European Network of Policy-Makers for the Evaluation of Educational Systems

Evaluation of Foreign Languages at Upper Secondary Level (EFLUSL)

GUIDELINES FOR EVALUATORS

AN ROINN DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS EDUCATION
AGUS EOLAÍOCHTA AND SCIENCE

Contents

The evaluation pack

These guidelines form part of a suite of evaluation instruments developed as part of the Evaluation of Foreign Languages at Upper Secondary Level (EFLUSL) project. The full contents of the pack are:

- *The EFLUSL Quality Indicators*

This document forms the basis of the evaluation activities. It consists of a set of fifteen quality indicators grouped under four broad areas, with illustrations of practice at two levels for each indicator.

- *Guidelines for Evaluators*

This document provides background information on the project and a guide to the use of the evaluation instruments. It describes how the evaluation is to be carried out and how the report is to be written.

- *Record of Evidence Booklet 1: Structured Interview with Principal/Head of Department*

This booklet is for use by evaluators when collecting evidence and making evaluations concerning planning for languages at a whole-school level. One booklet should be completed in each school.

- *Record of Evidence Booklet 2: Structured Interview with Teacher and Lesson Observations*

This booklet is used when gathering evidence concerning the teacher's planning and preparation, the teacher's readiness for teaching, including his/her competence in the target language. It is also used to collect evidence and record evaluations during the observation of language lessons. One booklet is used for each teacher observed.

- *Student Questionnaire*

This questionnaire, to be administered by the class teacher, may be used to gather additional information in relation to student learning and achievement.

- *School Report Template*

This electronic template should be used when writing the school evaluation report.

Introduction

The European Network of Policy-Makers for the Evaluation of Educational Systems

The European Network of Policy-Makers for the Evaluation of Educational Systems is an intergovernmental organisation, composed of senior officials in ministries of education, Inspectorates and evaluation agencies in the EU member states and other European countries. It seeks to promote co-operation between member states in the evaluation of school-based education. The network promotes best practice in various aspects of school evaluation and the use of evaluation outcomes to inform and develop educational policies at national level. The EFLUSL evaluation instruments are the outcome of a number of research projects organised under the auspices of the network. The secretariat of the network is based in the Department de l'Éducation Nationale in Paris.

Origins of the EFLUSL evaluation framework

In 2004 the European Network of Policy-Makers for the Evaluation of Educational Systems initiated the EFLUSL project with the aim of developing a common set of quality indicators for the evaluation of teaching and learning in foreign languages. The main outcome of the project was the development of an evaluation framework for foreign language teaching and learning that may be used within various inspection and evaluation contexts.

The EFLUSL evaluation framework was developed in accordance with the principle that effective evaluation and reporting can enhance the richness of the teaching and learning process. EFLUSL participants were conscious that, although written testing and examinations are used widely at upper secondary level, such written assessment provides limited information on the effectiveness of language teaching and learning. Participants considered that when evaluators observe and interact with teachers and learners in schools, a much more complete form of evaluation becomes possible. By means of such evaluation, good practice in language teaching and learning can be acknowledged and affirmed and areas for development and improvement can be identified.
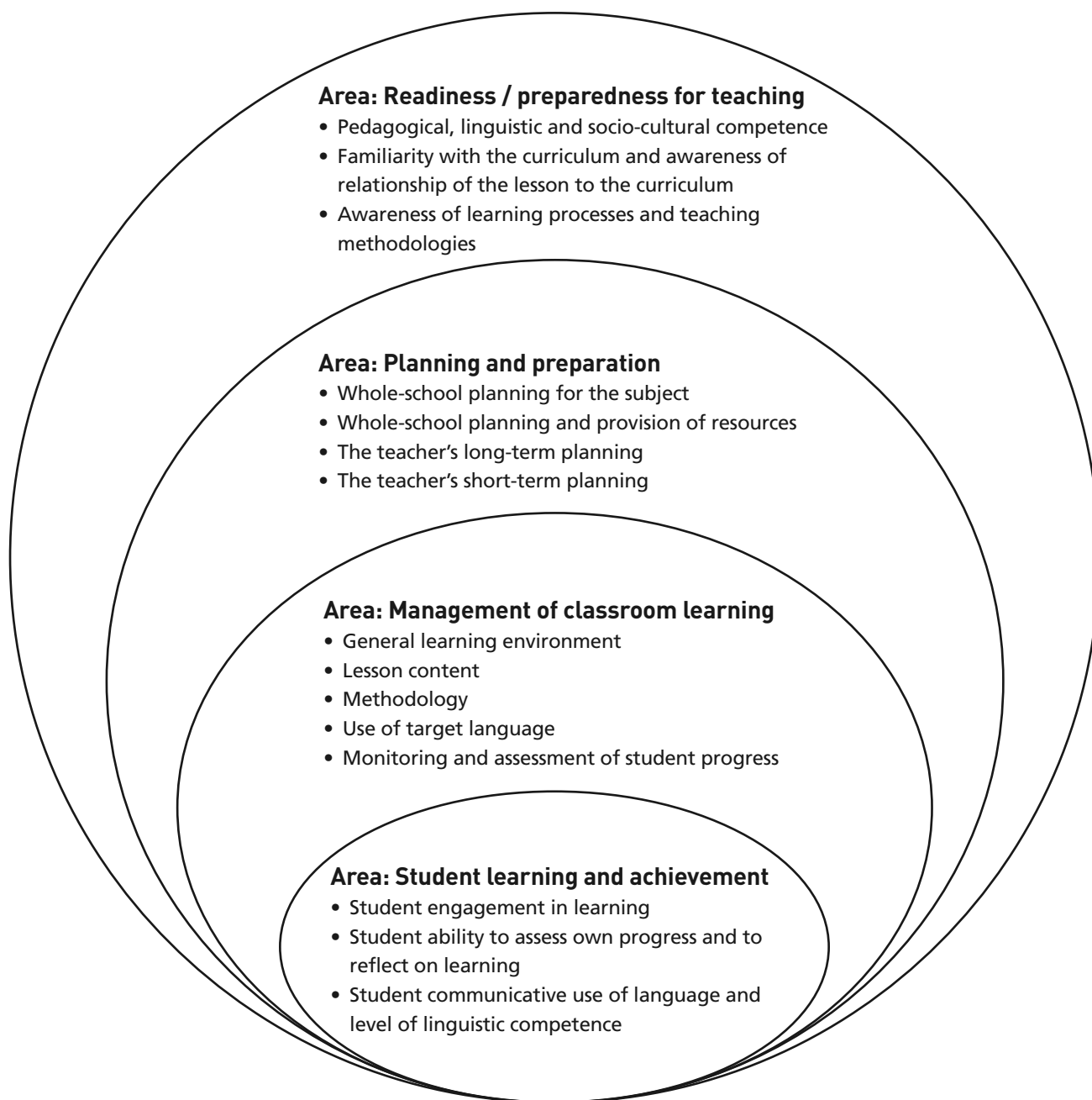
The EFLUSL project was primarily concerned with the development of a framework for use in external evaluation. In each of the participating countries, there was a growing realisation that internal self-review and external evaluation can complement each other in promoting quality assurance in schools. The EFLUSL project participants agreed therefore on the principle that the external evaluation framework should complement school self-review and recognised the contribution the project could make to the development of quality indicators which could be used in schools for school self-review and internal evaluation. For this reason, the EFLUSL framework includes indicators for school-level planning for language provision, as well as including indicators for individual teacher planning and review of language teaching and learning.

A cornerstone of the EFLUSL project was respect for diversity in curricula, methodologies, schools and educational systems. The participating schools in the EFLUSL project were drawn from seven different countries. In developing the evaluation instruments, the project drew on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and on best practice in the participating countries. The CEFR provides a basis for European consensus on standards of quality and transparency in the area of language teaching, learning and assessment. For this reason, the CEFR formed an essential theoretical backdrop to the work of the project, both in relation to levels of linguistic competence and its use of "can-do" type descriptors and illustrations.

The EFLUSL Quality Indicators

The evaluation framework provides indicators under four areas. As illustrated in the diagram, these areas are closely inter-related and have at their centre the student and the development of his/her linguistic, communicative and socio-cultural competence.

The EFLUSL Quality Indicators

Area: Readiness / preparedness for teaching
- Pedagogical, linguistic and socio-cultural competence
- Familiarity with the curriculum and awareness of relationship of the lesson to the curriculum
- Awareness of learning processes and teaching methodologies

Area: Planning and preparation
- Whole-school planning for the subject
- Whole-school planning and provision of resources
- The teacher's long-term planning
- The teacher's short-term planning

Area: Management of classroom learning
- General learning environment
- Lesson content
- Methodology
- Use of target language
- Monitoring and assessment of student progress

Area: Student learning and achievement
- Student engagement in learning
- Student ability to assess own progress and to reflect on learning
- Student communicative use of language and level of linguistic competence

Areas, indicators and illustrations

Within each of the four areas in the evaluation framework, a number of indicators have been identified. For each indicator, illustrations of relevant features of practice have been delineated at two levels so as to aid the evaluator in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning in the school.

*The **area** is indicated by the shaded band at the top of the page.*

*An **illustration of practice** in relation to the indicator is provided in **bold** print at two levels – "optimum practice" (Level 4) or "scope for development" (Level 2) – see next page.*

Area: Planning and preparation

Indicator	Illustrations of practice
The teacher's long-term planning	*Level 4: Optimum practice* **The teacher's long-term planning is informed by the relevant curriculum. It demonstrates a level of reflection on the aims and objectives for teaching and learning.** *The long-term plan identifies desired learning outcomes for the students in each class group, reflecting their differentiated needs and abilities, their interests and learning styles. Long-term planning also takes into account the substantial informal learning outside the classroom.*
	Level 2: Scope for development **Some cognisance is taken of the curriculum and of the varied learning needs and interests of students. Most of the time however, the syllabus is not a living document with the students and the long-term plan is often equivalent to the plan of the textbook.** *Because the school curriculum is based on a certain course book, teachers may not feel that they need to do specific planning in terms of aims and student needs, since this has already been done for them by the head teacher and textbook authors. Long-term planning focuses primarily on the delivery of the programme and takes little account of the learning capacities and styles of the students.*

***Indicators** are listed on the left.*

***Further examples,** in **italic** print are used to expand the illustration. These examples may or may not be observed during the evaluation but they provide some additional prompts for the evaluator.*

Evaluation Ratings: four levels of performance

During the evaluations, evaluators assign ratings at one of four levels to each area within the framework. These levels are:

Level 4: Optimum practice
Level 3: Competent practice
Level 2: Scope for development
Level 1: Requiring urgent attention

These ratings can be used to assist evaluators when making judgements about the overall quality of each aspect of the teaching and learning of the target language in the school.

In making judgements and drawing conclusions in relation to each of the indicators, the evaluator should assign a rating consistent with the practice observed and consistent with the illustration of the particular level of performance. This will assist in identifying key areas of strength and areas for further development within the school.

The ratings could also be used to assist national agencies in compiling data on the general areas of strength and areas for further development that are common throughout schools in an education system. For example, in compiling a composite national report on language teaching, it would be possible to state the proportion of schools that show 'optimum practice' in the management of classroom learning or identify the areas that need to be addressed in teacher education programmes.

It is important to note that the areas and indicators have not been assigned a particular weighting or importance relative to each other. This means that it is not possible or valid to combine the ratings from each area for a particular school or so as to produce a single aggregated 'score' for the school. It is not possible, therefore, to use the ratings to produce a 'league table' of schools or individual teachers.

Conducting the in-school evaluation

Purpose of the evaluations in schools and classrooms

The evaluation framework is designed primarily to enhance classroom observations and evaluation visits to schools by external evaluators.

Overview of evaluation activities

In conducting the in-school evaluation a range of evaluation activities is used to ensure the collection of a comprehensive evidence base. The activities include:

Evaluation activities at whole-school level
- Structured interview with the school principal and, where relevant, the head of the subject department
- Review of planning documentation for foreign languages and/or for the target language that is being evaluated

Evaluation activities at classroom/lesson level
- Structured interviews with the individual language teachers

- Review of each teacher's long-term and short-term planning documentation
- Review of assessment records and records of students' progress
- Observation of teaching and learning in language lessons
- Observation of student-student interaction
- Interaction with students in the target language
- Examination and review of students' work
- Administering the student questionnaire

Record of evidence booklets

Two record of evidence booklets are provided to support the evaluation activities at whole-school level and at classroom/lesson level:

- *Record of Evidence Booklet 1: Structured Interview with Principal/Head of Department* - one booklet per school
- *Record of Evidence Booklet 2: Structured Interview with Teacher and Lesson Observations* - one booklet per teacher

These booklets are designed to assist evaluators in making accurate observations and in recording evidence in a reliable and convenient manner. They are based on the evaluation framework and so assist the evaluator in making consistent, reliable and objective judgements about the quality of teaching and learning in the school. The findings in the evaluation report should be consistent with the evidence and findings recorded in these booklets.

Record of Evidence Booklet 1: Structured Interview with Principal/Head of Department

The EFLUSL Quality Indicators recognise that the whole-school context plays a significant role in ensuring effective language learning and teaching. Evidence concerning whole-school planning, and specifically how it impacts on planning for foreign language learning, is sought in a structured interview with the principal and with the head of the subject department, where relevant. The planning documentation for foreign language learning and/or the target language should also be reviewed, ideally some time before the visit to the school.

Record of Evidence Booklet 1 provides a structured interview schedule and space on which to record the evidence collected during the interview and when reviewing the documentation. This booklet also provides space where the evaluator can draw conclusions in the form of summary statements and an overall rating of the quality of whole-school planning.

Record of Evidence Booklet 2: Structured Interview with Teacher and Lesson Observations

This booklet is designed to support the evaluator in undertaking the aspects of the evaluation that are concerned with preparing for and implementing the teaching and learning activities in the classroom. One booklet should be completed for each teacher observed. The booklet provides for the observation of two lessons with the same class group. Prior to visiting classrooms and observing lessons the evaluator should also meet with the teacher.
A structured interview schedule is included in *Record of Evidence Booklet 2* to support this activity. Some parts of the interview should be conducted in the target language. The interview and lesson observation should provide an opportunity to gather evidence concerning:

- the teacher's readiness for teaching, including his/her competence in the target language, his/her ongoing contact with the target language community, his/her experience of teaching the target language, and his/her continuing professional development

- the teacher's planning and preparation
- general information on the class group, including information on the students' general ability levels, the type of curriculum and course that they are following and the extent to which the subject is optional or mandatory
- contextual details regarding the lesson that will be observed, including information on where the lesson comes in the teacher's plan of work
- the teacher's management of classroom learning
- students' learning and achievement.

Record of Evidence Booklet 2 also provides space where the evaluator can draw conclusions in the form of summary statements and overall ratings for the four areas of the framework, except the two indicators relating to whole-school planning, which are recorded in *Record of Evidence Booklet 1*.

Evaluation activities in the classroom
Observing learning and teaching
The most important evidence for the evaluation is collected during the period of observation in the classroom. The greater part of this period should be spent in observing the teacher and students engaged in teaching and learning activities. It is desirable that the evaluator observes the main elements of a complete lesson, including the opening or introduction, development, and consolidation of lesson objectives.

Interacting with students
The evaluator should also interact with the students: this interaction is a useful means for the evaluator to augment and complete the evidence base in relation to student learning. Evaluators may interact with students at the end of the teaching period or at an appropriate occasion in the course of the lesson. This interaction should be based on the lesson content, following on naturally from the teacher's work just observed, and broadening the discussion to test further the linguistic, communicative and socio-cultural competence of the students within the parameters of the curriculum. In engaging with the students, the evaluator may use a variety of questioning strategies to elicit information and to affirm students in their learning. The Student Questionnaire (to be administered by the class teacher) should also provide relevant information and evidence of student learning and achievement.

Recording the evidence
Space is provided in *Record of Evidence Booklet 2* for the evaluator to make notes during the observation of lessons. Immediately following the period of observation, the evaluator should use his/her notes to complete the summary statements and assign overall ratings.

Recording and compiling the evaluation
The evaluator should assign an overall rating to each of the following areas using the four-point scale described above:

- In *Record of Evidence Booklet 1* the evaluator should record a rating for the area: Planning and preparation, in relation to the two whole-school indicators

- In *Record of Evidence Booklet 2* the evaluator should record a rating for the areas:
  o Readiness/preparedness for teaching
  o Planning and preparation, in relation to the two indicators for individual teacher planning

o Management of classroom learning

o Student learning and achievement.

- At the conclusion of the evaluation activities in a school, the evaluator will have completed one *Record of Evidence Booklet 1* and, depending on the numbers of teachers observed, one or more than one *Record of Evidence Booklet 2.* There is an appendix to *Record of Evidence Booklet 1* where the ratings recorded in all the booklets used in the school are collated to assist the evaluator in making judgments about the overall quality of each aspect of the teaching and learning in the school.

Feedback to teachers

The aim of the feedback should be to enhance the motivation and overall capacity of the school community to achieve its goals and strive for further improvements. The evaluation should aim to be of considerable benefit for the school through engaging teachers in a process of structured discussion and review about the effectiveness of their teaching and the learning of foreign languages. By sharing the evaluation framework and its indicators with the teachers, evaluators may also enhance the capacity of the teachers and the school to engage in self-evaluation and review.

The evaluation report

The evaluator should prepare an evaluation report on the quality of teaching and learning in the target language in the school. The evaluation report should not make reference to individual teachers but rather draw on the evidence gathered from the observation of a number of lessons to identify findings and present conclusions relating to the learning and teaching in the relevant language in the school as a whole.

General principles for report writing

The report should:
- identify, acknowledge and affirm good practice in language teaching and learning in the school
- promote continuing improvement in the quality of language teaching offered by the school
- promote self-evaluation and continuous development by the school and the teachers
- provide an assurance of quality for the school and for the system as a whole, based on the collection of objective, dependable, high quality data.

In writing the evaluation report, evaluators should ensure that:
- all statements in the report are based on the evidence gathered – it is not necessary to present all available evidence in the report, but sufficient reference should be made to it so as to convince the reader of the accuracy of the judgements made in the report
- all findings are objective and sustainable
- the report indicates clearly the quality of the education that is being provided
- the evaluative statements in the report reflect the findings recorded in the record of evidence booklets
- the evaluation report affirms good practice and includes specific illustrations, where appropriate
- shortcomings are clearly identified as areas for further development
- the narrative in the evaluation report reflects the ratings assigned in the record of evidence booklets
- the written report is consistent with any verbal findings communicated to the teachers or school principal.

In summary, evaluators should:

- keep to the structure of the framework of indicators
- use the headings and sub-headings provided
- aim for a concise narrative style
- make clear evaluative statements
- briefly justify statements.

Content of the report

It is suggested that the report should have the following sections:

Introduction

- Size, location, type or orientation of the school; socio-economic context of students; range of student ability; number of teachers teaching languages and number of teachers visited
- A context note should cover any sensitive or unique circumstances which should be taken into account
- Evaluation activities: A short account of the evaluation activities conducted and the sources of evidence on which the report is based

Quality of readiness/preparedness for teaching

- Pedagogical, linguistic and socio-cultural competence
- Familiarity with the curriculum and awareness of the relationship of the lesson to the curriculum
- Awareness of the learning processes and teaching methodologies

Quality of planning and preparation

- Whole-school planning for the subject
- Whole-school planning and provision of resources
- The teachers' long-term planning
- The teachers' short-term planning

Quality of management of classroom learning

- General learning environment
- Lesson content
- Methodology
- Use of target language
- Monitoring and assessment of student progress

Quality of student learning and achievement

- Student engagement in learning
- Student ability to assess own progress and to reflect on learning
- Student communicative use of language and level of linguistic competence

Summary of strengths and areas for development