

UCU lesson observations bargaining checklist

UCU believes strongly that lesson observation procedures must be negotiated between the UCU branch and college management resulting in a formal agreement.

UCU recognises that there is an appropriate place for lesson observations within institutions so long as they are conducted with the right safeguards and procedures in place.

The philosophy and approach underpinning lesson observations schemes must be:

- That they are supportive of those being observed
- That it is an opportunity for teaching professionals to receive advice and guidance from fellow professional teachers on their strengths and weaknesses
- To provide material for professional reflection
- To identify areas for CPD and further training and support

Acceptable aims of lesson observation:

- To observe actual teaching and learning in order to raise the quality of teaching and learning and so enhance the students' learning experience
- To provide evidence for part of the college's/service's formal appraisal scheme and discussions(not linked to pay)
- To provide evidence for probation and professional formation reports where appropriate
- To provide evidence for appropriate formal procedures such as capability and competence
- To provide a system of identifying, sharing, improving and developing good practice
- To provide evidence for the college self assessment reports
- To provide evidence of teaching and learning during an OFSTED Inspection
- To provide evidence that would encourage staff to reflect on their delivery styles and build on their skills

Issues requiring formal agreement:

- **Number and frequency** – one per year under normal circumstances i.e. not part of capability procedure or probation period etc. No more than three per teaching year.
- **Notice period** - the amount of notice given by management for the lesson to be observed, seek at least three weeks' notice.

- **Window period** – should be as small as possible, exact lesson notified in advance is optimal. Window should never be longer than the equivalent period of an OFSTED inspection.
- **Selection of lesson** – good practice is the line manager and teacher being observed should be involved in selecting lesson to be observed.
- **Who observes** – observers should be trained teachers, trained in observing. Where peer observation is used a panel of observers should be used from which those being observed can choose.
- **Purpose** – the purpose of the observation should be clear and agreed.
- **Feedback** – immediate brief verbal followed up with more detailed and written.
- **Outcomes** – should be agreed, observed also able make notes on records of observation
- **Grades** – where grading is used there should be agreement on what grades result in action being required. UCU opposes compulsory action resulting from satisfactory or grade 3 observations.
- **Appeal** – there should be a right of appeal when observations are not carried out according to agreed procedures or where staff are unhappy with the outcomes.