



# THE DEVELOPMENTAL OBSERVATION OF ONLINE TEACHING

Guide for Educators

For all forms and guides of the DOOT Protocol refer to <https://flora.educaiton/doot>

Flora Mahdavi  
June 2021

## Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>FOCUS AREAS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>COURSE ORGANIZATION AND GUIDANCE</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>DISCUSSION FACILITATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHOOSING THE RIGHT FOCUS AREA</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>PROCESS OVERVIEW</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>STEP 1 – PRE-OBSERVATION MEETING</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>STEP 2 – OBSERVATION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>STEP 3 – POST-OBSERVATION MEETING</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>OBSERVATION FOLLOW UP PLAN</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>7</b>

You may use or distribute the DOOT Protocol for non-commercial purposes, with the following attribution:

**Mahdavi, F. (2021). Protocol for Developmental Observation of Online Teaching (DOOT). Retrieved from <https://flora.education/doot>**

**Audience:** This guide is created for an educator whose teaching practices in an asynchronous online course is to be observed upon their request following the Protocol for Developmental Observation of Online Teaching (DOOT).

## Introduction

This guidebook provides information about a process for developmental observation of online teaching (DOOT). Upon your request for observation, this process starts and an educational developer (i.e. from teaching and learning center, a peer educator, or a teaching mentor) with experience in online teaching or supporting online teachers will work with you and facilitate the observation process.

This observation is confidential and meant as an opportunity for your professional growth, hence the importance of your direct involvement throughout the process. The notes and outcomes of the observation will only be shared and discussed with you, and no one else, unless you decide to do so. The educational developer may keep a record of the proceedings of the observation to be able to follow up with you as needed.

The DOOT protocol includes observation of online courses that are facilitated on a learning management system (LMS). The observations include *teaching practices/activities* during the time that learners engage with the course. They do not include considerations for the design and development of its content, which usually happen prior to the start of a course and you may not have been involved in.

## Focus Areas

Within the DOOT protocol, online teaching activities are categorized in three broad categories of:

- Organizing course and guiding learners (Course Organization and Guidance)
- Administering assessments and providing feedback (Assessment and Feedback)
- Facilitating discussions (Discussion Facilitation)

You can choose one of these categories as the focus area of observation. It is recommended that you choose one focus area per observation to keep your learning concentrated and meaningful, and the observation process manageable. These focus areas are explained next.

### Course Organization and Guidance

Observation of Course Organization and Guidance considers the preparations that you put into different areas of a course at the beginning of a term as well as modifications and possible reorganization of course components based on the progress of learners and turn of events during a term. This area also includes observation of ongoing communication with learners, within the course environment, to engage, inspire, and guide them through learning activities during the course.

It is important to distinguish between the course design and course organization. Course organization refers to decisions that are made to adjust the design of a course during the educational experience of the learners, while design is defined as structural decisions that are made before the engagement of learners with a course (Garrison, 2017). Usually, design is handled by a curriculum team and many educators get to teach a course that is already designed; therefore, within the DOOT Protocol, course design is deemed outside the scope of online teaching and its observation. However, design that cannot be adjusted with reasonable modifications to be conducive to creating a productive learning community in the class would hinder the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Course design may be discussed in a post-observation meeting, and improvements to the course design may be part of the follow up plan.

Another area that is not within the scope of observation is one-on-one communication between the educators and learners through mediums such as email. Ethically and logistically, it is not possible to provide the educational developers with access to your mailbox. Therefore, if you wished to discuss email communication with learners, make that particular correspondence available to the observer by forwarding the digital message or providing a hard copy to them.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

Assessment activities can be formative, for the purpose of assessing learners' comprehension and academic progress during the course, or summative for evaluation of learners at the end of a course. Administering these activities will require your intentional planning and organization of methods, timing, and scope. After learners complete assessment activities, you provide them with feedback that they can improve upon, and if applicable assign grades.

Observation of this functional area focuses on what you need to do in the areas of a course that are mainly involved in the administration of assessments and providing feedback. Within the context of online courses on a learning management system, most of such activities are designed and organized in the form of assignments or exams/tests. Rubrics can be used to outline expected criteria for completion of activities and their assessment. Grade book can be used as an alternative and consistent channel of communicating grades and feedback to learners. All of these areas are considered in observation of Assessment and Feedback.

### **Discussion Facilitation**

Discussion activities may be loosely identified as formative assessments as they demonstrate learners' thought process and understanding of the topic being discussed. However, in online education, discussions are the place where the discourse happens and learners need to converse and dialogue to build personal understanding around a topic and contribute to group learning. While at the end of a discussion grades may be assigned to learners' effective participation, the main feedback and guiding of the dialogue must happen during the discussion.

Observation of this functional area includes your role in guiding the discussion from the initial stage of posing a question or topic for inquiry through to exploring that topic and integrating ideas and finally coming to a consensus on the topic or resolution of the original problem.

Usually, within LMS environments, discussion forums are the only area where learners can converse and share work, opinion, and comments. Therefore, educators or course designers may use this tool for a variety of purposes, such as a forum for introductions where learners get to know each other, a forum for learners responding to other learners' technical questions, or a forum where learners can have none academic, side conversations. Although such forums are important in creating a community of learning, they do not serve the purpose of discourse and are not included in the observation of this functional area.

### Choosing the Right Focus Area

It is important to choose the right focus area for the course that you are teaching. For example, courses that relate to human issues and current affairs such as Family Law could lend themselves well to meaningful discourse and be a good fit for observation of Discussion Facilitation. On the other hand, in a more procedural course such as Legal Document Processing, where learners need to learn how to create legal documents based on a set of rules and standards, having multiple formative assessments and providing regular continuous feedback may facilitate learning more effectively. Such courses are better fit for observation of Assessment and Feedback, or Course Organization and Guidance focus areas.

There may be cases where one focus area is too large to cover in one observation and you may have to narrow the observation further to more specific sections within that focus area. For example in a course with 40 learners and five discussion topics, you may choose two of the discussion topics that are already completed for observation of Discussion Facilitation. Observing completed discussions allows the observer to examine your role through different phases of the discussion.

Also, for observation of Assessment and Feedback, choose assessment activities that have been completed by learners and you have provided feedback prior to the start of observation. This will enable the observer to see how you have handled the whole cycle of administering an assessment and providing feedback.

## Process Overview

The observation process entails three steps of 1) pre-observation meeting, 2) observation, and 3) post-observation meeting.

### Step 1 – Pre-Observation Meeting

The educational developer schedules a 1-hour pre-observation meeting at a time that is convenient for both of you. Depending on your availability and geographical location, the meeting can be held in person or online.

During this meeting you will get to know the educational developer, if you don't know them yet, and discuss your reasons for requesting this observation. You need to choose a focus area for the observation prior to the meeting. You will inform the educational developer of your chosen focus area and they will ask for more information or clarification if needed.

You and the educational developer will agree on timelines and other relevant arrangements for the next steps of the process. Take advantage of this meeting to ask any questions that you may have about the observation and discuss your concerns as well.

### Step 2 – Observation

The educational developer will request access to the course that you are teaching on the LMS and conduct observation of the focus area that you have agreed upon. Typically, the observation happens within a week and their access to your course ends at the end of it. During the observation, the educational developer completes the relevant Observation Form, which they will share with you at the post-observation meeting.

### Step 3 – Post-Observation Meeting

This is a 1-hour meeting that the educational developer schedules according to your availability and can be conducted online or in-person. The main purpose of this meeting is to provide an opportunity for your critical reflection on your practices when teaching online. To achieve this objective the educational developer will choose an area of discussion based on their observation notes and will ask relevant questions to facilitate and guide a reflective conversation. The educational developer will provide you with the completed Observation Form and all of their notes at the end of this meeting.


## Observation Follow up Plan

The observation process on its own is not enough to produce an improving change in your teaching practices. Consider this observation to be a guided diagnostic exercise through which you critically reflect on your understanding that informs your practices. Generally, it is expected that by the end of the observation process, you identify an area of practice that you want to improve.

With the support of the educational developer, you will set specific goals for practices you want to change. For example, you may set your goal to be 'including a short video in the course announcements at the beginning of the semester, to introduce yourself to the learners'. This practice helps the learners to relate to you as the human behind the technology and can be the first step in establishing a learning community.

You then, lay out the type of support or training needed in order to implement the required change in practice and achieve your goal. In the case of the above example, you may need training in how to use the LMS tools to create such a video; or consultation on what should or should not be included in an introductory video. It may be that you do not need any support and can implement the change on your own.

Ideally, the outcome of post-observation meeting is a plan for further actions such as review of relevant resources, training, ongoing consultation and check-ins, requests for modifications to the course design, and plans for future observations if needed.



TEACHING EXPERTISE IS DEVELOPED  
THROUGH A LEARNING PROCESS THAT  
CONTINUES OVER TIME.  
(Kenny et al., 2017, p.1)

## Background

The DOOT protocol is designed based on the Community of Inquiry (CoI) (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) theory of online education, which has its roots in the social constructivist view of education. This protocol is designed to serve the needs of online educators who are using a learning management system (LMS) to facilitate student learning.

During the year 2019, online educators from Chiu School of Business and educational developers from Teaching and Learning Enhancement at Bow Valley College participated in the design based research project that has resulted in the creation of the DOOT protocol. These participants have provided input into feasibility of the protocol and its initial design; they also participated in the iterative evaluation and refinement of the DOOT Protocol. The protocol is expected to continue to evolve and be refined in order to serve the changing needs of online educators in higher education institutions.

## References

- Garrison, D. R. (2017). *E-learning in the 21st century: A community of inquiry framework for research and practice* (Third ed.). Abingdon, Oxon;New York, NY: Routledge.
- Garrison, D. R., Anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 2(2-3), 87-105.
- Kenny, N., Berenson, C., Chick, N., Johnson, C., Keegan, D., Read, E., & Reid, L. (2017). *A developmental framework for teaching expertise in postsecondary education*. Paper presented at the International Society for the Scholarship of teaching and Learning (ISSOTL) Conference, Calgary, AB.