

# Peer Observation

## Reflective Practice

The peer observation of my synchronous session provided a valuable opportunity to critically reflect on my teaching practice through a professional and pedagogical lens. The observation highlighted several strengths, particularly in relation to structure, clarity, accessibility, and communication. The session demonstrated a clear and logical organisation, effectively introducing learners to the module, expectations, and learning environment. The use of a visually consistent slide design, combined with audio transcripts and subtitles, reflects strong alignment with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), providing multiple means of representation to support diverse learners (CAST, 2024). This confirms that my planning successfully supports accessibility and inclusive practice.

The observation also identified strengths in my communication style. Clear dictation, enthusiasm, and regular pauses to check understanding contributed to a supportive and engaging learning environment. This aligns with the concept of teaching presence within the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasises the importance of clarity, facilitation, and instructor visibility in online learning (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000). Furthermore, encouraging learners to engage through chat and discussion forums demonstrates an effort to foster social presence and collaborative learning.

However, the observation also highlighted areas for development, particularly in relation to structured learner interaction. It is important to contextualise this feedback. The observer reviewed a recorded version of the session and therefore could not observe the interactive ice-breaker activity, which was conducted off-record due to GDPR and data protection considerations. This activity involved learners introducing themselves and sharing their motivations for joining the course, and it plays an important role in establishing early engagement and a sense of community.

This highlights a limitation of recorded observations, particularly in online environments where certain interactions cannot be captured. The ice-breaker activity aligns with social constructivist principles, where learning is enhanced through interaction and shared experience (Vygotsky, 1978), and with the Community of Inquiry framework, which emphasises the importance of social presence in supporting learner engagement (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000). While this interaction was present in the live session, its absence in the recording may have influenced the observer's perception of engagement.

At the same time, this reflection has prompted important insights into my practice. Although interaction was embedded within the live session, it was not sufficiently visible within the recorded component. In addition, the session itself remained largely instructor-led, with limited structured activities beyond informal interaction. This indicates an opportunity to strengthen active learning strategies within synchronous sessions, ensuring that engagement is both embedded and observable.

Another area for development identified in the observation relates to constructive alignment. While the session clearly introduced module objectives and assessment components, the explicit link between learning outcomes and assessment tasks could be strengthened. Additionally, key assessment details, such as grading weight and policies, were not fully clarified. This suggests the need to enhance transparency and ensure learners have a clear understanding of expectations, aligning with principles of constructive alignment (Biggs and Tang, 2011).

## Action Plan

In response to this feedback, I will implement several targeted measures to enhance engagement, clarity, and alignment in future sessions.

Firstly, I will ensure that structured interactive activities are embedded within the recorded portion of synchronous sessions. While GDPR considerations may require certain interactions to occur off-record, I will incorporate visible engagement strategies such as polls, chat prompts, and short reflective tasks that can be captured within recordings. This will ensure that both live and recorded elements demonstrate active participation and support learner engagement.

Secondly, I will introduce structured breakout room activities within the session itself, particularly in the early stages of the course. These activities will provide opportunities for learners to introduce themselves, share experiences, and discuss motivations, fostering a sense of belonging and community. This aligns with social constructivist theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and supports learner engagement in online environments (Salmon, 2013).

Thirdly, I will strengthen constructive alignment by explicitly linking learning outcomes to assessment tasks at the beginning of each session. Learning outcomes will be clearly articulated using action-oriented language (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001), and I will provide a visual overview of how these outcomes connect to assessment components. I will also ensure that key information regarding grading, submission policies, and expectations is clearly communicated to learners.

Additionally, I will incorporate short in-session application tasks to support experiential learning. These activities will allow learners to engage with content in real time,

reinforcing understanding and promoting active participation (Kolb, 1984). This will help balance instructional delivery with interactive learning.

Finally, I will continue to build on my strengths in accessibility and communication by maintaining multimodal delivery, clear explanations, and structured navigation of the virtual learning environment. I will also seek ongoing feedback from learners and peers to evaluate the effectiveness of these changes, aligning with reflective practice models (Schön, 1983).

## Conclusion

Overall, this peer observation has been highly valuable in identifying both strengths and areas for development. While the session demonstrated strong organisation, accessibility, and teaching presence, it also highlighted the need to enhance visible learner interaction and strengthen alignment between learning outcomes and assessment. The additional context regarding the off-record ice-breaker activity provides important clarification but also reinforces the need to ensure that engagement is evident within all aspects of delivery.

The measures identified will support a more balanced approach, integrating structured interaction with clear instructional design. This reflective process reinforces my commitment to continuous improvement and to creating inclusive, engaging, and effective learning environments that support both learner participation and success.

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