# Record of Observation or Review of Teaching Practice

Session/artefact to be observed/reviewed: Colour Darkroom induction session

Size of student group: 7/8 students

Observer: Kitty Eyes

Observee: Cora James

##### Note: This record is solely for exchanging developmental feedback between colleagues. Its reflective aspect informs PgCert and Fellowship assessment, but it is not an official evaluation of teaching and is not intended for other internal or legal applications such as probation or disciplinary action.

Part One

Observee to complete in brief and send to observer prior to the observation or review:

What is the context of this session/artefact within the curriculum?

*This is a Colour Darkroom induction for BA Photography first years, who have signed up for this session – it is an extracurricular activity that allows them to gain access to the facilities to boost their practice and use independently.*

How long have you been working with this group and in what capacity?

*These students have been with us since September 2024, and I may have taught them various inductions, colour processing, camera skills, B&W darkroom and studio, I may have seen them lots or not really met them properly.*

What are the intended or expected learning outcomes?

* *To fully understand and apply the Health and Safety compliance expected within the department and how it relates specifically to their use in the colour darkroom.*
* *To have a full understanding of what a colour enlarger is, after an extensive demonstration by technical staff.*
* *To understand what a colour negative is and use them to make a test strip using a colour enlarger.*
* *To examine their own test strips and adjust both colour balance and exposure time, with advice and guidance from technician.*
* *Make a contact sheet & a final print in the colour darkroom.*
* *To be able to use an easel efficiently to create borders on their prints.*

What are the anticipated outputs (anything students will make/do)?

*Students will make their own contact sheets and a final print of an image they select from their contact sheets. They will be able to cut and expose test strips, load their exposed paper into the machine, understand exposure times and an introduction to colour theory & colour balancing and make their own adjustments as well as set up their easels to create an even border for their singular image.*

Are there potential difficulties or specific areas of concern?

*Lateness can be a potential difficulty as I do have to start promptly and there is lots of key information at the start of the session that is vital for students to know. They are working in low light, and the students will be expected to work in some areas (their own booth and the loading room) in pitch black. I must do demonstrations in the light for things that are done in the dark, which requires being with a smallish group of 7 in close proximity and trusting eachother in the communal spaces. There is a lunch break to refuel and opportunities for students to individually have comfort breaks and use the daylight communal area if they are struggling with the darkness.*

How will students be informed of the observation/review?

*I will email them prior to the workshop to let them know that I will be being observed. I will also introduce Kitty at the start.*

What would you particularly like feedback on?

*I’m up for any and all feedback – would love your insight from one technician to another!*

How will feedback be exchanged?

*Email is fine!*

## Part Two

### Observer to note down observations, suggestions and questions:

The induction was structured as a full day, the morning centering around H&S and the introduction of the process, with the afternoon focused on the students creating their own work. Cora splits the process up into small chunks which she demonstrates and then asks the students to replicate themselves before moving on to the best step. This pacing allows for her to check that each student has correctly completed the step and allows her to individually correct or give tips to students, effectively mimicking 1:1 time during a lesson with multiple students. As this is a more advanced technique, Cora kept reminding the students of their black & white darkroom inductions and drawing similarities between the two, prompting them to recall their previous knowledge and build upon it, teaching it as a continuance of a known skill rather than a completely new process. I really like when skills are taught as “buildable” as it makes the learning seem less daunting to students and further solidifies what they’ve already been taught – I’ve found in the past that knowledge doesn’t stick around in a student’s brain for as long as we hope it does, so I really liked that she kept drawing them back to that original induction.

I was interested to see if such a small group of students would have adverse effects on the lesson, but I actually think it’s one of the best parts. Yes, there were problems with student lateness, but catching them up did not seem to hamper Cora or the lesson timing.

Cora clearly has a positive and healthy relationship with her students, knowing most of them in the class by name and cultivating a very comfortable, safe, and fun atmosphere for learning. More than once I heard a student say to a peer “is it stupid if I ask if....” and then be encouraged by others to ask Cora, which shows a lovely respect and comfortability that the students know they can ask her anything and they won’t receive any adverse reaction or judgement.

I was also struck by Cora’s use of language - as I often am when watching technical staff teach – a very carefully balanced use of technical terms and plain language with a direct and well-paced pattern of speech that was incredibly easy to understand. Even I, with a severely limited knowledge of photography, understood her directions and the specialist processes of the induction.

I really enjoyed watching Cora teach, her comfortability, ease, and specialist knowledge was wonderful to watch, and as a technician that is new to teaching structured lessons I’m very grateful to have been welcomed into her space!

## Part Three

### Observee to reflect on the observer’s comments and describe how they will act on the feedback exchanged:

Thank you Kitty for your kind words and reflections – I thought what you said about my step-by-step process essentially mimicking 1:1 time was really interesting, I haven’t thought about it like that before – I knew I needed that part of the workshop to be relatively fast, but that students will be at drastically different ability levels and experience so felt like breaking it down was the only way! In an ideal world you would just learn this 1:1 but there is something nice about the collective experience of being all together for the first time in the darkroom. You also reflected on my constant referring to the B&W darkroom knowledge they already have, we find it important that our students have this knowledge that we can build upon, otherwise learning colour can be a bit of a baptism of fire, and like you said it is hopefully less daunting! I am also always surprised by how much students don’t remember initially after a workshop, and then I remind myself that when I taught myself to knit a few years ago I watched the same youtube videos repeatedly, and still (3 years in) need to remind myself what certain abbreviations mean in knitting patterns and watch tutorials again. Lateness is a massive problem, especially in technical workshops where the time constraints are tight, I find myself able to catch people up, but I think that also depends on their eagerness of the whole group and the person who is late. I love when students feel comfortable enough to ask questions, this cohort are BA first years, so they are already quite a connected cohort, but a lot of them are fresh from A Levels or college and around 18/19 so feel quite different to teaching master’s students.

I have worked hard on my use of language; I think as a technician we must use a lot of ‘technical’ jargon which many find inaccessible, so I wanted to work out how to properly explain the technical terms, particularly for international students as English is not their first language, and found this was best done with a mix of plain language – very basic slow explaining, this massively improved once I had a child and came back from maternity leave, motherhood in general slowed me down, so I find that reflected in my teaching.

I hope to continue to create comfortable environments for my students, aiming for them to feel free of judgement as that is the best way to feel when learning and honing a new skill.