

Technical Qualifications: Practical Observation Forms – Best Practice

Introduction

The collection of high-quality evidence that clearly demonstrates candidate abilities and supports the awarding of marks, is an essential part of the assessment process.

Markers must be able to clearly link available candidate evidence to the marks they have awarded and demonstrate this in their recorded evidence. Where assessors required to carry out observation of performance, detailed and descriptive notes should be recorded on subject-specific Practical Observation (PO) forms (or equivalent¹).

This document offers practical guidance and suggestions for how centres may complete these forms effectively and efficiently to ensure that moderators understand and can justify the awarding of marks.

In addition to some best practice principles, along with some useful hints and tips, this document includes some examples with attendant supporting commentary.

Please note – this document is supplemental to the *Marking and Moderation Centre Guide*, which contains detailed guidance on the collection of both candidate and tutor evidence.

Preparing for observation

As part of internal quality assurance, we recommend that, where possible, centres trial the planned arrangements for the observation of practical assessments before the assessments themselves take place. This will allow for review of the quality of evidence captured and identification of any manageability issues.

Consideration should be given to:

- Number of assessors
- Number of candidates
- Location of assessment
- Required equipment
- Time required for each task/activity

The key factor to consider is the logistics of collecting sufficient high-quality evidence for every candidate.

We would recommend that for straight-forward observations, (and unless otherwise specified) no more than **eight** candidates should be observed by a single assessor at one time.

¹ Centres are welcome to use their own versions of PO forms to capture notes and evidence of Practical Observations. Where they do, they must ensure that they allow for the breadth and detail required to ensure that candidate performance is accurately captured. As such we recommend using our PO forms as a guide for what factors need to be considered on bespoke centre versions.

Assessment Objectives

Referring to the Assessment Objectives is a key aspect of identifying how candidates performed in the task(s). Remember though, that the weighting of AOs in tasks is not always even, so when completing PO forms, you may find yourself writing more in some sections.

The below table gives some useful suggestions as to what you may consider for each AO when capturing observation evidence.

Assessment Objective	What you should consider when capturing evidence
AO1 Describe how well the candidate shows recall of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stating facts without explanation • Simple descriptions of what they are carrying out • Showing aspects of straightforward knowledge through logical sequencing and application of skill etc.
AO2 Describe how well the candidate shows understanding when carrying out practical tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candidate's explanation of why they are completing a process • How they may change their course of action • Whether they can justify their actions etc.
AO3 Describe how well the candidate demonstrated their practical skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How practiced/fluid the hand eye coordination and dexterity are • How confident they are • How accurate or 'polished' the outcome is • Safe working
AO4 Describe how well the candidate brings it all together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How coherent their actions are • How well they draw from the breadth of their knowledge and skills • Reflection on theory when solving practical problems • How well they can work out solutions to new contexts/ problems on their own • Time management etc.
AO5 Describe how well the candidate attended to detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionalism • Perfecting • Accuracy • Checking • Taking care • Methodical working etc.

Best practice principles

The following are a set of agreed principles to support centres effectively capturing assessor observation evidence, along with practical hints to enable centres to do this. Additionally, we have included some examples of this in practice.

1. The PO form should clearly indicate which activities/tasks the commentary relates to.

- Use a single PO form to capture all practical tasks/activities. This helps support a holistic picture of the candidate's performance
- Create some templates with all the required tasks/activity titles pre-populated to aid notetaking on the day (*see example below*)

<p>AO1 Describe how well the candidate shows recall of knowledge</p>	<p>Task No:2 Shows accurate recall of knowledge across all aspects of the task. Particular confidence was seen when describing a wide range of signs of good and ill health during the health check, also when describing the signs of a horse with a heavy worm burden.</p> <p>Correctly described the normal ranges of the horses TPR and showed logical and correct sequencing during the task. Correct equipment was selected and used. Parts of the grooming kit were identified and use of each part was correctly described with confidence.</p> <p>Area of improvement - incorrect sequence for TPR where she started with temperature.</p> <p>Task No:3 Showed detailed and accurate knowledge across all aspects of this task. Tack was correctly identified and a confident and detailed description of the process of fitting the tack was given. This included fitting a breast plate, side reins and brushing boots.</p> <p>Recall relating to lunging was accurate and detailed. Correctly described the sequence of lunging an older horse which showed confidence in relation to the needs of older horses.</p> <p>Logical sequencing was applied when cleaning tack after lunging.</p> <p>Area of improvement: Descriptions of how to clean tack were accurate and clear but could have been more detailed in places. E.g. how to strip clean and reassemble a bridle.</p>
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2. The PO form commentary should clearly link to marking band descriptors

- Have the relevant marking grid to hand, to refer to when completing the PO form
- Use the terminology from the band descriptors in the marking grid to indicate the level of the candidate's performance (*see example below*)

<p>AO4 Describe how well the candidate brings it all together</p>	<p>Task no: 2 Candidate could confidently adapt the task showing high levels of skill. Her understanding was applied competently to the practical application of the task.</p> <p>A holistic understanding was seen in the task by applying knowledge of older horses to the practical E.g. when providing the horse with forage ration poor dentition/ reduced digestion in older horses was linked to different types of suitable forage. Confident linking of common health issues when explaining health checking with detailed explanations. Decisions made during practical were justified, e.g providing a deep bed for an older horse and its health needs. Overall the practical was fit for purpose and integrated theoretical knowledge.</p> <p>Area for improvement: The incorrect sequencing of TPR, temperature was taken rather than respiration or pulse.</p> <p>Task no: 3 Candidate competently applied understanding to the task. E.g fitted tack to a high standard and lunged competently. Ability to confidently deal with a horse when it became spooked by using the voice to calm the horse, maintaining / using the line safely to slow the horse and remain calm. Consistently linked to the needs of an older horse to the tasks showing a holistic understanding, e.g circle size, exercise level and link to the arthritis and health implications. The outcomes of the task were fit for purpose.</p> <p>Area for improvement: N/A</p>
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The AO assesses a candidate's ability to take their knowledge and understanding into their practice showing their level of expertise. If they are able to do this well, they can be trusted to perform well in a range of similar situations and work out situations to new context.

It is up to the marker and moderator to weigh up the strengths and weaknesses in each AO. This is how we decide how well the tasks have been performed. Candidates scoring high marks will have few weaknesses. Candidates scoring top marks may still have the odd weakness, but these may be very minor or typical for the level.

It's important to give examples of what was missed or not done as well as expected because this is how we differentiate one performance with another. Moderators will also be able to see whether expectations were too high/ low.

3. Commentary should identify strengths *and* weaknesses of the candidate's performance

- Try and avoid step-by-step descriptions of everything candidates do, instead aim for a qualitative judgement of how they performed the task
- Consider other candidates and how well they performed while undertaking the same tasks
- Consider identifying what the candidate did well during the task(s), as well as anything that could have been improved (*see example below*)

<p>A02 Describe how well the candidate shows understanding when carrying out practical tasks</p>	<p>Task No: 2</p> <p>Consistently linked husbandry needs of horses to health and welfare during this task. This included the specialised needs of older horses relating to feeding, dentition and arthritis. For example "explained the impact of poor dentition in older horses and the need for soft forages and concentrates/mashes" The candidate confidently explained worming in horses and showed detailed understanding of the need for worming programmes. E.g.: "Worms cause inflammation of the digestive tract which can lead to colic and weight loss so it's important to treat horses and keep worm levels low on the yard.</p> <p>Also explained impact of manure removal from fields by saying "Poo picking prevents the horse eating larvae in the grass and becoming re infected."</p> <p>Coherently explained the importance of health checking and grooming and could confidently link this to health and welfare. Connections between theory and practice were made throughout. Overall, a detailed and clearly justified task with no areas of improvement.</p> <p>Task No: 3</p> <p>The candidate gave detailed explanations across all areas of the task. The importance of correct fitting tack was explained very coherently and linked to health/ welfare and impact on horses' performance. For example "explained an ill-fitting saddle may cause pain and injury to a horses back & that this may make the horse less willing to work or to become poorly behaved when ridden".</p> <p>Reasons for lunging an older horse were explained and linked to the common health issues seen in older horses. E.g. linking arthritis to size of circle on the lunge, "The size of the circle should be larger when lunging an older horse because they have arthritis and it places less stress on their joints</p> <p>Area for improvement: she did not fully explain why it is important to clean tack. Omissions – dry leather can crack and didn't link to safety aspect/checking tack or to help make tack last longer.</p>
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This AO assesses a candidate's ability to explain. In practical tasks, they should be able to explain aspects of what they are doing and why. The tutor should write what was said so that the marker and moderator can differentiate one answer with another. One may be more detailed. One might leave out an important aspect. It is not sufficient to say that something was detailed and coherent without then giving some aspects of what was said.

This gives an example in speech marks of what the candidate explained so the marker and moderator can see how detailed it was.

4. The PO form should provide details of the level of the candidate’s performance along with some examples to support stated performance level.

- Explain the candidate’s level of performance supported by a couple of examples. Long, descriptive, detailed narratives are not required and can be very time-consuming (*see example below*)
- The PO form should provide examples of why the candidate’s performance is fair/good/excellent. There should be a mixture of comments on the quality of a) the process b) the outcome and c) what they said.

<p>AO5 Describe how well the candidate attended to detail e.g. professionalism / perfecting / accuracy / checking / taking care / methodical working etc.</p>	<p>Excellent skills demonstrated in make-up application; manicure and nail polish application performed with equal confidence. The hairstyling techniques demonstrated confidence in skills and in the candidate’s ability to reflect and improve to an excellent finish.</p> <p>The student demonstrated accuracy and precision in each element, focus was maintained. Exceptional control with the hair length. She demonstrated a methodical working pattern throughout the task producing a polished overall look.</p> <p>There were minimal errors in the hairstyling which were identified and rectified by the student, visually checking throughout. Time was taken to carefully look at the work across the three technicalities, reflecting on product choice, technique and application.</p> <p>The hair was well secured with grips that were intended to be placed hidden from view however some could be seen. Make-up was carefully blended perfecting the finish and the each step of the manicure was performed accurately, the nails were carefully checked and perfected following the polish – very minimal flooding on one nail only.</p> <p>Care was observed by the student to ensure precision at each stage of the task.</p>
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This shows that the attention to detail was not quite flawless. This candidate, along with her written tasks, gained 8 out of 9 marks – their drop in marks would have been through her practical imperfections seen documented here.