manner, avoiding evaluative statements about what went well or poorly. This approach helps set a non-judgmental tone. Instead, consider reflecting on contextual factors that may have influenced the lesson. For example, discussing the number of students present, the physical layout of the classroom, or any specific challenges encountered can provide a balanced foundation for the discussion.

LEADING THE CONVERSATION

To facilitate a productive dialogue, employ coaching questioning techniques that guide teachers toward self-reflection and conclusions without imposing feedback. Some effective questions include:

- *"Is there anything you would do differently? Why?"*
- *"What surprised you during the lesson?"*
- *"What aspects of the lesson went as you expected?"*

Using open-ended coaching questions encourages deeper reflection, prompting teachers to analyze their experiences and identify areas for improvement on their own.

GUIDING TEACHERS TO CONCLUSIONS

As the conversation progresses, maintain a focus on prompting teachers to arrive at their own insights. Use technique such as:

- encouraging elaboration: *"Can you tell me more about that?"*
- reflective summarization: *"So, if I understand correctly, you felt that... Is that right?"*
- exploring implications: *"What do you think this means for your future lessons?"*

These strategies help teachers to not only articulate their thoughts but also to discover personal learning points, leading to more meaningful growth and development.

By focusing on these structured approaches during the feedback session, the observer can foster a reflective atmosphere that empowers teachers to enhance their practice effectively.

DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Following the feedback session, encourage the teacher to develop an action plan to address the identified areas for improvement. This plan should be specific, measurable, and aligned with the teacher's professional development goals.

Note: The teacher does not always need to start with the most significant aspects highlighted in the feedback, as these may also be the hardest to change. Instead, it can be more effective to focus on aspects that, while seemingly minor, are more manageable and can be adjusted more easily. Issues might occur when the identified areas for improvement require significant effort and years of work (especially when they have become 'habits'). If the change is not visible or does not occur quickly, frustration can undermine the reflective process (and related gradual change), which is the true objective of the teaching observation practice.

GUIDELINES 25 TEACHING OBSERVATION

It is important to reiterate that the effectiveness of teaching observation can be significantly enhanced through follow-up sessions. These sessions not only facilitate the monitoring of progress but also create opportunities for re-observation if needed. By continuously tracking the teacher's development, the impact of teaching observation on their practices can become more enduring. In some cases, this process can seamlessly transform peer observation into a valuable peer mentoring initiative, fostering a supportive environment for ongoing professional growth and collaboration.

To assess the long-term impact of teaching observation, it is essential to conduct observation or manager meetings with the teachers (also after self-observations) over an extended period. This helps determine whether the reflective practices and improvements identified during the teaching observation process translate into sustained enhancements in teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

//03. HOW TO INTEGRATE TEACHING OBSERVATION IN FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

Teaching observation can serve as a cornerstone of broader faculty development programs by fostering reflective practice. When integrated with ongoing training and workshops, it provides a cohesive approach to professional growth that aligns with the actual needs and preferences of teaching staff. The key is to ensure that teaching observation complements rather than overlaps with other training initiatives, creating a more holistic and effective development experience.

Teaching observation can act as a catalyst for broader faculty development initiatives by identifying common areas for improvement across teaching staff. This could help in designing targeted training programs that address specific needs, thereby increasing faculty engagement and adherence to development initiatives. The tools used to manage teaching observation such as grids or records (appropriately anonymized) are, in this sense, an invaluable source of information. They can be used to gather insights into the teaching variables that teachers show the most interest in, their desires for future improvement, and—by capturing the observers' perspectives—the critical issues identified (even if not discussed with the teachers). These insights are crucial for designing faculty development workshops and training sessions that are more aligned with the actual needs of the faculty members. By addressing these common areas, institutions can ensure that their development programs are relevant and impactful.

When observation is designed as peer observation, it facilitates peer learning by creating opportunities for faculty to observe and reflect on each other's practices. This can foster the development of communities of practice (both formal or informal) where teachers share insights, strategies, and feedback on specific topics or areas of interest (for example: providing feedback on group activities, manag-

ing debates, applying team-based learning strategies, designing revision activities, and so on), thus enhancing collective teaching practices and professional development.

Finally, it is important to track the long-term impact of teaching observation on faculty development. This involves assessing whether teaching observation helps increase faculty engagement with other development initiatives and whether it serves as an effective tool for developing broader teaching competencies over time.

Measuring impact is one of the major 'open questions' in faculty development. Identifying measures of impact (as well as of effectiveness) remains a topic of reflection and discussion, and this—naturally—also applies to teaching observation practices. Such a measurement, however, can only begin with the objectives the institution set when adopting the practice. Quantitative aspects, such as participation rates in the initiative, requests for follow-up observations, and involvement in other voluntary faculty development initiatives, can be monitored. Additionally, more qualitative impacts can be tracked: the formation of spontaneous communities for reflecting on teaching issues, the publication of articles on discipline-specific pedagogy or experimental approaches, and so on.



To find out how Charles University teachers link teaching observations to the [Framework for Effective Teaching](#), you [can click HERE](#).

//04. CONCLUSIONS



At the university level, teaching observation is a multifaceted process that includes developmental and reflective practices, formative feedback, and structured implementation frameworks.

While it holds significant potential for enhancing teaching quality and professional development, it also presents challenges that require careful consideration and resource allocation. Effective teaching observation practices are those that are well-structured, goal-oriented, and supported by educational leadership and collegial partnerships.

Take-home messages:

For Faculty Members

- **Engage in reflective teaching practices:** Treat teaching observations as a space for thoughtful reflection, aligning instructional methods with both personal goals and institutional standards.
- **Welcome constructive feedback:** Embrace feedback as a resource for growth, using it to make targeted improvements in teaching techniques.
- **Learn from peer observation:** Observing colleagues' approaches can inspire new teaching strategies, enriching your own practices with fresh perspectives.

For Educational Developers

- **Facilitate non-judgmental observations:** Guide the process with a focus on growth, ensuring feedback remains supportive and constructive.
- **Help bridge feedback with practical development:** Assist faculty in turning feedback into specific, realistic actions that foster progressive improvements.
- **Clarify roles in observation:** Define and communicate observer roles clearly, creating an environment centered on collaboration and professional growth.

For Teaching and Learning Centers

- **Ensure teaching observation sustainability and accessibility:** Design teaching observation processes that are manageable and adaptable, supporting consistent faculty engagement.
- **Leverage data for faculty development offerings:** Use data from observations to shape relevant and impactful faculty development programs, tailored to specific teaching needs.
- **Cultivate communities of practice:** Encourage peer networks for sharing insights and strategies, building a culture of collective professional development.
- **Strengthen observation skills through training:** Provide all the actors of the process (observers, observed teachers, if present facilitators, etc.) with the necessary skills for effective observation and constructive feedback.

For Institutions

- **Incorporate observations into development pathways:** Position teaching observations as integral to professional growth, especially suggesting it during the onboarding process.
- **Demonstrate commitment to quality and innovation:** Use observations to support and communicate high standards of teaching and continuous improvement.
- **Develop a culture of continuous growth:** Align teaching observations with the institution's mission of educational excellence, fostering an environment of reflection and innovation.

Remember

This document serves as a starting point for the adoption of teaching observation practices, offering a framework to understand its multiple interpretations, the diversity of practices, and the range of tools used in different institutional and cultural contexts. Rather than presenting a fixed model, these guidelines aim to provide a common ground for discussion, adaptation, and experimentation.

At Charles University, a first level of localization has already been initiated through the activities conducted in December 2024, which are reflected in these guidelines. However, the real work begins now: the next phase is about actively monitoring the experiences as they unfold, gathering insights from those who engage with these practices firsthand, and learning from both successes and challenges.

This process is not about immediate perfection but about progressive refinement. The goal is to foster a community of practice that openly discusses what works, what needs adjustment, and what should be reconsidered to make teaching observation a meaningful and sustainable practice within Charles University. By valuing the perspectives of early adopters and using their feedback to shape future developments, we will gradually move toward more precise recommendations and ultimately define the boundaries and specificities of a model that truly fits our institutional reality.

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ANNEX I: PRE-OBSERVATION MEETING – DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Getting Acquainted with the Teacher Before Observation

Note: The following questions are only suggestions. This part of the conversation should not be a rigidly predefined set of questions. The purpose is to get to know the teacher and understand their approach to teaching. Questions should be prepared based on the specific context.



Examples of questions:

-
- ❑ What aspects of your teaching do you consider to be your strengths?
 - ❑ What do you think a good lesson should include to be considered successful?
 - ❑ What motivates and excites you about teaching this subject?
 - ❑ What are your strengths as a teacher?
 - ❑ What does it feel like for you to be observed?
 - ❑ What is one of your best/worst teaching experiences?
 - ❑ How do you usually plan and prepare your lessons?
 - ❑ Do you reflect on your teaching in any way after a lesson or course?
 - ❑ What role does feedback from students or colleagues play in your teaching?
 - ❑ Are you trying to improve anything specific in your teaching this semester?
-

2. Context:

Number of students:

Student composition (e.g., year, field of study, language proficiency):

Course stage (beginning, mid-semester, end of semester):

Teaching format (lecture, seminar, lab, hybrid, online, other):

Specific challenges within the group (e.g., engagement, large class size, assessment difficulties, students with special needs):

Any other factors the observer should be aware of:

3. Lesson Overview:

What will students be doing during the lesson?

What would you like students to learn during the lesson (learning outcomes for this session)?

What teaching strategies and materials will you use? Why did you choose them?

How did you structure the lesson? Why did you organize it this way?

Why did you select this specific lesson for the observation?

4. Goals

Would you like me to observe what students are doing during the lesson, or focus on what you are doing?

Areas of focus (examples):

- ▣ Student engagement
- ▣ Clarity of instructions and communication
- ▣ Use of active learning strategies
- ▣ Use of the learning environment and materials
- ▣ Providing feedback
- ▣ Formulating questions for students
- ▣ Handling student mistakes
- ▣ Classroom time management
- ▣ Lesson delivery
- ▣ Other (please specify):

What specific indicators could be observed during the lesson?

Example: *For the area of "student engagement", we might focus on the indicator: "The teacher uses strategies to pose questions that encourage active student participation."*

Note: *It is essential to ensure that both the observer and the teacher clearly understand the goals. Agreement on these goals is crucial to meet expectations and build up trust.*

5. Materials Before the Observation

Will any materials be shared before the observation?

- Lesson plan
 - Course syllabus
 - Recording of a previous lesson
 - Other:
-

6. Organization of the Observation

Will the observer use any specific tool or protocol during the visit?

- A predefined observation template: Which one?
- A custom form (agreed upon during this meeting)
- No specific tool, only general notes
- Other:

Observer placement:

- Discreet position at the back of the room
- Among the students
- Online participation with camera off/on
- Another agreed placement:

Will the observer be introduced to the students?

- Yes. How?
 - No introduction needed
-

7. Follow-Up Steps and Reflection

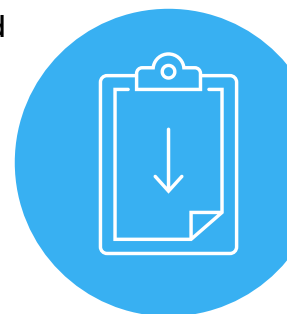
Date and time of the feedback meeting:

Preferred feedback format:

- Written report
 - Face-to-face discussion
 - Combination of both
-

ANNEX II: OBSERVATION GRIDS EXAMPLES

The observation grids selected as examples in this work were chosen based on specific criteria. First, they are all publicly available, ensuring transparency and accessibility. Second, they are used in different universities, representing diverse institutional contexts and approaches. Finally, they exhibit distinct structural and methodological characteristics, making them particularly useful for illustrative purposes. It is important to emphasize that these grids are not presented as the best or most effective tools in absolute terms, but rather as examples that highlight the variety of possible observation frameworks in higher education.



Emory University, Center for Faculty Development and Excellence

- ↘ [Teaching Observation Form: Quantitative](#)
- ↘ [Teaching Observation Form: Qualitative](#)

Source: Emory University (n.d.) *Teaching observation forms*. Center for Faculty Development and Excellence, Emory University, Atlanta, GA. Available at: <https://cfde.emory.edu/resources/teaching-pedagogy/observations-forms.html> (Accessed: 23 July 2025).

University of British Columbia

- ↘ [Classroom Observation Protocol for Undergraduate STEM - COPUS](#)

Source: Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative (n.d.) *The Classroom Observation Protocol for Undergraduate STEM (COPUS)*. University of British Columbia. Available at: <http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/tools/copus.html> (Accessed: 23 July 2025)

Loughborough University

- ↘ [University Developmental Observation Form](#)

Source: Loughborough University (2024) *University Developmental Teaching Observation Form 2024–25*. Organisational Development Hub, Loughborough University. Available at: <https://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/od-hub/topics/teaching-observations/> (Accessed: 23 July 2025)

University of North Florida, Faculty Excellence and Academic Engagement

- ↘ [FEC's Peer Observation Form](#)

Source: University of North Florida (n.d.) *FEC's Peer Observation Form*. Office of Faculty Excellence and Academic Engagement, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL. Available at: <https://www.unf.edu/feae/resources-and-programs/FEC-Peer-Obs-Form.html> (Accessed: 23 July 2025)

University Teaching Academy Manchester Metropolitan University

- ↘ [Structured Observation Form](#)
- ↘ [Semi-Structured Observation Form](#)
- ↘ [Open Observation Form](#)

Source: Manchester Metropolitan University (2023) *Structured Observation Form, Semi-Structured Observation Form, Open Observation Form*. University Teaching Academy, Manchester Metropolitan University. Available at: <https://www.mmu.ac.uk/about-us/professional-services/uta/peer-observation/observation-resources> (Accessed: 23 July 2025)

