



Policies and Procedures

Operations Department

Direct Observation Skills in Students

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Direct Observation Skills in Students

1. Defining Direct Observation

Direct observation occurs when an assessor is able to monitor the student's interaction directly at the place of work. This is an assessment on the practical aspect of the course. The assessor is physically present at the workplace during the session.

Students should be aware that this is as much a teaching tool as it is an evaluation tool. It is a learning tool because the assessor will often participate in the encounter by making suggestions to the student, pointing out areas that may need attention. The assessor will also record comments and observations on the competency of the student. These will be kept by the assessor and will not be given to the student however, the student will get verbal feedback during the session. Providing feedback to the student is an important part of using direct observation as a learning tool. After the session, the assessor will also usually discuss the observations with the student. In addition, the assessor will thereafter prepare a report and the student will get a written copy of this report as feedback.

2. The use for Direct Observation

Direct observation is used to evaluate:

- i. Knowledge of the theoretical content and its relation to day-to-day activities
 - i. Knowledge of the practical aspect of the course
 - ii. Implementation and execution of the skills learnt – both theory and practice.
 - iii. Knowledge of the management and administrative tasks
 - iv. Interaction and communication with staff, parents and students
 - v. Organizational skills.
 - vi. Attitude of student

3. How does the student apply for Direct Observation?

Direct Observation is part of the requirement for the completion of the course therefore, each student will sit for at least one Direct Observation session. The student usually emails our course administrator on admin@futurefocus.com.mt and asks for an appointment for Direct Observation. In the email, the student will need to specify name and surname, location of placement and course. It is up to the student to decide at which point of the course he/she wishes to have the Direct Observation session,

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however it is advisable that the student would have already completed at least 50 hours at the placement location so that practical skills related to the placement would have been acquired. The student must allow a period of three weeks before the final date can be set up. During these three weeks, the appointment is set up by the course administrator, who gets in touch with the assessor and makes an appointment for a date and time when the session is to take place. Next, the student is informed by email from the course administrator of the date and time for the Direct Observation session to be held.

4. How is the set-up of the Direct Observation session?

The student shall attend the allocated location, which will be the Centre where he/she would be doing their placement. The assessor will come at the agreed time and will observe the student within the place of work. Direct observation consists more of a discussion that takes place between assessor and student, wherein the assessor would require information about the student's practice, rather than watching the practice being done. It will involve case and situational scenarios where the assessor explains a hypothetical situation and will want to hear how the student would tackle and resolve the issue. The student will be asked general questions which would have been covered in theory and will be expected to describe how he/she would react in such situations.

The setting is informal because the student will be within the usual work environment and will greet the assessor at her usual desk at work. It does not involve a formal exam set-up.

5. Does the student need to fill any form?

Students do not need to fill a form or worry about setting plans with assessors. All the administrative work takes place within our offices and students are informed of the date of direct observation by email. They are requested to confirm the appointment, and the office administrator refers the confirmation to the assessor.

6. How is the student informed of the session?

The administration office sets up all that is required for the appointment and will send an email to the student to inform and confirm with him/her when the session will be taking place.

7. What is the timeframe for a Direct Observation session?

Direct Observation sessions usually take between 45 to 60 minutes.

8. Is a report prepared at the end of the Direct Observation session?

The assessor writes down notes during the session, however a proper report is prepared thereafter on the basis of what the assessor would have observed

9. Will the student receive a copy of the report?

Following the session, the course administrator will forward a copy of the report to the administration office. Our office will then proceed to forward this report to the student. The student can then be aware of the outcome of the session and have access to the feedback provided by the assessor.

10. What does the assessor look for during the Direct Observation?

Case Study:

The Assessor, Mr A, was assessing the student Ms L on her managerial and leadership skills with respect to a Childcare Centre. At the start of the session, Mr A enquired about Ms L's position and role. Ms L specified that she is the manager and also the owner of the Centre. The assessor observed that the fact that the student owned the Centre could be considered as an additional asset within her practice for the course being studied. This gave her the responsibility which could strengthen the practical aspect.

The assessor, Mr A, proceeded by asking first about the Health and Safety policy and procedure within the Centre. Mr A was very meticulous, evident by the fact that he required accurate details of the process which takes place in situations of emergency, asking about the actual routes and locations of safety exits and assembly points. Mr A asked about the frequency of practice of fire drills and made it clear that these had to take place as often as possible so as

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to have the practice reinforced in the young students. Mr A appeared satisfied with the system applied in order to gather the children in case of emergency, but he was careful to leave nothing uncovered as shown by the fact that he asked to see it in effect. The student demonstrated how they used a skipping rope which all the children were trained to hold upon being directed to do so.

Mr A went into the system applied where it comes to the relationship with the carers within the Centre and also wanted to know how Ms L deals with queries from parents. Although satisfied with the replies, Mr A went a step further by asking Ms L how she would react should there be an issue between a parent and a carer. Mr A showed his satisfaction in the replies provided by Ms L, and for another time during the session he showed that he was being thorough by the fact that he elaborated and gave further details on the approach that Ms L should use in such situations.

Mr A covered a number of other practical situations which could happen whilst managing a Childcare Centre and was confident that Ms L was accurate in her answers. This was evidenced by the fact that Mr A felt he could proceed by questioning on the theoretical level. The assessor went through a number of authors, checking on whether Ms L was aware of their philosophies and their teachings. Mr A used a highly professional approach but maintained an approachable level which could be seen by the fact that Ms L was comfortable and could discuss her opinions and views about the topics which were brought up.

Following this, Mr A asked to have a look at the premises. His satisfaction about the setting of the appropriate areas of the Centre was clear from his comments about the divisions of the play/dining/recreation areas etc.

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Before ending the session, Mr A checked for understanding by going over the main points of the discussion which took place, requiring a clarification of the areas he had previously pointed out as being central to the effective and efficient management of the centre.

To conclude, the assessor communicated effectively with the student as seen from her replies and her positive attitude to implement and maintain all that was discussed. The technique applied by Mr A allowed Ms L not only to accept the comments but also to feel comfortable with accepting the feedback, shown by the manner in which she questioned about details and how she ascertained that they will not be overlooked.

11. Points to remember

- i. Health and safety – sound knowledge of the requirements of H&S.
- ii. Awareness of presence of emergency exits, firefighting equipment and first aid needs. Adequate signage has to be in place within the building for this aim and purpose.
- iii. Certainty that all staff understands comprehensively the procedure for evacuation in the event of an emergency.
- iv. Ascertain that all staff is trained in the operation of fire extinguishers - the priority shall be to follow evacuation procedures before attempting to extinguish but only very small fires that will not cause any unnecessary risk.
- v. Where is the assembly point located? Is it clearly indicated accordingly?

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- vi. How many times is the evacuation plan practiced? Is this taking place at different times of the day?
- vii. How would you react upon evacuation signal?
- viii. Do you have a plan for duties of staff members in case of emergency? How often is this discussed and practiced? Who will assume responsibility for standing at the designated exit and will encourage everyone to vacate the building? Which person will ensure that no one re-enters the building?
- ix. The importance of attendance sheets: how do you ensure that these duly reflect the daily attendance. Where is it placed? What is the importance of the attendance sheet in case of emergency? The manager shall be responsible to provide the attendance sheets upon reaching the Assembly Point and shall check that all persons are present in accordance with the list of the classes taking place at the time of emergency.
- x. How do you ensure that the environment is up to the requisite standards (cleanliness/hygiene/adequate room for varied activities/ adequate sectioning for varied activities etc)? What is your role in the upkeep of these standards? How do you oversee that they are maintained?
- xi. Filing system – organized and clear so that information is readily accessible
- xii. Organizing extra-curricular events for parents and children - would you include this? Give an example.
- xiii. Communication with staff. Meetings - how often are these held? Do you ensure that there is fluid communication between you and the staff? What measures do you use? Do you ensure that meetings are held outside working hours? Is all the staff given an opportunity to receive and give feedback. How is this taken up and acknowledged? How is feedback addressed?

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- xiv. Communication with parents – When would you inform a parent of an occurrence which took place during school hours. How would you tackle the situation whereby a parent becomes aware of an occurrence of which she should have been informed, but was not?
- xv. Communication with carers – how would you deal with a carer who is not performing up to the required standards? What method would you use to point out the shortcoming? What would your tipping-off entail? Would you speak to the carer in question on a personal level or would you use a general and generic approach?
- xvi. Communication between staff and parents – in the event of an issue between a carer and a parent, how would you deal with the situation? Would you address the issue with the parent in front of the carer, and vice versa?
- xvii. Knowledge of theory done in class – how would you apply a named theory to the practical situation? What do you believe applies in practice where it comes to certain (named) theories (egg the nature/nurture debate)? What is your opinion on these theories? Which school of thought do you support? How do you implement it within your practice?

GOOD LUCK!