LA TROBE UNIVERSITY

LIVING WITH DISABILITY RESEARCH CENTRE

Using the Observing Practice Quality tool to observe and assess the quality of staff support

Dr Lincoln Humphreys & Professor Christine Bigby

CRICOS PROVIDER 00115M

What is the Observing Practice Quality (OPQ) tool?

The OPQ…

- is an easy-to-use tool to assess the quality of staff support using observation
- helps to focus on what is important when observing and assessing the quality of staff support
- has been developed into an app so it can be completed on a phone
- download for free at Google Play Store for android and the App Store for iPhone
- paper version can be downloaded from the OPQ website
- designed to be used by frontline supervisors and service managers as the basis of feedback to help staff improve their practice
- also used by auditors and quality assurance assessors to evaluate service quality
- was developed to fill a need by disability organisations and auditors for a way to observe and assess the quality of staff support → observation is the best way of knowing the quality of staff support

Observing Practice Quality (OPQ) website

www.observingstaffsupport.com.au

How was the OPQ developed?

Based on the Active Support Measure (ASM) – an observational research tool developed by Mansell & Elliot (1996) - frequently used in Active Support research

OPQ development process:

1. Exploratory factor analysis of ASM: two dimensions of good support – technical and interpersonal
2. Write items to tap two dimensions, development of scoring and instructions: writing, rewriting, revising
3. Expert review: researchers and experienced practitioners reviewed the tool and scored a video
4. Development of the app
5. Tested the app and tool with practice leaders observing staff in services and interviewing the practice leaders
6. More revisions, substantial changes to the app, development of the training website
7. Further tested the app with practice leaders observing staff in services
8. Still more to do…

The OPQ tool

11 items that focus on important aspects of good support

Technical Support	Interpersonal Support
1. Offering activities to take part in	5. Communicating clearly
2. Offering choice	6. Noticing and responding to the person's communication
3. Providing opportunities to be engaged	7. Respecting the person in all interactions
4. Providing the right type and amount of assistance	8. Having friendly interactions
2 Optional Items	**Engagement**
A1 Teaching something new	9. How much of the time was the person engaged?
A2 Responding well to behaviour that is a danger to self or others	

Rating the items

3	The worker provided good support
2	The worker sometimes provided good support, but it could have been better
1	The worker did not provide good support

Rate each item based on what you observed during the entire observation:

- What did you see happen?
- Did the worker provide good consistent support tailored to the person?
- Were there missed opportunities?
- Were there ways to provide better support?

How to observe

- The OPQ can be used in any setting where a worker provides direct support to a person with an intellectual disability, e.g., accommodation or day service, in the community
- You complete the OPQ about **one worker and one person** they are supporting
- Observe minimally for 20 – 30 minutes or longer → longer is more reliable
- Stand or sit where you can see and hear the worker and person they are supporting
- Limit your influence on what is happening
- You are observing worker and scoring the support, but it is easier to interpret support by watching from the perspective of the person being supported

Item 1. Offering activities to take part in

- What *type* of activities did the worker offer the person?
- Multi-step or single step

3. Multi-step activities comprise multiple steps, often require time and effort to do.

E.g., making toast, cooking a meal, changing bed sheets,
writing a shopping list, playing a board game with another person

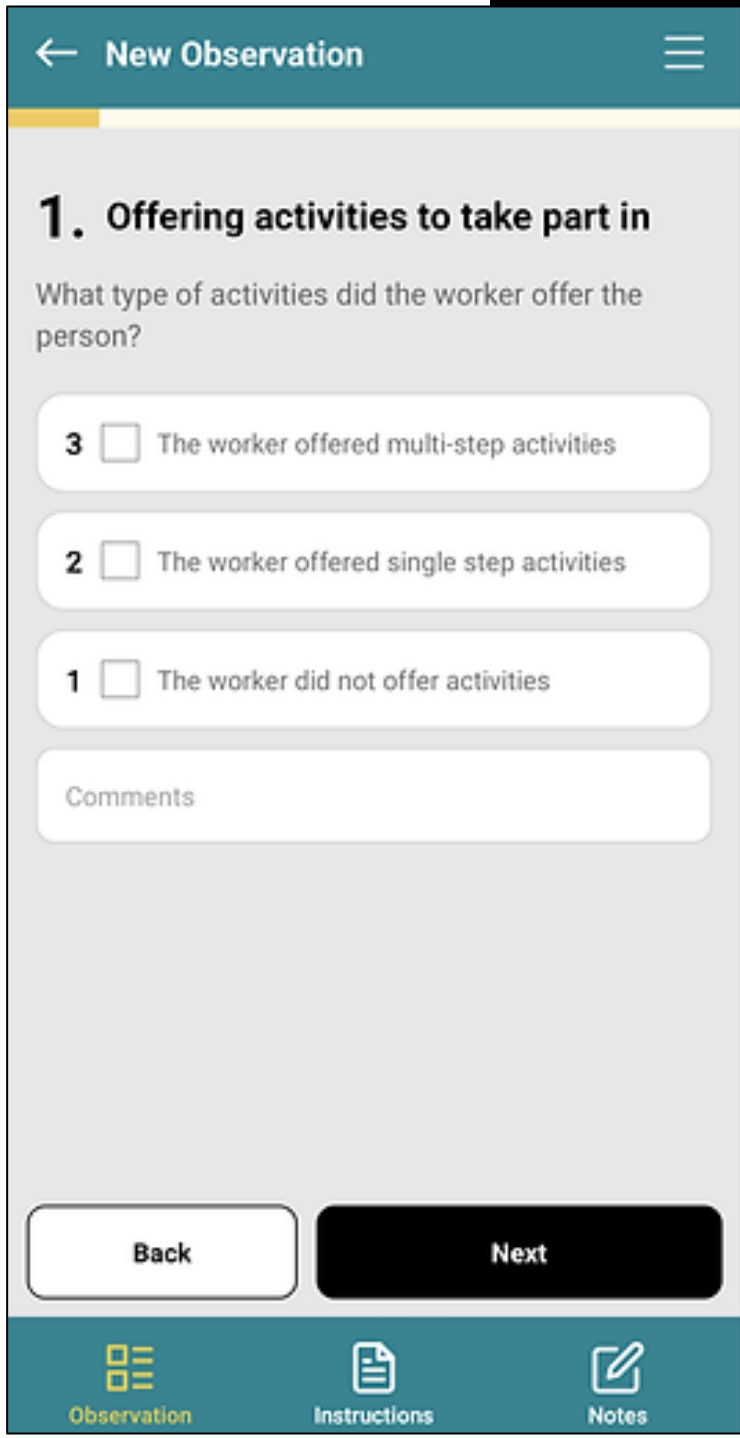
2. Single step activities comprise **just one or two steps**, often done quickly or easily.

E.g., closing curtains or blinds, carrying clothes to a washing machine,
checking for mail in a letter box, carrying rubbish to a bin

1. Worker not offering any activities and the person does nothing.

E.g., just sitting, standing, watching the worker or other people

* This item is easier to interpret and rate based on an observation than conceptually



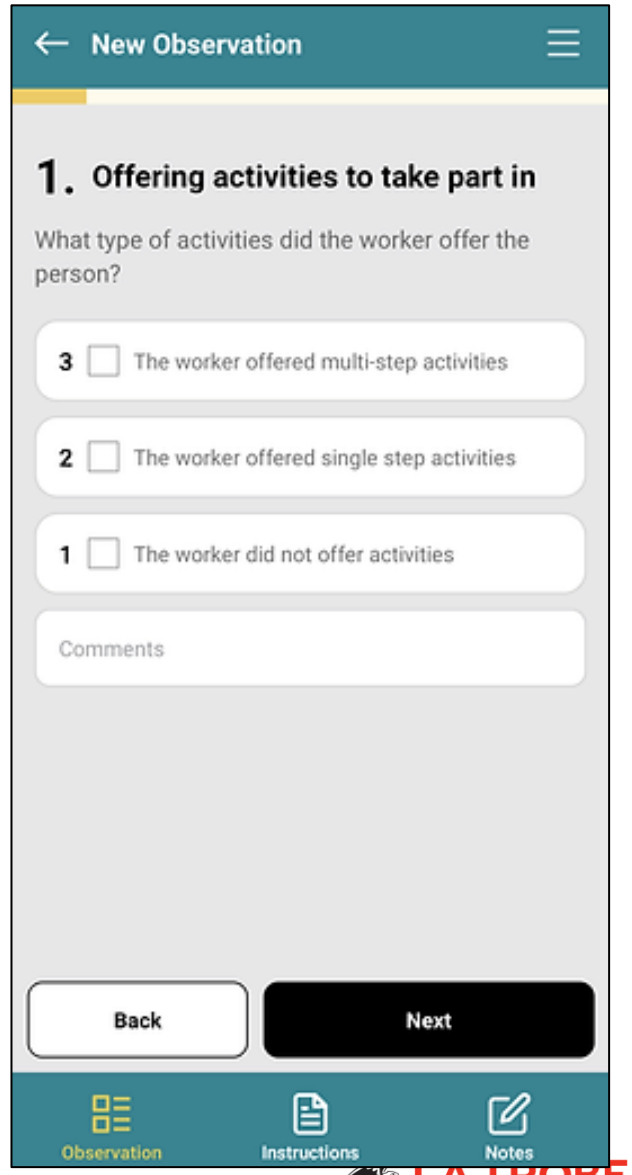
Cookbook

Rating item 1. Offering activities to take part in

What type of activities did the worker offer the person?

The worker in the video would be rated a 3 for this item

3	2	1
• getting coffee from a cupboard • turning on the kettle • getting a cup • getting a spoon • putting coffee in a cup • pouring milk into the cup • pouring hot water in the cup • stirring with a spoon	If the worker made the coffee for the person, then the person drank the coffee and afterwards the person took the empty cup to the sink	If the worker was busy doing other activities, such as cooking or cleaning, and did not offer or support the person to participate in any activities



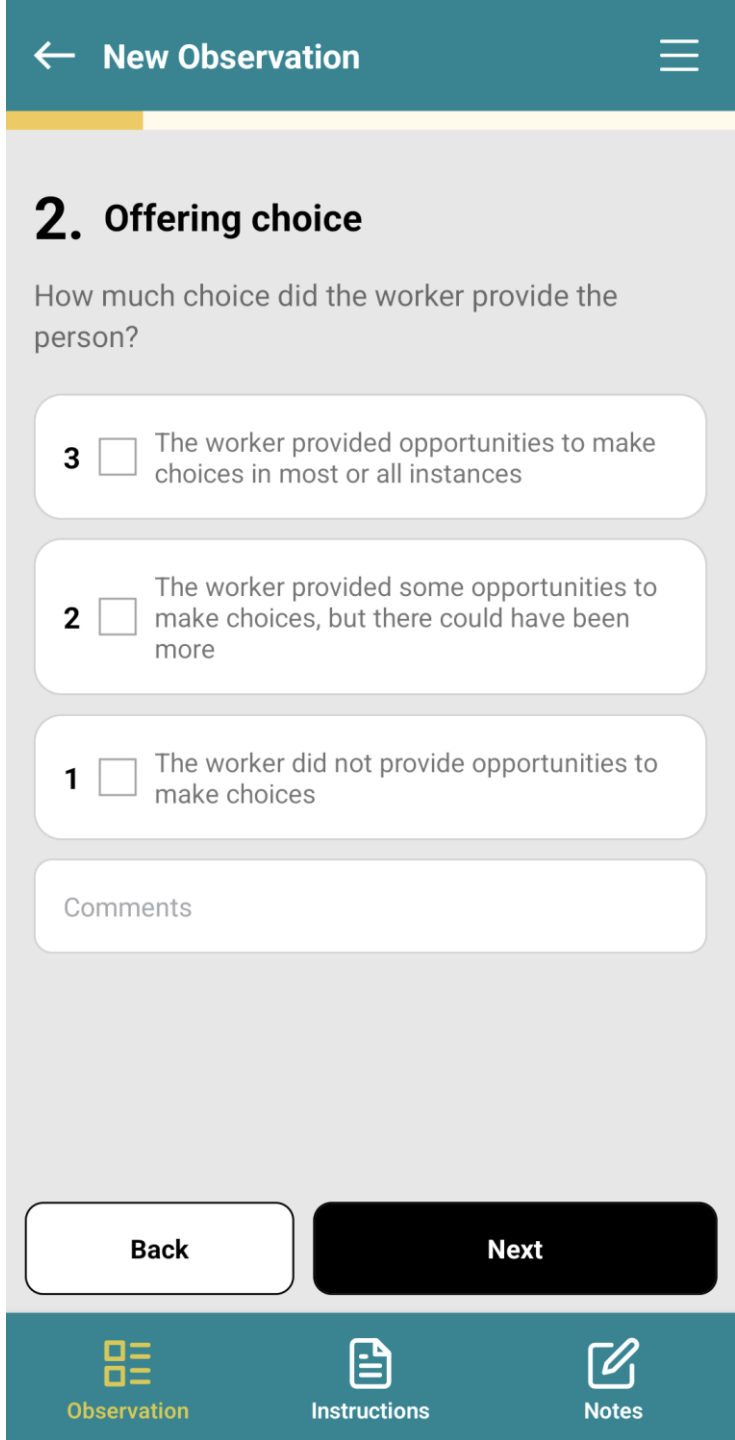
Item 2. Offering choice

- How much choice did the worker provide the person?

Choice in:

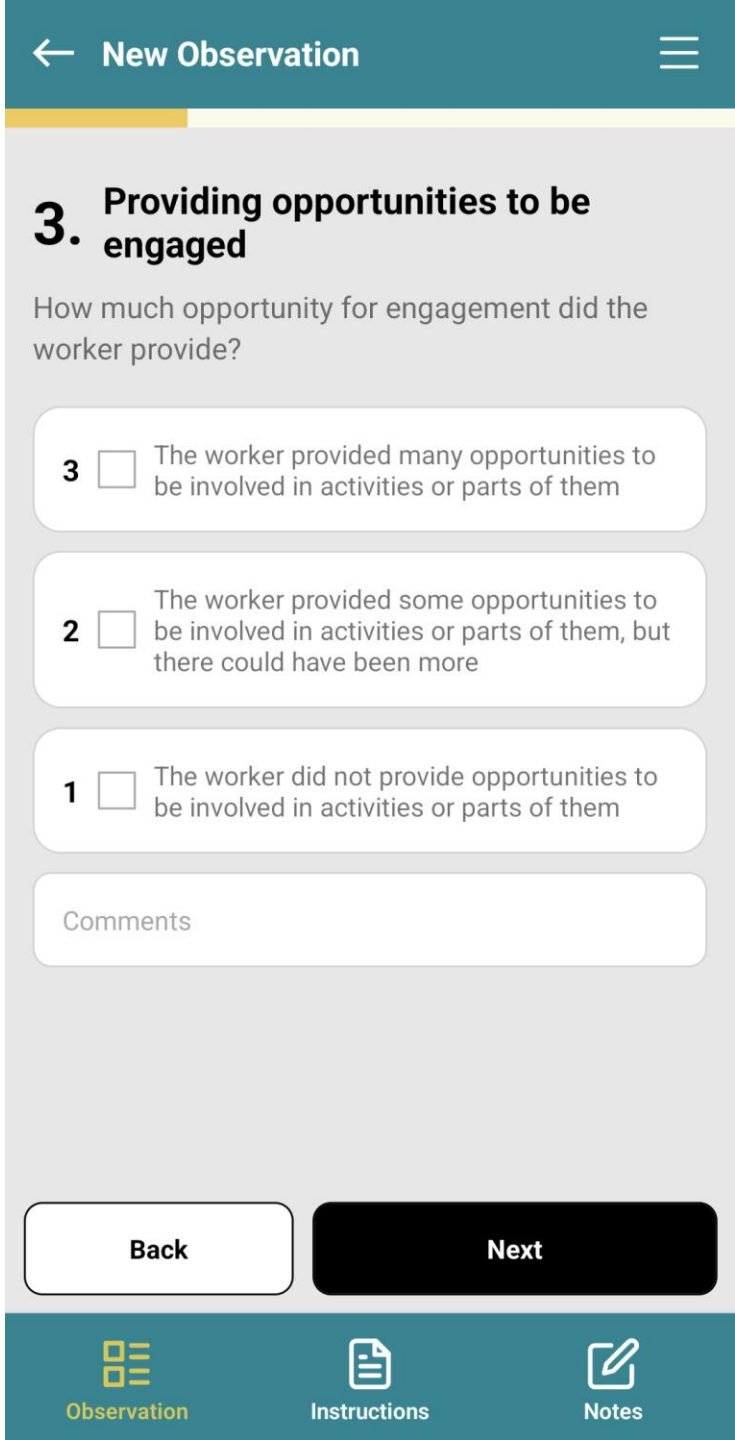
- Activities to participate in
- The parts of the activity the person does
- When to do the activity
- For how long, how to do it, whether to participate or not

How much choice will depend on the person and the situation: how many options they understand and the reasonable number of choices depending on the activity and what is happening.



Item 3. Providing opportunities to be engaged

- How much opportunity for engagement did the worker provide the person?
- Many activities have multiple parts. E.g., making a coffee
- The parts of an activity can be opportunities for a person to participate
- E.g., to turn on the kettle, get a cup and a spoon, put coffee in the cup
- It about the worker recognising and providing the person with these opportunities to participate and be engaged
- Reflects Every Moment Has Potential/task analysis:
  - breaking activities down into parts to create more opportunities to engage a person
  - thinking in steps
  - recognising opportunities to be engaged

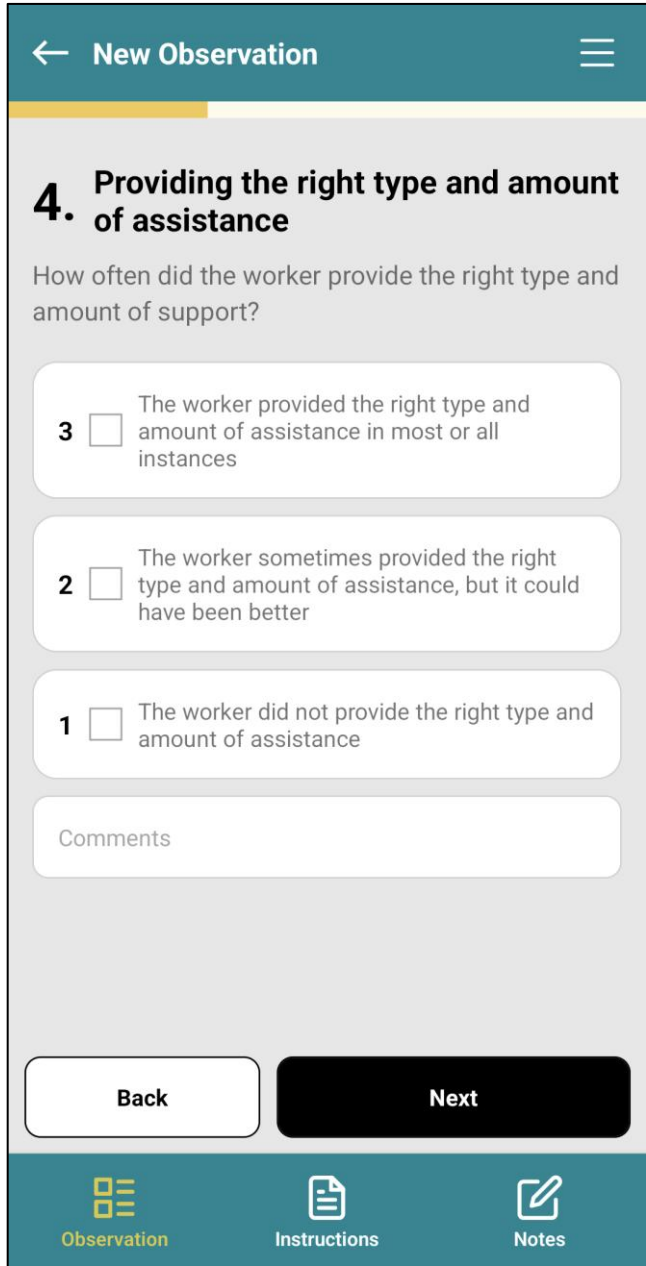


Item 4. Providing the right type and amount of assistance

- How often did the worker provide the right type and amount of support?
- Reflects Graded assistance to ensure success Essential of Active Support
    - **Asking**: “Can you get the milk from the fridge?”
    - **Instructing**: “Press the switch on the kettle”
    - **Prompting or gesturing**: Pointing to the cupboard to get a cup
    - **Demonstrating**: Showing the person how to hold a carton to pour milk
    - **Guiding (hand-over-hand assistance)**: Both the worker and the person holding the kettle to pour hot water into a cup

When observing, pay attention to:

- Does the worker provide the right type and amount of assistance for the person and the activity?
- Is it too much or too little assistance?

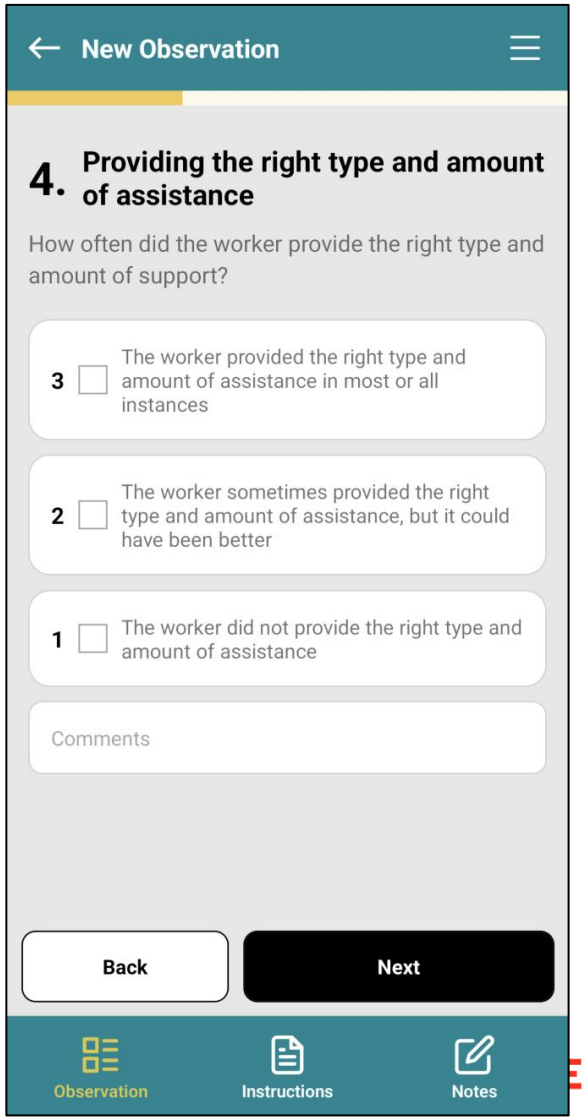


Rating item 4. Providing the right type and amount of assistance

How often did the worker provide the right type and amount of support?

The worker would be rated a 3 for this item.

3	2	1
•guiding to cut broccoli with a knife •instructing to break broccoli florets •instructing to put broccoli into the container •asking the number of eggs needed and gesturing •standing back when the person cracks the eggs because the person can do this themself •gesturing how to grind salt	If the worker provided the right assistance by guiding the person to cut broccoli with a knife and instructing to break off the broccoli florets, but then provided too much assistance by guiding the person to crack the eggs when the person can do this independently after being asked	If the worker only provided verbal instruction to cut the broccoli with a knife (not enough assistance), guiding to crack the eggs when the person can do this independently (too much assistance), and asking the person to turn on the oven when gesturing was also needed (not enough assistance)



Item 5. Communicating clearly

- How clear was the worker's communication?
- Communication is tailored to the person so they understand.

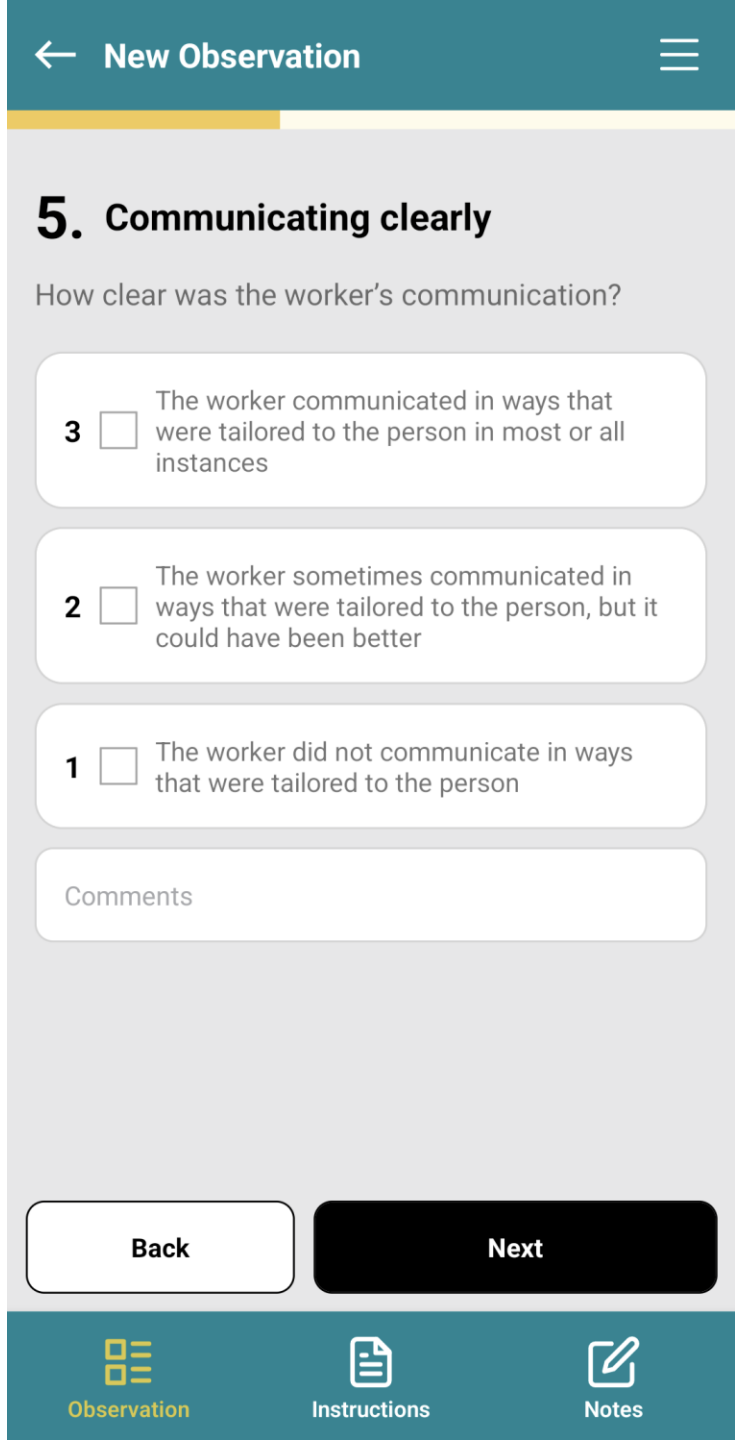
When observing, pay attention to:

- Is the worker's communication tailored to the person? Too complex/too simple?
- Does the person understand the worker's communication?

Item 6. Noticing and responding to the person's communication

How often did the worker notice and respond to the person's communication?

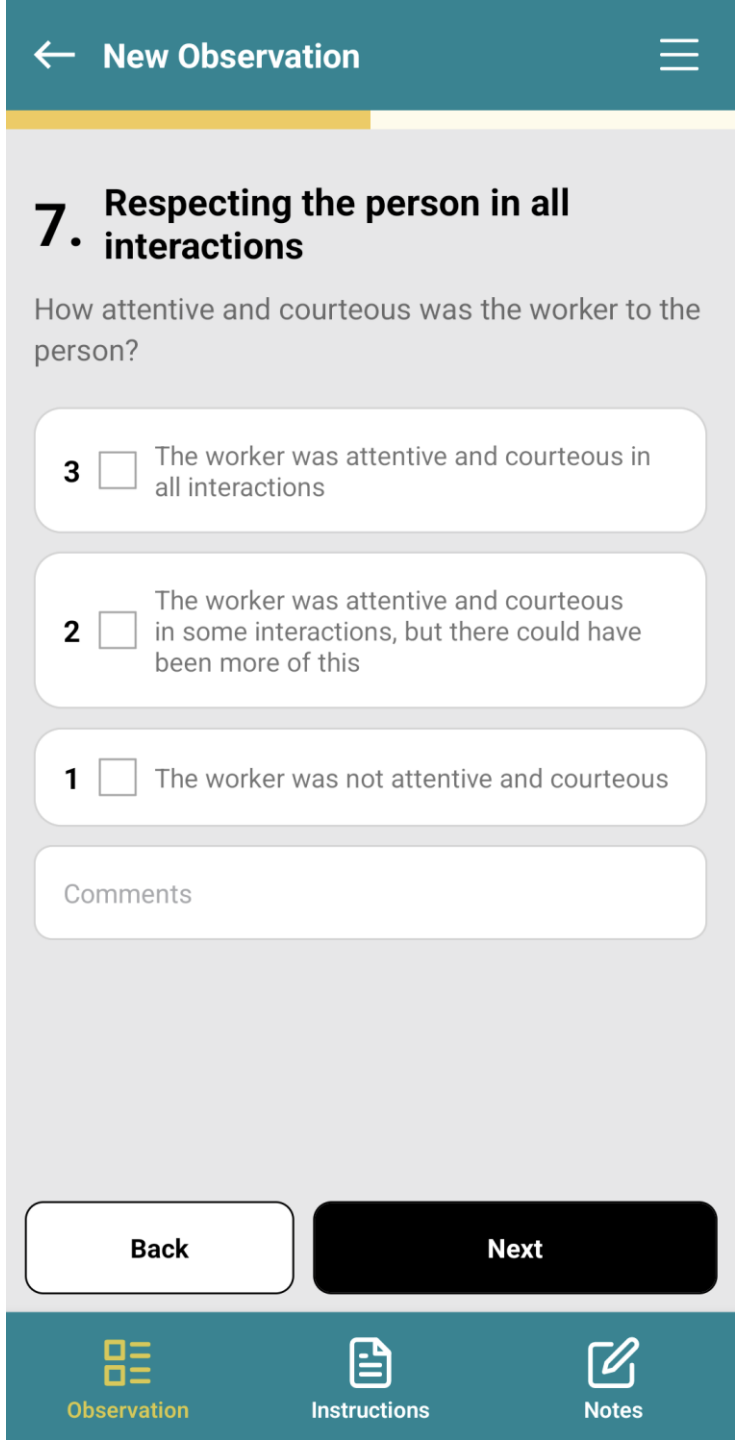
- Does the worker notice all the person's attempts to communicate?
- How does the worker respond to what the person communicates?
- Does the worker miss or ignore any attempts made by the person to communicate?



Item 7. Respecting the person in all interactions

How attentive and courteous was the worker to the person?

Respectful Interactions	Disrespectful Interactions
paying attention to the person	not paying attention to the person when they are communicating
showing interest in them	being dismissive
being courteous	trying to hurry the person during an activity
helping the person feel secure and comfortable during the activity and interaction	speaking in an abrupt or directive tone
going at the person's pace	talking about the person in front of them
	mocking the person, or making them feel uncomfortable or embarrassed



Item 8. Having friendly interactions

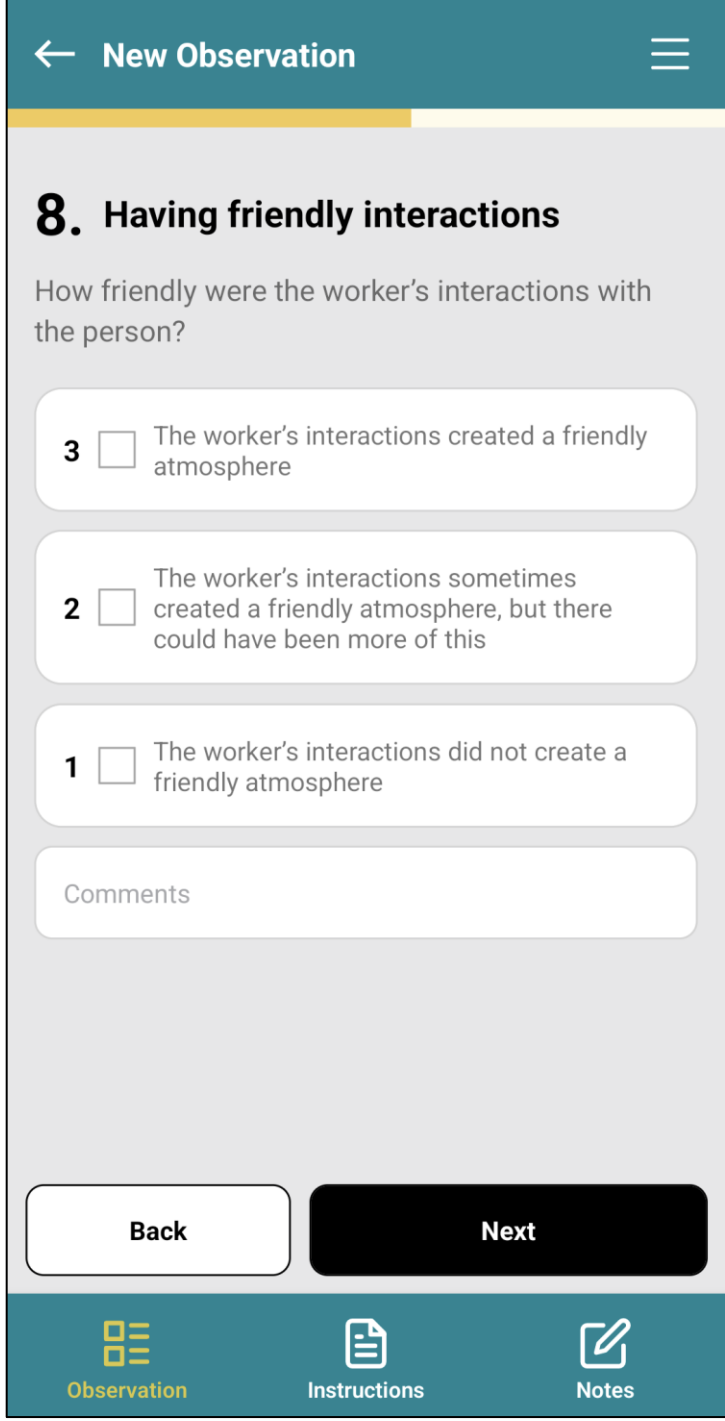
How friendly were the worker's interactions with the person?

A worker can use the opportunities available during the activity:

- smiling back when the person smiles at them
- laughing when something funny happens
- giving praise when a person achieves something
- asking the person a question related to what they are doing

When observing, pay attention to:

- Does the worker use the available opportunities or create opportunities for a friendly atmosphere?
- Is the person enjoying the activity or interaction?
- Are there moments of fun?

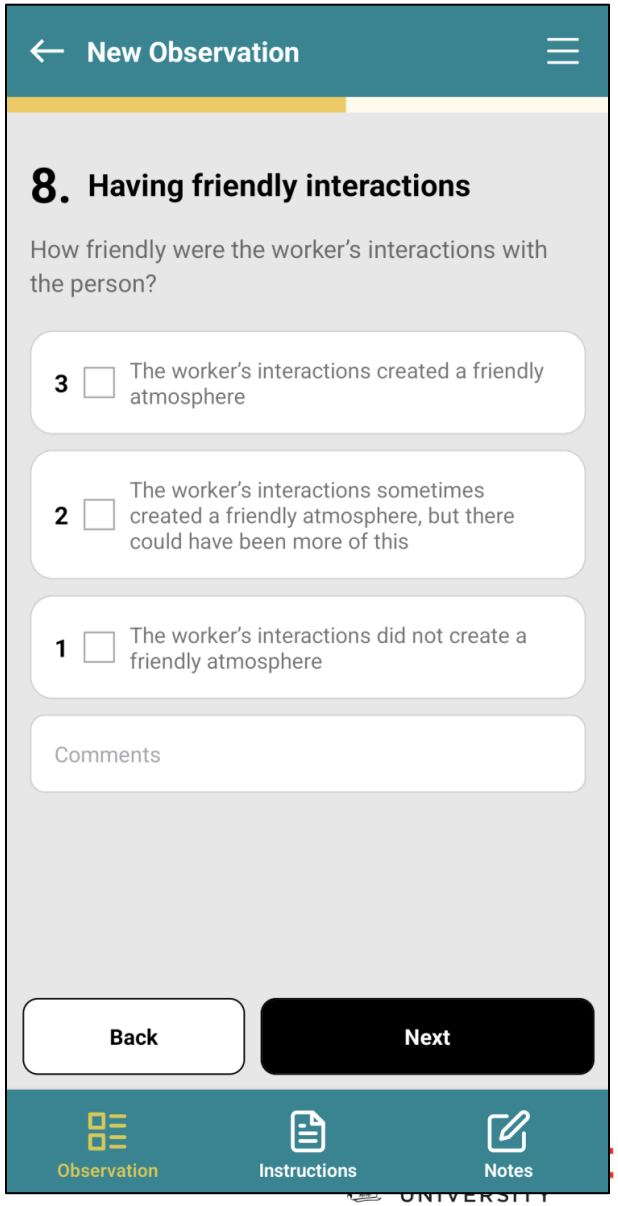


Rating 8. Having friendly interactions

How friendly were the worker's interactions with the person?

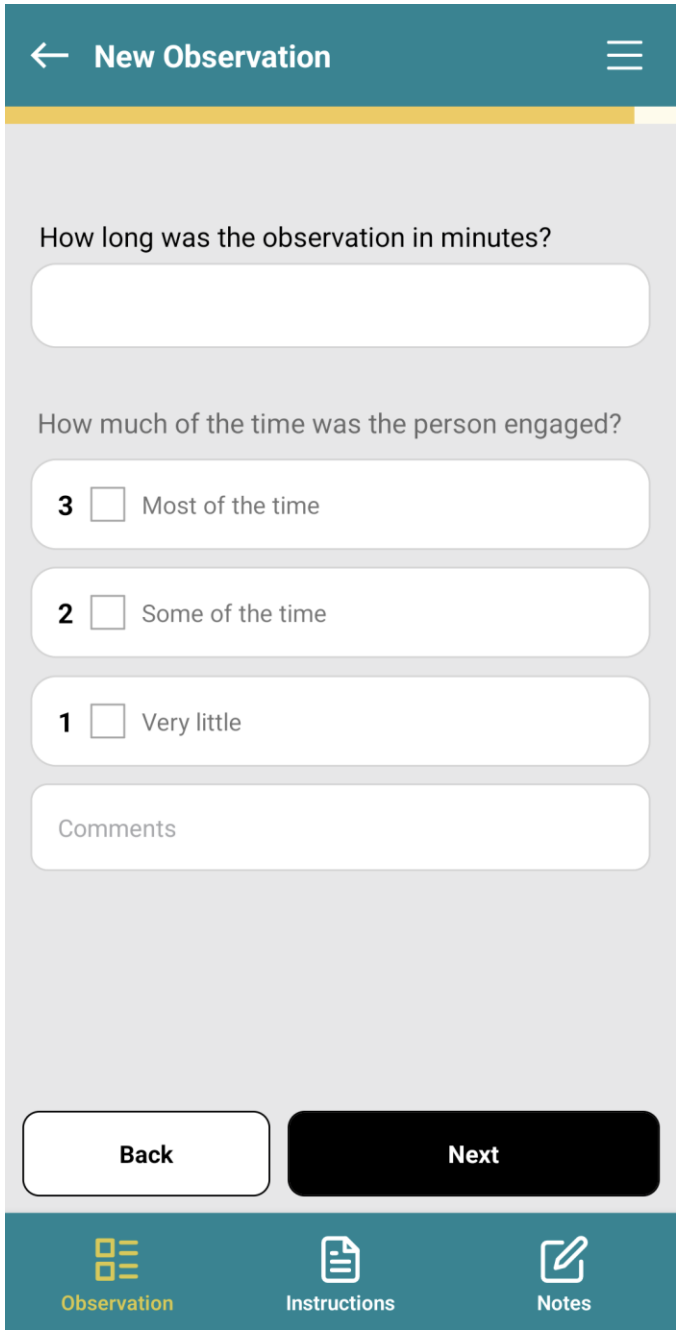
The worker would be rated a 3 for this item.

3	2	1
• smiling • using a friendly and positive tone when speaking • giving praise • providing positive comments about the painting • sharing moments of fun (e.g., "Woah that's heaps") • making small talk when something interesting happens • including the person in a conversation with another person who visits them	If the worker had used a friendly and positive tone when speaking, gave the person praise when painting, but also missed some opportunities for moments of fun and did not include the person in the conversation with the visitor	If the worker was overly focused on the task of painting and had not used the opportunities available for moments of fun and commenting when something interesting happened, did not provide positive comments about the painting, and did not include the person in the conversation with the visitor



9. How much of the time was the person engaged?

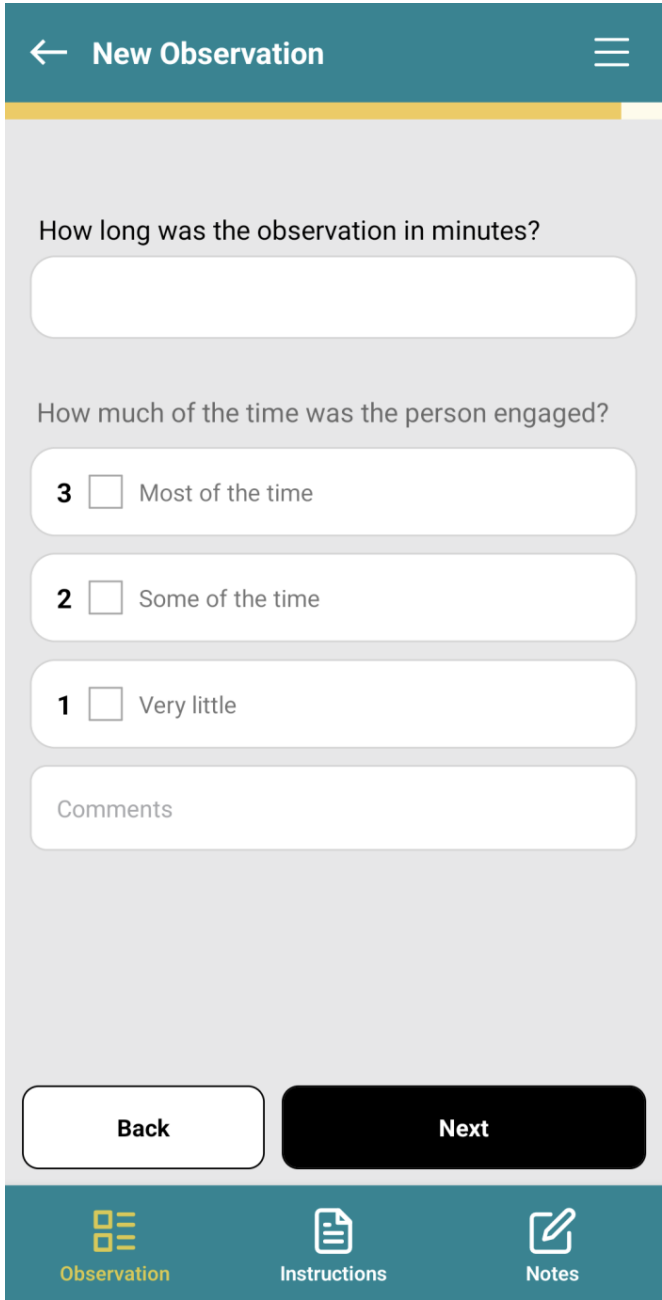
- Engaged means purposeful activities and social interactions
- Purposeful: completing a task, achieving an outcome, being beneficial to themselves or someone else, being fun or enjoyable
- **Household activities**: preparing a meal, vacuuming the floor, making coffee, changing bed sheets, counting money.
- **Leisure or recreation activities**: painting, reading, kicking a ball, using an iPad, exercising on a treadmill.
- **Personal activities:** brushing their teeth, combing their hair, putting on shoes.
- **Social activities**: talking, listening, signing, gesturing to interact with another person.
- Disengagement: doing nothing – just sitting, standing, walking back and forth



Rating 9. Time engaged

How much of the time was the person engaged?

3	2	1
If the person was engaged for most of the observation e.g., 20 minutes out of a 30 minute observation	If the person was engaged for some of the observation, but was also disengaged e.g., 10 to 20 minutes out of 30 minutes	If the person was disengaged for most of the observation e.g., less than 10 minutes out of 30 minutes



Practice Video

- Watch the video and complete the OPQ
- Just based on what you see in the video
- The video is 10 minutes and has been edited
- After the video you will complete the OPQ and discuss in small groups your ratings

Total Score

- A total score is calculated by adding up the ratings for items 1 to 8.
- Maximum score = 24

20 – 24	High quality support
14 – 19	Medium quality
8 – 13	Low quality support

- The two optional items – A1 Teaching and A2 Responding well to behaviour that is a danger – and item 9 Time engaged are not included in the total score. They are interpreted separately.

Create and register an account

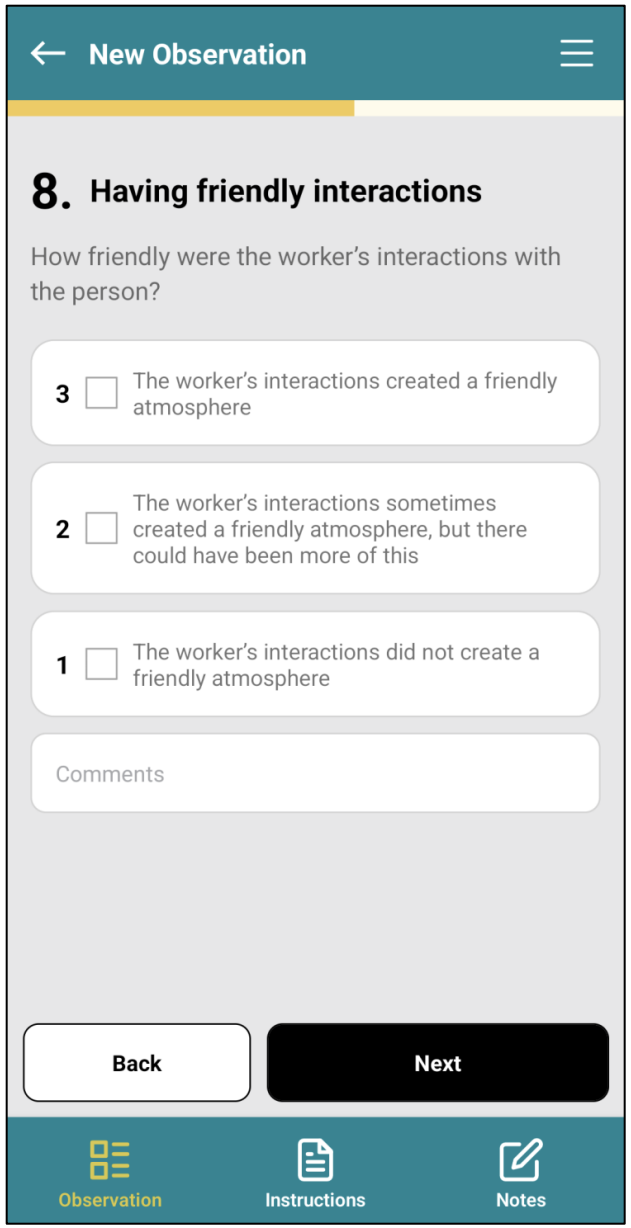
Download the OPQ app and register an account in the app.

Types of accounts:

1. **Organisational account**: created by senior person in an organisation.
   - All individuals who work for the organisation can then register using this account.
   - Means all data and scores collected by staff will be stored together.
   - Enables the organisation to analyse scores which can inform strategies to improve service delivery, staff training and quality of life outcomes.
   - Email lids@latrobe.edu.au to request an organisation account
2. **Individual account attached to an organisation**: a worker can create an account that is registered with the organisational account
3. **Individual account**: if you do not work for an organisation or want to register your account with your organisation

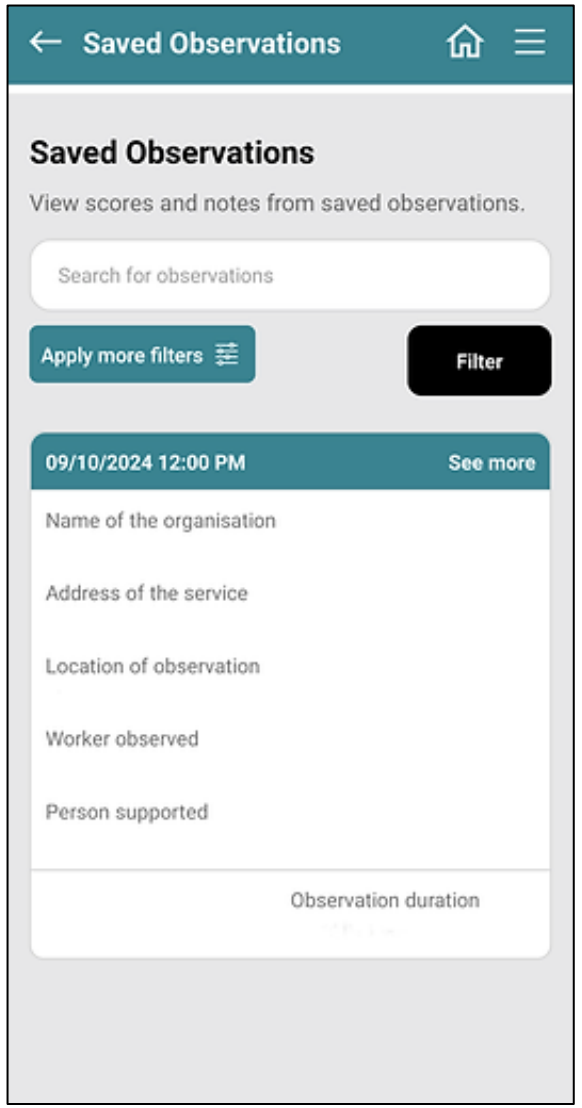
App Features: Observation

- **Record Notes**: E.g., where the observation took place, what was the activity/activities, quotes, what worked well, what could be improved, start time
- **Record Item Comments**: record notes specific to an item to help with scoring or giving feedback
- **Read Instructions**: explanation and examples for each item, guide to interpret total scores
- **Review item ratings screen**: can review ratings for each item before saving the observation and can click on the item to change the rating



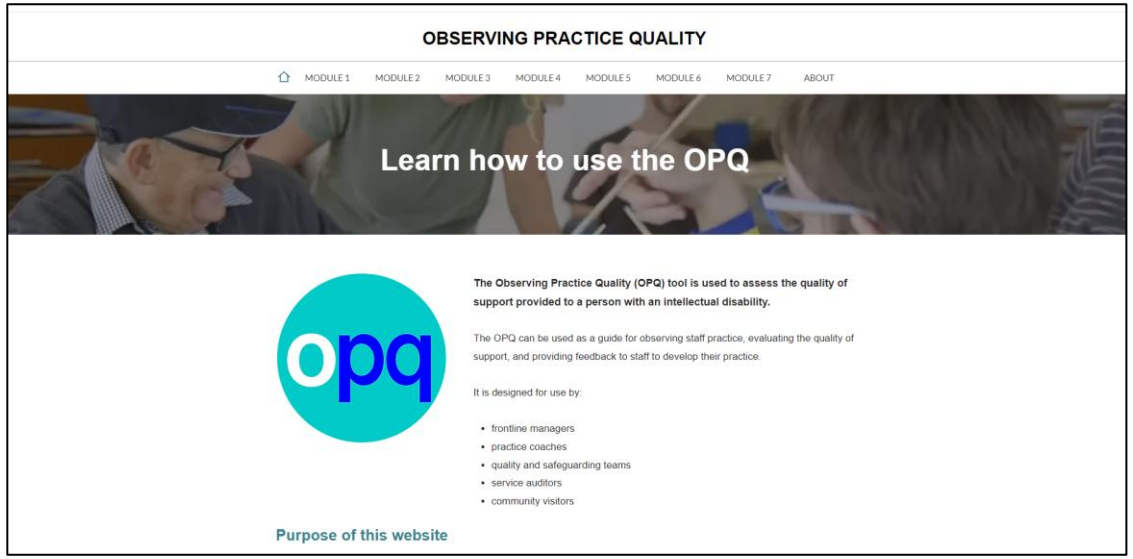
Saved Observations

- Has a record of all saved observations
- Total score and ratings for each item, notes and comments



Website Features

- www.observingstaffsupport.com.au
- Training in how to use the OPQ tool and app
- Explanations for each item



- A video for each item demonstrating a 3-rating level of support and then example explanations of how the support could have been a 2 or 1 rating if provided differently
- 3 practice videos
- About page: the different types of accounts, accessing saved observations, accessing the observation dashboard, downloading an Excel file, download word versions of the OPQ tool and instructions, how to delete account, change password etc. → Quite useful!

Observation dashboard

- https://app.observingstaffsupport.com.au/login
- Login using the same details you use for the app
- Has all your saved observations
- Can click on an observation to see saved scores and notes → I prefer doing it here than in the app
- Can delete your saved observations
- Download Reports: exports all your data as an Excel file → can then do further analysis

Giving Feedback to Develop Staff Practice

- The purpose of feedback is to help the worker to develop their skills and improve their practice.
- The OPQ total score and ratings for individual items can help to assess the overall quality of the support, identify where the worker provided good support and areas to improve.
- After observing and before providing feedback to the worker:
    - reflect on the support observed
    - review the OPQ score, ratings for items and any notes
    - plan what you will say and how you will say it
- When you are ready to provide feedback and the worker is ready to receive it:
    - find a suitable place to talk, ideally in private, away from other people
    - facilitate the conversation by asking questions, identifying examples of good support, encouraging the worker to reflect on their practice, and providing suggestions to improve their practice
- Just giving a worker their score will not be sufficient to improve their practice.

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Thank You

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