

# **Module 11    Practical Teaching**

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## **Unit 11.1            Observation Lessons**

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# Introduction

## About this unit

Welcome to Unit 11.1 - Observational lessons, the first of two units in Module 11 - Practical Teaching.

This unit consists of three sections:

- *Section 1: Getting started*, which as its name suggests, helps you to draw together what you have learnt from previous modules and prepare for observing an experienced practitioner in a teaching environment
- *Section 2: Conducting the observation*, covers skills and issues in objective observation
- *Section 3: Writing the reports* assists you in organising and presenting your final assessment and in presenting a journal of your experiences throughout this exercise.

## How to use this book

In addition to basic information, this unit includes activities and two assignments to be completed and submitted to your tutor.

The activities will not be considered as part of your assessment for the unit. Their purpose is to assist you reflect and organise yourself as you proceed through the unit.

## How you'll be assessed

You will be assessed on your response to two written assignments – one to be completed after Section 1 (prior to the observation lessons) and the other to be submitted after the observation lessons.

Assignment 1 is concerned with the preparation work you do prior to the observations. It is a report on items including:

- arrangements made,
- background information,
- key aspects chosen to be observed for:
  - theory session, and
  - practical session and,
  - how the sessions will be reported.

Assignment 2 is the report you submit after observing the lessons. It will describe the techniques you observed which were used to deliver instruction in the observed practise lessons. Credit will also be awarded for the journal you will submit with your report.

Please contact your tutor regarding the time allowed for their completion.

## Finding your way

As you work through the text you'll see symbols in the left margin of some pages. These icons guide you through the content.



Read



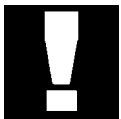
Important- take note!



Activity



Assessment task



## Competency

The curriculum of this training program for Technical and Vocational teachers is competency based. The competency for each unit is expressed as a number of learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Assessment criteria specify what you must be able to do to show you have gained the knowledge and skills needed to achieve each learning outcome.

Each unit has its' own specified criteria. Recognition of prior learning is encouraged. If you feel confident that you have the necessary level of competence to successfully complete the elements shown under Assessment criteria on the next page, you may be able to take the assessment without studying the unit.

## Learning outcomes

When you have completed this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the techniques used to deliver instruction in an observed theory lesson
- evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques used in the theory lesson
- describe the techniques used to deliver instruction in an observed practise lesson on a topic relevant to your area of expertise.
- evaluate the effectiveness of the techniques used to deliver instruction in the practise lesson

## Assessment criteria

Identify and discuss in relation to each observed theory lesson:

- student learning outcomes
- instructional technique/s
- appropriateness of instructional techniques to the subject matter
- appropriateness of learning aids and resources
- student responses.

Identify and discuss in relation to each observed practical lesson:

- student learning outcomes
- instructional technique/s
- appropriateness of learning aids and resources
- student responses
- students' ability to demonstrate skills taught

Identify and discuss in relation to teacher:

- communication with students
- openness/response to students' contribution
- extent to which teacher seems approachable
- teacher's mannerisms i.e. those that enhance learning e.g. maintains eye contact, voice inflection; those distracting from learning e.g. rattles keys, makes annoying sounds
- encourages appropriate social interaction among students
- promotes suitable physical environment

We have translated these assessment criteria into two assignments for this unit. The actual assignments are referred to in the text of this booklet, but they have been placed at the end, to allow flexibility for the course administrators who will advise you of the processes they have decided on.

### **Other resources**

- Modules 3 and 4 in this course.



# Section 1



## Getting started

### What's required?

This unit gives you the opportunity to observe teachers in practise to see how they apply the principles and techniques you have covered in this course so far. The observation will help you to consolidate your understanding and reflect on skills and techniques that you can use in similar situations.

You will need to carefully review the material in:

- Module 3 Instructional techniques and
- Module 4 Learning Resources

So you can highlight important principles and skills to observe in these demonstration situations.

You'll need to do some careful planning, not only in regard to organising the observation sessions, but also in terms of working out what information you need to collect:

- prior to the session
- during the session, and
- at the end of the session

You will need to decide:

- what you are going to observe - because you cannot observe everything
- how you are going to collect and record the information; and
- how you will use this information in your two reports.

All this planning should occur before the observation sessions. I suggest that you first read the assignments carefully so that you are clear about the outcomes you are expected to produce. Have a brief look through Section 3 as well to clarify this even further. Then, with a clear idea of what's expected, start working through Sections 1 and 2 in this booklet which will guide you through the process, encouraging you to review, organise, implement, reflect, evaluate and record.

There's an old saying often referred to in educational circles:

*"I hear and I forget  
I see and I remember  
I do and I understand."*

This unit is about *seeing* so you *remember*. The next unit will be your chance to *do*, to try teaching theory and practical sessions, and there may be many useful strategies gained from this unit that will assist you.

## Negotiate arrangements

You will need to observe at least one theory and one practical session in your area of subject expertise, conducted by a competent and qualified teacher. Talk to your tutor about whether you can make these arrangements yourself or whether they will be made for you.

Make sure you have given yourself enough time to prepare for the observations prior to these sessions. Preparation will require that you review the modules as discussed above, interview the teacher about the class and the program and do your planning.

You will need to be very clear about your role and how you will conduct yourself during the observations. For example you will be an observer only so you will not be involved in the sessions in any way.

- it's best that you place yourself in a position where you can observe and record unobtrusively otherwise your behaviour could make the teacher and or the students uncomfortable and consequently affect their performance.
- your task of observing and recording will require concentration, so don't get distracted by questions from students, who may try to draw you in to what they are doing.
- teachers may find it somewhat threatening to have an observer in their classroom recording their performance; so, it is important that you are discreet and professional in your approach. You do not give your written evaluation of the session to the teacher although you may discuss the session with this person after the event. Ask questions about their approach ("I wondered why you used... approach") but avoid advice giving (You should have... Why don't you...) which may sound presumptuous coming from a trainee.

## Professional Behaviour

As with all work in the education profession, you will be expected to keep information about individuals within professional circles and confidential. Only those who need to know should be given information about an individual. It is easy to carry personal information outside of the professional circle – at which point it becomes gossip.

## Collect background information

You will need information about the teaching context that you will be observing, for example the:

- characteristics of the student group
- course and subject they are studying and where they have reached in the syllabus
- aims or learning outcomes of the sessions you will be observing
- training environment—is it face to face or flexible delivery, formal or informal?



### Activity 1 The characteristics of the student group

Module 3.1 describes a range of characteristics to be considered in planning course delivery. Review these and discuss relevant information with the teacher/s you will observe.

Find out if and how content and delivery of the subject material is adapted to suit the needs of the group or individuals within the group.

Record important points about what you expect to observe in the space below.

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## Activity 2

### Review course material

Module 3 *Instructional Techniques* and Module 4 *Learning Resources* covered a wide range of information and skills about the practise of teaching. It's time to review these modules so that are aware of how they are applied in the situations you observe. In the event that you will observe students at the secondary education level, information is provided in the appropriate section on some specific activities to note in observing them.

A short list of some of the content is given here. It includes:

- principles of adult learning
- identification of instructional strategies
- characteristics and quality control of instructional systems
- behavioural objectives
- competence—its nature and characteristics
- assessment:
  - what it is
  - norm referenced / criterion referenced
  - formative/summative
  - fair / valid / reliable
- evaluation—what / why / how
- unit planning
- lesson planning.

The list is short, but it contains headings for some substantial pieces of work covered already. It has the following implications for your observation:

- you will have to be selective—you cannot observe all of the above
- some of them will be essential
- your observation(s) will have to be focused

Record important points in the space below.

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**Check your answers with your tutor.**



## Plan the observation

The observation process is quite complex. It involves many activities including:

- asking questions
- interpreting experience
- sharing what is learned with others
- building on relationships with others
- keeping a record
- developing your unique inquirer's role

Good observation includes all of the physical senses, particularly hearing and seeing, but also touch, smell and taste.

It is also important to acknowledge that the collection procedures you use will vary depending on the level of trust you have developed with the people you observe. Part of the planning should involve negotiation / discussion about the things you are hoping to comment on in your report, with the teacher you observe. This could, for example, involve your not disturbing the people you are studying during the lesson. You should be unobtrusive and fill a natural role that is acceptable to you and to the people you are observing.



### Activity 3

List here some of the things you would like to discuss with your mentor teacher when you are making arrangements for the observation lesson(s).

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### Plan the report

In your final report, you are expected to identify and discuss, in relation to each observed theory lesson:

- student learning outcomes
- instructional technique/s
- appropriateness of instructional techniques to the subject matter
- appropriateness of learning aids and resources
- student responses

Identify and discuss in relation to each observed practical lesson:

- student learning outcomes
- instructional technique/s
- appropriateness of learning aids and resources
- student responses
- students' ability to demonstrate skills taught

Identify and discuss in relation to teacher:

- communication with students
- openness/response to students' contribution
- extent to which teacher seems approachable
- teacher's mannerisms i.e. those that enhance learning e.g. maintains eye contact, voice inflection; those distracting from learning e.g. rattles keys, makes annoying sounds
- encourages appropriate social interaction among students
- promotes suitable physical environment

These requirements will give you some structure around which you can plan the report.



#### Activity 4

List here your initial thoughts about how you will prepare / present your final report.

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## Summary

The actual process of observing either a theory or a practical lesson does not take long. However, if insufficient planning has been done in advance, the time will be wasted.

Remember to negotiate your requirements and needs around the demands of the mentor teacher and the environment in which you are a guest.

If you have completed all of the activities listed above, you should be well prepared to gain the maximum benefit from the lesson(s) you will observe.



## Assignment No. 11.1-1

You are now required to do the Assignment 11.1 – 1 that will be found at the end of this unit or distributed by your tutor.



## Section 2



### Conducting the observation

#### Some tips about observing lessons

The purpose of observing lessons is to see the various interpersonal interactions between and among the people in the classroom or workshop, including the teacher, the ancillary staff, if any, and the students. You will not be able to observe every little thing that occurs – you will have to be selective. The following steps may help you.

1. Keep a log of your observations, but don't try to write down everything.
2. Maintain the focus of your observation. Remember above, we said that you would have to be selective. You will have to cull/edit/select what is important to you for your report.
3. Be aware that your prior experiences, the novelty of having an observer in the classroom and your personal style will all be reflected in your perceptions, and thus in your log.
4. Develop a system for your observations. You might, for example:
  - focus for part of the time on the class as a whole
  - focus on specific teacher activities: giving assignments, asking questions etc
  - observe communication skills
    - focus on the nonverbal behaviour of the teacher
    - language use
    - articulation
  - focus on specific student activities
  - classroom management
    - analyse the physical arrangement of the environment
    - supervision of pupils
  - observe safety and procedural requirements
  - observe how the teacher reinforces appropriate behaviour



### Activity 5

In Activities 1.2 and 1.3 you started to think about the things you would observe during your observation lesson(s). This activity is designed to get you to focus clearly on exactly the things you will be looking for, so we ask you to list them below. Notice that we have deliberately given you less space to record your plans.

List what you hope to observe here.

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### Participant's roles and expectations

Although you will be in a classroom or workshop setting for your observations, there are two main people involved in the observation process: you and the mentor teacher.

The main role of the mentor teacher is to support you in your transition to the profession of teaching i.e. s/he is assisting you to reach your goals.

You as a trainee teacher are an invited guest in the session(s) and you would be expected to behave in an appropriate professional manner. This could involve you in all or some of the following:

- displaying a cooperative attitude
- being responsible
- being punctual

- respecting confidentiality of information
- asking questions
- returning borrowed resources promptly, and in good condition
- showing initiative
- adopting safe working practises



### Activity 6

List here the implications of the above list for your lesson observations.

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## Summary

There has not been a lot of volume in this section, and there has been some repetition. We have tried to help you to focus your thinking so that when you observe the lessons, you will be able to identify techniques you can use to make your own lessons better.

Some textbooks refer to the term “clinical supervision” and the main purpose of clinical supervision is observation of critical incidents that impact on the process being supervised, whether it is a teaching practicum or a medical operation.



## Section 3



### Writing the final reports

#### Objective versus subjective reporting

Let's begin by considering what is meant by observation. To observe is not the same as to see. To observe is a deliberate act, and there is always a reason for it.

In this module, your specific reason for observing lessons is to pick up ideas, tips, techniques, and strategies that you can incorporate into your own lessons to make them more effective.

As well as observing, you have to accurately record your observations.

You will choose the method of observation/reporting that is most suitable for you. Remember that there are several different methods for collecting and recording observations, and they can be divided into three groups:

- chart methods, e.g. checklists, rating scale
- narrative methods
- sampling methods

Whatever method you use, it is important to distinguish between:

- The **objective facts**—exactly what you see or hear, and
- Your **subjective interpretation** of these facts—conclusions you may make from what you have seen or heard.

Our minds are constantly trying to make meaning out of what we see, and so we tend to try to interpret what we are seeing automatically. There are dangers in doing so when we are recording our observations of lessons, because our own mindset determines how we interpret what we see. Others with a different mindset may interpret the same information quite differently. In other words, our life experiences give us a set of filters that we use to make our own interpretation of events, which can lead to a skewing of the information.

Therefore, in recording observations, it is vital to document the observed facts only and avoid recording our inferences or interpretations unless these are specifically identified as such. This distinction will be important when you are writing up your observations afterwards.

**Some tips for writing observation records.**

1. Know in advance what it is you want to observe in particular.
2. Develop some shorthand techniques to help you write notes you can understand later.
3. Keep to facts, not interpretations.
4. Schedule time soon after the observation to write up your observations in more detail.

Following are three samples of checklists/organisers that you may like to adapt to your particular purposes. In the first sample, we have assumed that you want to observe the implementation of adult learning principles in the classroom. In one column there is a list of possible observations with space in the second column for your comments/notes. If you intend to use this sort of format, you should keep your list manageable and know where the items are on the page. Otherwise you will be flicking through pages looking for a heading and you could miss what is going on in the lesson. In the second, we have assumed that you are looking to observe what techniques your mentor teacher uses to involve the class in learning activities, how they use media to its best advantage and how they integrate the introduction body and conclusion of the lesson. You may want to observe four or five items, but be aware that if you try too many, you risk missing important points. The third sample will help you to observe a lesson taught students at the secondary education level.

**SAMPLE 1**

<b>LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET—Adult learning principles</b>	
<b>Observation Category</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Encourage problem-solving ability rather than content provision	
Involve the learner in an active way - encouraging them to be interactive	
Use the learner's past knowledge as a foundation for new learning	
Ensure that the learning environment is suitably organised and arranged	
Base new learning activities on an analysis of the learner's needs, in agreement with the learner	
Ensure that the assessment of learning outcomes is understood by the learner	

**SAMPLE 2**

<b>LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET</b>	
<b>Observation Category</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Techniques for involving the class	
Use of media	
Integrating introduction, body and conclusion of lesson	



**SAMPLE 3****PART A – Teacher Activities**

<b>LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET</b>	
<b>Observation Category</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Starting the lesson <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reference to previous knowledge</li> <li>• arouse students' interest</li> <li>• state importance/relevance of lesson to students</li> </ul>	
Procedure incorporated in body of lesson e.g. lecture, discussion, demonstration	
Materials used in course of the lesson e.g. textbooks, television, models, handouts	
Provisions made to cater to individual differences	
Disciplinary techniques used	
How did the teacher conclude the lesson	
How did the teacher's personal qualities help advance the lesson e.g. use of correct grammar, voice volume and pitch	

**SAMPLE 3****PART B – Student Classroom Behaviour**

<b>LESSON OBSERVATION SHEET</b>	
<b>Observation Category</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Students' readiness for lesson e.g. sitting at desk with books, walking around classroom	
Student participation in lesson discussions	
Students' response to teacher's questions e.g. raised hands	



## Summary

There are different ways to record observations. Part of your planning will be to determine which method best suits your needs.

Knowing in advance what you are looking for will help you to structure your observations and to maintain your focus.

Be careful to distinguish between the ***objective facts*** – exactly what you see or hear, and your ***subjective interpretation*** of these facts – conclusions you may take from what you have seen or heard i.e. keep interpretations, inferences and conclusions entirely separate.



## Assignment No. 11.1-2

You are now required to do the Assignment 11.1 – 2 that will be found at the end of this unit or distributed by your tutor.





## Assignment No. 11.1-1

**To be completed and returned to your tutor for assessment.**

**This is an open book assignment and you may refer to whatever references you have at your disposal.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Due Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare a report on arrangements made, background information, key aspects chosen to be observed for:

- (a) theory session
- (b) practical session and how the techniques will be recorded.

This report should be about one page for each lesson to be observed.





## Assignment No. 11.1-2

**To be completed and returned to your tutor for assessment.**

**This is an open book assignment and you may refer to whatever references you have at your disposal.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Due Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

This is in two parts – one is a report of a theory lesson that you have observed, and the other a report of a practical lesson you have observed.

### **Part one**

In relation to the observed theory lesson, submit your report to your TVET tutor. It is expected to be of no more than three pages, and it should cover topics including:

- student learning outcomes
- instructional technique/s
- appropriateness of instructional techniques to the subject matter
- appropriateness of learning aids and resources
- student responses.

### **Part two**

In relation to the observed practical lesson submit your report to your TVET tutor. It is expected to be of no more than three pages, and it should cover topics including:

- student learning outcomes
- instructional technique/s
- appropriateness of learning aids and resources
- student responses
- students' ability to demonstrate skills taught