

Occupational and Environmental Medicine

Direct Observation of Field Skills

A formative assessment tool



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians



Australasian Faculty of
Occupational and Environmental Medicine

Purpose

A Direct Observation of Field Skills encounter evaluates the trainee's competency in purposeful evaluation of a workplace or environmental setting. Direct Observation of Field Skills is designed to:

- guide the trainee's learning through structured feedback
- help improve technical and practical competency
- provide the trainee with an opportunity to identify strategies to improve their field skills
- be a teaching opportunity for an assessor to share professional knowledge and experience.

Overview

A Direct Observation of Field Skills encounter involves a trainee being observed while conducting a workplace visit with a defined purpose, e.g. the assessment of modified duties to assist a worker's return to work. The trainee is offered feedback from the assessor across a range of areas related to technical ability and professionalism.

A Direct Observation of Field Skills encounter takes approximately 45 – 60 minutes on site, but will vary depending on the purpose of the visit and nature of the visited site.

Field activities to be observed

The field activity is selected by the trainee in consultation with the assessor and should be based on the relevant skills outlined in Domains 20, 80 and 90 of the AFOEM Training Curriculum. The encounters should reflect the trainee's level of experience. The trainee is responsible for ensuring that the required number of Direct Observation of Field Skills encounters are completed.

Areas for assessment

That the trainee:

1. understood the purpose of the field activity
2. obtained consent from relevant parties
3. prepared beforehand, showing insight
4. observed what was appropriate to the purpose of the activity
5. anticipated how the observed tasks may vary
6. considered social and organisational factors
7. accounted for relevant laws and standards
8. sought guidance where appropriate
9. provided apt recommendations
10. communicated with courtesy and effect.

Trainee responsibilities

- Arrange a Direct Observation of Field Skills encounter with an assessor.
- Obtain relevant consent and arrange a time and place to meet.
- Provide the assessor with a copy of the Direct Observation of Field Skills rating form.
- Complete tasks after the encounter, including the entry of data into the AFOEM Portal via the online Direct Observation of Field Skills tool.
- Submit a copy of the completed form to their assessor and supervisor (where different) through the online tool.

Assessor responsibilities

- Determine whether the subject and site of encounter is appropriate for the trainee's learning needs and stage of training.
- Use the Direct Observation of Field Skills rating form to rate the trainee.
- Provide constructive feedback and discuss improvement strategies. If a trainee receives a rating which is unsatisfactory, the assessor must complete the 'Agreed actions for development' section. The form cannot be submitted if this section is left blank.
- Provide an overall judgment on how the trainee conducts the activity.

Direct Observation of Field Skills Process



Preparation for a Direct Observation of Field Skills

- The trainee is responsible for initiating each Direct Observation of Field Skills encounter.
- The assessor could be the trainee's supervisor, another Fellow of AFOEM, another medical practitioner whose practice embraces occupational medicine and workplace assessments, or a more advanced AFOEM trainee (Stage C).
- The trainee seeks an opportunity to complete a Direct Observation of Field Skills and chooses the field activity in discussion with the assessor.
- The degree of challenge of each encounter should match the trainee's advancement within their stage of training.
- The trainee and assessor need to have a clear understanding of the purpose, process, and outcomes they aim to achieve during the Direct Observation of Field Skills encounter.
- The trainee's series of Direct Observation of Field Skills encounters should include a variety of settings and nominated purposes.

During a Direct Observation of Field Skills

- The Direct Observation of Field Skills encounter takes approximately 45 – 60 minutes, including a 15 minute feedback session. This will depend on the purpose of the encounter and nature of the site.
- The assessor closely observes the trainee throughout all stages of the encounter, including evidence of preparation and post-encounter communication and recommendations.
- The assessor makes notes and rates trainee's performance on the Direct Observation of Field Skills rating form. The assessor provides an overall 'competence' rating based on the outcomes of the encounter.
- The observation is immediately followed by feedback from the assessor. Feedback covers what the trainee did well and any areas for improvement. If any significant areas for development are identified during the consultation, the assessor and trainee should discuss suggestions for improvement. If a trainee receives a rating which is unsatisfactory, the assessor must complete the 'Agreed actions for development' section. The form cannot be submitted if this section is left blank.
- The Direct Observation of Field Skills rating form is signed by trainee and assessor.

After a Direct Observation of Field Skills

- The trainee retains the completed Direct Observation of Field Skills rating form.
- The trainee enters the data from the completed Direct Observation of Field Skills rating form into the AFOEM Portal via the online Direct Observation of Field Skills tool as part of their record of training.
- The trainee submits a copy of the completed form to their assessor and supervisor (where different) through the online tool.
- The assessor reviews the form to ensure it is an accurate reflection of the encounter.
- The supervisor views the completed form to confirm that the encounter has been satisfactorily completed.
- The trainee takes a copy of the completed Direct Observation of Field Skills rating form(s) to meetings with their nominated supervisor(s).

More information
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