



**LA TROBE**  
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LIVING WITH DISABILITY  
RESEARCH CENTRE



## The Observing Practice Quality (OPQ) Tool

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# Using the Observing Practice Quality (OPQ) tool

- 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, community
- Complete the OPQ about one worker and one person they are supporting
- Observe for 15 – 30 minutes or longer
- Stand or sit where you can see and hear the worker and person they are supporting, limit your interactions, before starting inform them what you are doing



# The OPQ tool

11 items that focus on important aspects of good support

Technical Skills	Interpersonal Skills
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 the person was engaged?
A2 Responding well to behaviour that is a danger to self or others	

## Rating the Items

<b>3</b>	The worker provided good support
<b>2</b>	The worker sometimes provided good support, but it could have been better
<b>1</b>	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?

## Item 1. Offering activities to take part in

- It is about the *type* of activity or activities the worker offers and supports the person to do
- Multi-step or single step

### 3. Multi-step activities 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, usually 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

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for recording observations. At the top, there is a teal header bar with a back arrow, the text 'New Observation', and a menu icon. Below the header, the main content area has a light gray background. It starts with a bold heading '1. Offering activities to take part in' followed by the question 'What type of activities did the worker offer the person?'. There are three radio button options: '3 The worker offered multi-step activities', '2 The worker offered single step activities', and '1 The worker did not offer activities'. Below these is a text input field labeled 'Comments'. At the bottom of the form are two buttons: 'Back' and 'Next'. The very bottom of the screen features a teal navigation bar with three icons and labels: 'Observation' (a grid icon), 'Instructions' (a document icon), and 'Notes' (a notepad icon).





## Rating item 1. Offering activities to take part in

*What type of activities did the worker offer the person?*

The worker in the video supported the person in a multi-step activity, therefore a rating of 3 for this item

3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• getting coffee from a cupboard</li> <li>• turning on the kettle</li> <li>• getting a cup</li> <li>• getting a spoon</li> <li>• putting coffee in a cup</li> <li>• pouring milk into the cup</li> <li>• pouring hot water in the cup</li> <li>• stirring with a spoon</li> </ul>	<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>

← New Observation

### 1. Offering activities to take part in

What type of activities did the worker offer the person?

3 ☐ The worker offered multi-step activities

2 ☐ The worker offered single step activities

1 ☐ The worker did not offer activities

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## 4. Providing the right type and amount of assistance

- This item is about how often the worker provides the right type and amount of assistance.
- 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:

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

← New Observation

### 4. Providing the right type and amount of assistance

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

3 ☐ The worker provided the right type and amount of assistance in most or all instances

2 ☐ The worker sometimes provided the right type and amount of assistance, but it could have been better

1 ☐ The worker did not provide the right type and amount of assistance

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

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

The worker in the video provided the person with the right type and amount of assistance in all instances and would be rated a 3 for this item.

3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•guiding to cut broccoli with a knife</li> <li>•instructing to break broccoli florets</li> <li>•instructing to put broccoli into the container</li> <li>•asking the number of eggs needed and gesturing</li> <li>•standing back when the person cracks the eggs because the person can do this themselves</li> <li>•gesturing how to grind salt</li> </ul>	<p>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</p>	<p>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)</p>

← New Observation

### 4. Providing the right type and amount of assistance

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

3 ☐ The worker provided the right type and amount of assistance in most or all instances


2 ☐ The worker sometimes provided the right type and amount of assistance, but it could have been better

1 ☐ The worker did not provide the right type and amount of assistance

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## 8. Having friendly interactions

This item is about how friendly the worker is when interacting 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:

- How friendly are the worker's interactions with the person?
- 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?

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for recording observations. At the top, a teal header bar contains a back arrow, the text 'New Observation', and a menu icon. Below the header, the title '8. Having friendly interactions' is displayed in bold. A question follows: 'How friendly were the worker's interactions with the person?'. There are three radio button options, each with a number and a description: 3 (The worker's interactions created a friendly atmosphere), 2 (The worker's interactions sometimes created a friendly atmosphere, but there could have been more of this), and 1 (The worker's interactions did not create a friendly atmosphere). Below these options is a text input field labeled 'Comments'. At the bottom of the form are two buttons: 'Back' and 'Next'. A teal footer bar at the very bottom contains three icons with labels: 'Observation' (a list icon), 'Instructions' (a document icon), and 'Notes' (a pencil icon).





## Rating 8. Having friendly interactions

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

The worker's interactions with the person in the video created a friendly atmosphere and would be rated a 3 for this item.

3	2	1
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• smiling</li> <li>• using a friendly and positive tone when speaking</li> <li>• giving praise</li> <li>• providing positive comments about the painting</li> <li>• sharing moments of fun (e.g., "Woah that's heaps")</li> <li>• making small talk when something interesting happens</li> <li>• including the person in a conversation with another person who visits them</li> </ul>	<p>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</p>	<p>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</p>

← New Observation

### 8. Having friendly interactions

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

3 ☐ The worker's interactions created a friendly atmosphere

2 ☐ The worker's interactions sometimes created a friendly atmosphere, but there could have been more of this

1 ☐ The worker's interactions did not create a friendly atmosphere

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## 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 – and item 9 Time engaged are not included in the total score. They are interpreted separately.



# 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.



# App Features: Observation

- **Notes:** E.g., where the observation took place, what was the activity/activities, quotes, what worked well, what could be improved, start time
- **Item Comments:** record notes specific to an item to help with scoring or giving feedback
- **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

The screenshot shows the 'New Observation' screen in a mobile app. At the top, there is a teal header with a back arrow and the text 'New Observation'. Below the header, the main content area has a light gray background. The first section is titled '8. Having friendly interactions' in bold black text. Below the title is a question: 'How friendly were the worker's interactions with the person?'. There are three rating options, each with a checkbox and a description: '3' with 'The worker's interactions created a friendly atmosphere', '2' with 'The worker's interactions sometimes created a friendly atmosphere, but there could have been more of this', and '1' with 'The worker's interactions did not create a friendly atmosphere'. Below the rating options is a text input field labeled 'Comments'. At the bottom of the screen, there are two buttons: 'Back' (white with black text) and 'Next' (black with white text). The bottom navigation bar is teal and contains three icons: 'Observation' (a grid icon), 'Instructions' (a document icon), and 'Notes' (a pencil icon).

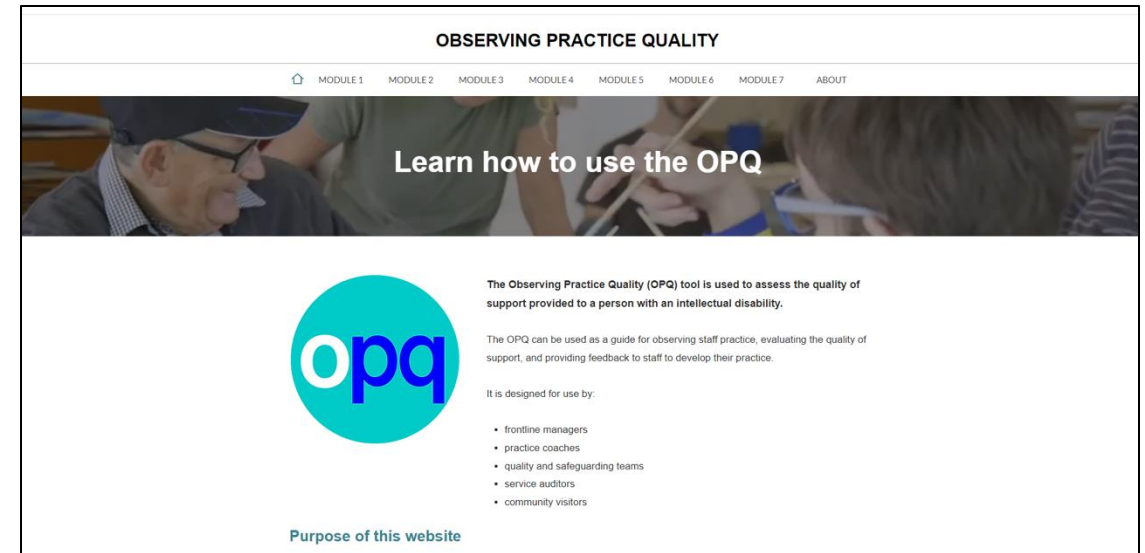
# App Features: Saved Observations

- **Saved Observations:** total score and ratings for each item, notes and comments, filter by service address, worker observed, person observed, date
- **Observation dashboard:** webpage that has all saved observations, can download an Excel file to then analyse data, administrator can download all organisational data

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface for 'Saved Observations'. At the top, there is a teal header bar with a back arrow, the title 'Saved Observations', a home icon, and a menu icon. Below the header, the title 'Saved Observations' is repeated in bold, followed by the subtitle 'View scores and notes from saved observations.' A search bar with the placeholder text 'Search for observations' is present. Below the search bar, there is a teal button labeled 'Apply more filters' with a filter icon, and a black button labeled 'Filter'. A date and time stamp '09/10/2024 12:00 PM' is shown in a teal bar, with a 'See more' link to its right. The main content area is a list of observation details, including 'Name of the organisation', 'Address of the service', 'Location of observation', 'Worker observed', and 'Person supported'. At the bottom of the list, 'Observation duration' is displayed with a value of '15:00:00'.

# Website Features

- [www.observingstaffsupport.com.au](http://www.observingstaffsupport.com.au)
- Can also access the website through the app
- 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



# Acknowledgements

- NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission for funding the project
- Professor Damminda Alahakoon and Isuru Ranapanada developing the app and technology solution
- Melanie Hayes graphic design
- Linda Wong website development
- Professor Teresa Iacono and Dr Tal Araten-Bergman for contributing to the early development of the OPQ
- Maitree filming
- Actors, support staff and people supported by Greystanes Disability Services, Unisson Disability Services and Golden City Support Services who participated in the videos
- Colleagues from across the disability sector who reviewed the OPQ tool
- Golden City Support Services and Life Without Barriers testing the OPQ app