NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY
Professional Education Programs

NIET | NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

NAU Model Observation Protocol

The model protocol was developed with support and expertise from the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) and is based in great part on NIET's extensive experience conducting evidence-based observations and meaningful evaluation conversations that lead to improved practice.

The NAU Observation Protocol guides University Supervisor through several steps:

1) Before the Observation:
    - Teacher Candidate completes Pre-Conference form
    - University Supervisor reviews Teacher Candidate's submission of the Pre-Conference form and considers which response would be appropriate:
        - Conducting a formal Pre-Conference (virtually, over the phone, etc.)
        - Responding to submitted Pre-Conference form with feedback.
2) During the Observation:
    - University Supervisor will actively collect evidence (scripting, video/audio recording, picture taking, etc.)
3) After the Observation:
    - Teacher Candidate and University Supervisor will immediately debrief the area of reinforcement, evidence to support the reinforcement, and identify potential area of refinement.
    - The University Supervisor will prepare for the virtual post-conference by:
        - analyzing the evidence to further develop the area of refinement
        - developing the reinforcement and refinement objectives
        - Identifying the practice that will impact the identified area of refinement
    - Conducting the virtual Post-conference

Pre Conference:

A pre-conference should include the following: an introduction, a discussion based on the review of lesson materials, and a summary of next steps.

Pre-conference Introduction (2 min)
The introduction helps to set the tone and purpose of the pre-conference. While it may appear overly formal it can be valuable in establishing routines that help to keep the conversation focused and brief. Below is an example of one approach to the introduction of a pre-conference:

- Greeting: *"Thanks for taking the time to meet with me. I'm really looking forward to coming into your class on _________"*
- Time: "*This discussion should take us about 20 minutes"*
- Set Purpose: *"The purpose of our conversation is for you to help me to know what I can expect to see happen during the observation and for you to know what things I am specifically looking for."*

Discussion of the Lesson (15 min)
Following the brief introduction, the assessor should transition quickly into probing further on the candidates intentions and plans for the lesson being observed. It is most productive when the University

Supervisor has reviewed the lesson plan prior to this conversation and can ask specific, probing questions about the lesson. The candidate should be doing the majority of the talking during this portion of the pre-conference. The University Supervisor should be capturing notes on the conversation. Below is an example of one approach to the discussion about the lesson:

- Reference review of materials: "*I reviewed the materials you sent me in advance and think I have a clear sense of the lesson but was hoping you could elaborate on a few points to be sure I understand your plan."*
- Ask questions: see pre-conference preparation section for examples

<u>Pre-conference Closure </u>(3 min)
University Supervisor should leave time at the end of the conference to summarize any takeaways from the conversation as well as align expectations for the upcoming observation. Below is an example of one approach to pre-conference closure:

- Revisit prior feedback: *"After our 1st observation, we agreed that you would work to [fill in] so I will be looking for evidence of that in the upcoming observation."*
- Summarize takeaways from the conversation: *"Based on what you shared with me during our conversation, it sounds like you are also looking for feedback on your transitions so I will be sure to make note of those as well."*

During the Observation:

The primary goal of the University Supervisor during the observation is to actively collect evidence. Active evidence collection should capture both teacher and student behavior/actions. Active evidence collection does not include making judgments or inferences during the observation; this occurs after when the assessors is analyzing and synthesizing the evidence. Evidence should reflect exactly what happens in the classroom. Evidence collected should include a balance of both summary statements as well as direct quotes.

There are various tools assessors may use to collect evidence during the lesson. This could include scripting, videotaping, audio-recording, or using other commercially available applications that aid in observing specific classroom interactions.

Evidence collected during the observation is solely to aid the assessor in identifying trends and selecting illustrative examples of aspects of performance. It is not designed to be shared directly with the candidate nor is it collected by ESE. Individual providers may, however, decide to collect this information from assessors for training or documentation purposes.

After the Observation:

After an observation, the University Supervisor will review evidence collected and begin to analyze it as a measure of candidate performance and then strategically plan for a post-conference in which candidates are provided with targeted feedback.

Ideally, post-conferences occur one to two days following the observation and last between 20-30 minutes. Complete post-conferences should not occur immediately after the lesson as this does not allow for sufficient time for the assessors to synthesize evidence and feedback or for the candidate to adequately reflect.

Preparing for the Post Conference:

The primary purpose of the post-conference is to provide candidates feedback about their performance during the observation. After categorizing evidence according to the indicators, University Supervisors should work to identify specific areas of strength (reinforcement) and areas for improvement (refinement).

Begin by gathering/reviewing evidence, including:

- Lesson Plan & Pre-Conference Planning Form
- Notes from Pre-Conference
- Observation Form that contains categorized evidence
- Candidate Self-Reflection Form

Identifying Reinforcement and Refinement Areas:

University Supervisors are asked to identify for the candidate areas of strength and areas for improvement. This does not preclude the candidate from self-identifying areas as well. Areas of reinforcement and refinement should be tied directly to Indicators.

- **Reinforcement**: The area of reinforcement should identify the candidate's instructional strength in a way that encourages the continuation of effective practices in the future. The area of reinforcement should be deep rooted in student-based evidence that demonstrates successful positive impact on student learning.
- **Refinement**: The area of refinement should identify the areas in need of instructional improvement.

In reflecting on the analysis of the evidence, University Supervisors should select 1 reinforcement area and 1 refinement area per observation. University Supervisors are encouraged to select the reinforcement and refinement areas that are most likely to improve candidate practice and have a positive impact on student learning.

There are several guiding questions and considerations that can support the identification of the effective reinforcement/refinement areas:

- Which areas on the rubric received the highest ratings (reinforcements) and the lowest ratings (refinements)?
- Which of these areas would have the greatest impact on student achievement?
- Which of these areas would have the greatest impact on other areas of the rubric?
- In which area does the candidate have the most potential for growth?
- Make sure that the reinforcement is not directly related to the refinement. It is important that candidates see their area of strength as separate from their area needing improvement.
- Choose a refinement area for which you have sufficient and specific evidence from the lesson to support why the teacher needs to work in this area.
- Select refinement topics around which you are prepared to provide specific support. There is nothing worse than telling a teacher they need to alter their practice and then not being able to provide specific examples for how this can be done.
- Understand the teacher's capacity when identifying an area of refinement. In other words, where will you get the biggest bang for your buck?
- Remember—reinforcements should be only to strengthen the candidate's performance. Do not hedge this part of the post-conference with qualifying statements such as "it could have been

even better if," or "next time you could also do…" Teachers need to hear what they are effective at, and have it be left at that.

- When developing the post-conference plan, consider identifying the area of refinement first. This will ensure that the reinforcement and refinement do not overlap.

Conducting the Post Conference:

Ideally, the post-conference occurs one to two days after the observation and lasts between 20-30 minutes. While conducting the post-conference face-to-face may be preferable, University Supervisors may consider taking advantage of other methods of engaging in pre-conference, such as Skype, Facetime, Google Hangout, etc. Post-conferences should not occur immediately after the lesson as this does not allow for sufficient time for the University Supervisors to synthesize evidence and feedback or for the candidate to adequately reflect.

A post-conference should include the following: an introduction, a discussion of reinforcement/refinement areas, and a summary of next steps.

Post-conference Introduction (5 min)
The introduction helps to set the tone and purpose of the post-conference. While it may appear overly formal it can be valuable in establishing routines that help to keep the conversation focused and brief. Below is an example of one approach to the introduction of a post-conference:

- Greeting: *"Thanks for taking the time to meet with me. I'm really looking forward to our discussion on the lesson I was able to see in action. "*
- Time: "*This discussion should take us about 30 minutes"*
- Set Purpose: *"The purpose of our conversation is for us to identify both strengths and areas of improvement in your practice"*
- Probe for self-reflection: *"What are your thoughts about how the students responded to the lesson?"* OR if the candidate already completed the self-reflection form, "*I saw from your reflection that…"*

Discussion of Reinforcement/Refinement Areas (20 min)
The discussion about strengths and areas for improvement should begin with outlining the areas of reinforcement and then transition to the areas of refinement. The University Supervisor should provide specific examples from the observation as evidence of the area of refinement or reinforcement. Below is an example of one approach to the discussion:

- Share areas of Reinforcement:
  - Provide evidence from observation: "*There were several instances throughout the lesson where you asked a variety of questions to check for student understanding. For example, after showing the pictograph you…"*
  - State impact on students: *"In doing so, students were required to justify their thinking and it allowed you to quickly identify misconceptions in students understanding. This was evidenced through my scripting of…."*
  - Provide recommended action: "*Continue to…"*
- Share areas of Refinement:

- Ask self-reflection question: Ask a specific question to prompt the teacher to talk about what you want him or her to improve. Utilize a question that includes specific language from the rubric, which can lead the teacher to reflect on the indicator you have identified as his/her area of refinement as it relates to the lesson. Example: "*When developing lessons, how do you decide on the pacing of the lesson so sufficient time is allocated for each segment?"*
- Share evidence from observation: "*You mentioned earlier that you wanted students to be able to work in groups and then report their findings. However, there was not sufficient time for this to occur during the lesson. According to the observation log, the first 6 minutes was spent organizing materials and transiting students; the next 23 minutes was spent with you modeling the objective at the board with some questions and answer time built in."*
- Provide concrete suggestions for how to improve: "*As you modeled how to analyze a pictograph, students could have worked with their group members to answer your questions prior to your providing the answer, then they could have reported to the class their findings. This would have still allowed you to model, but would have also allowed students to work together to analyze the pictograph. Students who may not have required this review could have worked independently in a group to analyze their own pictograph while the rest of the class participated in your modeling. This would have also allowed you to differentiate the pacing of the lesson to provide for students who progress at different learning rates. This lesson could also have been segmented into two different lessons."*
- Provide recommended action: "*Moving forward…*"
- Share resource/support: *"As you work to further refine this skill, I think it might be helpful if you go and observe Mrs. Blank in 3rd grade who is highly-skilled in this area. I've already spoken with her and she has agreed to an observation and debrief next week."*

Post-conference Closure (5 min)
Evaluators should leave time at the end of the conference to summarize any takeaways from the conversation. Below is an example of one approach to post-conference closure:

- Share Post Observation Form: *"I've categorized the evidence from observation, and provided proficiency ratings according to how the evidence from the lesson connected to the rubric. I have also recorded the reinforcement and refinement areas and actions here."*
- Leave time for questions: *"Do you have any other questions?"*
- Confirm next steps in process: *"The next formal observation will be …."*