

# The Four Domains, In Practice

Danielson's framework describes teaching in four domains. Observers see two of them; the other two live in your planning and professionalism.

## DOMAIN 1

### Planning and preparation

Knowing content, knowing learners, designing coherent sequences and assessments. Visible in documents, not lessons.

**In class:** Your unit plan showing WHY this lesson sits here is Domain 1 evidence.

## DOMAIN 2

### Classroom environment

Respect, rapport, routines and learner behaviour. The domain observers score most generously, everywhere.

**In class:** Learners restarting work after a reminder without drama: that is the environment speaking.

## DOMAIN 3

### Instruction

Questioning, engagement, assessment-in-the-moment, flexibility. The hardest domain to score and the one that tracks learning.

**In class:** The observer's eye is on the learners: who is thinking, who is producing, who is hiding.

## DOMAIN 4

### Professional responsibilities

Reflection, records, families, professional growth. The domain that exists between observations.

**In class:** Your reflection notes from LAST observation, acted on, are this domain's best evidence.

# Before the Observer Arrives

Preparation that improves the lesson, not performance that decorates it. Observers recognise both.

## Lead with learning evidence

Decide how learning will be visible during the lesson, because that is what distinguished practice means.

**Say:** "At minute 40, what will every learner have produced that shows the goal was met?"

## Plan the questions, not just the tasks

Domain 3 turns on questioning quality. Script your top three questions and their follow-ups.

**Say:** "What is my hinge question, and what will each wrong answer tell me?"

## Let learners do the talking

Distinguished classrooms run on learner-to-learner discourse the teacher engineered.

**Say:** "Where in this lesson do learners build on each other's answers without me relaying?"

## Bring the paper trail

Domains 1 and 4 are scored from artefacts: unit plan, assessment data use, reflection notes.

**Say:** "Which three documents show my planning and my response to last time's feedback?"

# What Moves a Score Up a Level

Across the rubric, the same shift separates proficient from distinguished: who is doing the intellectual work.

## From teacher-led to learner-led

Proficient: the teacher checks understanding. Distinguished: learners monitor their own and act on it.

**In class:** Learners using the criteria to improve a draft unprompted outranks the teacher circulating with tips.

## From participation to contribution

Proficient: most learners engaged. Distinguished: learners initiate, question and extend.

**In class:** A learner challenges another's reasoning, respectfully, without teacher prompting.

## From plan followed to plan adjusted

Proficient: the lesson goes as designed. Distinguished: the design bends to live evidence.

**In class:** The mid-lesson check fails, and the next ten minutes visibly change because of it.

# Observation Week Checklist

A calm, honest preparation list. The goal is your normal teaching at its best, not a one-off show.

## The lesson

- The learning goal is worth observing: new material or genuine application, not a revision filler.
- An all-learner check exists at the hinge of the lesson.
- Learner talk is structured into at least one segment.
- You know what you will do if the check shows the class is lost.

## The evidence

- Unit plan shows where this lesson sits and why.
- Last observation's feedback has a visible response.
- Two or three learner books show feedback acted on over time.

## The conversation

- You can name your lesson's weakest moment before the observer does.
- You have one genuine question to ask THEM: feedback is a dialogue.
- Disagreement is prepared for: scores are evidence-based judgements, and evidence can be discussed.

# Observation Scores: A 5-Minute Honest Briefing

What the research says observation frameworks can and cannot tell a school. Leaders, read before calibrating.

## ■ The framework measures something real

FFT scores correlate with student achievement under random assignment: the rubric is pointing at genuine teaching quality, especially in the instruction domain.

## ■ One lesson is a weak sample

Year-to-year score stability is modest, and the same instrument yields different score distributions in different contexts. A single observation is an anecdote; trends across several are data.

## ■ The four domains behave like one

Psychometrically, scores collapse toward a single factor, and environment scores run systematically higher than instruction scores everywhere. Comparing a teacher's domains against each other over-reads the instrument.

## ■ The honest caveat

Use observations for development conversations, multiple samples for any judgement, and composite domain scores over component arithmetic. High-stakes single-lesson verdicts are the use the evidence supports least.

### Evidence base

Garrett, R. and Steinberg, M.P. (2015). Examining teacher effectiveness using classroom observation scores. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*.

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Kettler, R.J. et al. (2022). Improving measurement of teacher performance: alternative scoring for classroom-based observational systems. *Educational Assessment*.

Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. ASCD.