



Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy

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Introduction

The observation and quality assuring of teaching, learning and assessment is a key process in maintaining and improving our teaching standards, as set out in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy, and in measuring the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

The observation framework, and associated processes, are in place to help us identify what we need to develop in order to achieve improved learner experience and outcomes, providing clear feedback to tutor/assessor to support them in this. The framework reflects the requirements of Ofsted and the College's strategic priorities.

The observation process will:

- inform individual development
- inform provision of professional development at curriculum and whole-college level
- inform the dissemination of good practice
- provide a cross college view on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment

This framework details a wide variety of observation activities and the protocols associated with each of them.

There are a number of fundamental principles that are consistent across all observations at TCFHE, and these are outlined below.

Core Principles

- Judgements relating to all observation activities are focused on exploring how what has been observed has impacted learners and how instrumental it has been in supporting their progress. Judgements about this impact will involve discussions with learners and consideration of assessed work.
- All observation activity contributes to the College's understanding of the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment that it delivers.
- The College provides learning across a diverse range of settings - observation activities need to be appropriate to the different contexts being observed.
- Where aspects of good practice are identified, they will be celebrated and shared with others in a timely way so that the tutor/assessor can learn from each other and encourage similar practice to be adopted across the College.
- Observing teaching, learning and assessment is a highly privileged activity. Providing effective feedback to the tutor/assessor requires high level skills and ongoing training. All observers will receive robust training reflecting the type of observation activity that they participate in so that they can perform this key role with confidence and courtesy.
- All actions that the observed tutor/assessor commits to take forward, and which the College commits to support and resource, provide the platform for performance improvement. It is the responsibility of the observed tutor/assessor to act on the feedback that they receive.

Purpose and aims of observation of teaching, learning and assessment

The purpose of observations of teaching, learning and assessment is to establish and continually improve standards by evaluating classroom activity against the criteria of the Ofsted Inspection Framework for Further Education and Skills, focusing on outcomes for learners and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Raise the standards of teaching, learning and assessment
- Monitor that effective learning takes place
- Recognise and share good practice
- Identify tutor/assessor development and support needs
- Underpin a rigorous self-assessment process
- Encourage and promote constructive professional dialogue
- Develop a culture of continuous improvement

Support and Development

One of the key outcomes of observation activity is that development and support can be put in place where improvement is required. This development or support is normally based around the areas for improvement that are identified. As outlined later in this document, there are particular triggers for further support linked to the Teaching and Learning Standards.

Types and frequency of Observations

There is only one type of lesson observation covered within this policy:

- developmental observation (risk rated)

All tutor/assessors will benefit from observed activity. We use a risk rating to help us determine who needs the most developmental support. We will base the allocation of this resource as follows:

- All **new** tutor/assessors and those returning after a long break delivering will be judged as high-risk and will be observed within **6 weeks**.
- Tutor/assessors who are deemed **high risk** of not meeting TCFHE quality standards will be observed every **3 months**. Action plans will be set and the progress of these plans will be discussed during regular performance meetings.
- Tutor/assessors who are deemed **medium risk** of not meeting TCFHE quality standards will be observed every **6 months**. Action plans will be set and the progress of these plans will be discussed during regular performance meetings.
- Tutor/assessors who are deemed **low risk** of not meeting TCFHE quality standards will be observed every **12 months**. Action plans will be set and the progress of these plans will be discussed during regular performance meetings.

Observed activity provides a snapshot of the quality of the learning experience and an opportunity to explore how key aspects of the learner experience (e.g. expectations linked to the quality of assessment) are being delivered. The Action plans that flow from the observations provide a key means of:

- Promoting the sharing and transfer of good practice
- Supporting the improved performance of delivery tutor/assessor on their journey to good or better

- Ensuring outstanding practice remains so

Observations of Learning and Assessment in the Workplace

Different activities (e.g. assessment, group teaching / training, 1 to 1 training) may occur during the observed session. The same lesson observation paperwork as for classroom-based learning should be used. The observer needs to be clear in their notes about the type(s) of activity seen.

Sometimes employers (supervisors and senior managers) are keen to be involved in the process. It is important this does not interfere with the observation, but time taken at the end does support the relationship between the organisation and TCFHE. It can be a useful opportunity to gather feedback from the employer on their experience of TCFHE. If there is any formal feedback the employer wishes to make, then please make a note of it and pass to your contact at TCFHE who will follow it up.

Responsibility of the Observee

The tutor/assessor being observed is expected to have read and clarified the criteria they are to be judged against prior to the observation taking place.

Where appropriate the observee may provide the observer with a range of documentation relevant to the session. It is not expected that observees create these records and materials for the sole purpose of observation and should only provide the observer with those which are used on a normal day to day basis. This may include:

- A class register
- A plan of learning for the session – This may include information of areas such as reasonable adjustments
- Copies of any hand-outs, worksheets, assignment material and such, related to the session.

This documentation can be the tutor/assessor's own copy, accessible either electronically or hard copy, in order to prevent unnecessary duplication of paperwork. Any paperwork with learner details will not be retained by the observer after the lesson.

Where possible, and only when it does not present a disruption to the learning, it is recommended that the teaching tutor/assessor briefly introduces the observer and informs learners of the purpose of the observation/learning walk when the observer arrives. During the observation the observer will talk to learners and look at their notebooks/folders/other examples of work.

Learner Feedback During Observations

Wherever possible, observers should elicit learner feedback during the session. This is a normal part of the observation process. This is usually done through talking to individual learners during the session, as long as this does not disrupt the session.

Providing Tutor/Assessor Feedback

On completion of the observation the observer and tutor/assessor shall schedule a feedback meeting. This meeting should be within one week of the observation and is likely to be carried out virtually. Ideally this will be by virtual web-conference and where possible should include the line manager. If the line manager is unavailable this should not be used as a rationale to delay the feedback.

Maintenance of Records of Observation

All parties will have access to the College's observation software; MESMA – OBSERVE. Therefore the final report will be recorded in OBSERVE in preparation for the feedback meeting.

After the Observation: Feedback and actions for improvement

To be effective, the feedback meeting should be held as soon as possible but no later than one week following the observed session. The feedback meeting will normally last no more than half an hour. The purposes of the feedback session are:

- To support colleagues in their professional practice
- To provide constructive feedback on the observed lesson to engage in a professional dialogue and share teaching and learning strategies
- To identify what worked well and why and what worked less well and why
- To match the strengths and areas for improvement to agreed teaching and learning standards and rate (if appropriate) these using the common rate descriptors
- To agree actions which will maintain or improve the standards of teaching and learning using an action plan. The line manager will monitor progress of these actions during performance management meetings.

During the feedback session

- The observer:
 - Will go through their evidence and judgements recorded on the observation evidence form
- The tutor/assessor:
 - needs to be prepared to discuss what happened in the session – try not to be defensive
 - needs to be prepared to discuss strategies for development and improvement . This could include training, peer observation, development of resources, coaching, etc.
 - will be asked to agree actions to maintain or improve the standards of teaching and learning. This could include additional training, peer observation, self-development, coaching, etc.
 - will be responsible for achieving the activities set in their action plan
- The line manager:
 - Will need monitor the progress of the action plan.

Appealing judgements

Although this process is for developmental purposes we recognize that there may be occasions where the tutor/assessor does not agree with the feedback or are unable to commit to the development actions being recommended. In this instance we encourage tutor/assessors to raise this with their line manager who will take appropriate action to consider the disagreement and make a decision.

Appeals should be made in writing. In all cases records should be updated to reflect the resolution and final agreements.

Training of Observers

The training of observers is a critical factor in the success of the observation programme by ensuring that those observing classes are both competent observers and are following the agreed approach to the process.

Training for observers to become part of TCFHE observation team will include:

All observers will undertake training in observation skills and feedback skills to enable them to accurately assess and grade the standards of teaching and learning in any lesson they observe.

This training will include:

- Awareness and application of the Ofsted inspection framework
- Skills required to conduct effective observations
- Conditions required for effective feedback
- Effectiveness of verbal feedback
- Agreeing and setting clear actions for improvement

Mandatory refresher / update training will be provided to cover changes to the observation protocol, and in general to remind observers of the demands of the role.

No-Notice Observations of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

There may be occasions when observations are carried out without notice to the tutor/assessor, for example where there are concerns about a course or the observer has experienced difficulties in arranging an observation or a complaint about teaching and learning has been raised by learner(s).

External Observers

External observers may be employed by TCFHE to conduct observations of teaching, learning and assessment either on their own or to conduct joint lesson observations to support the development of observers and/or to moderate the quality of the observation process.

Quality assurance and moderation of the observation policy

Quality assurance activity will take place at least annually to ensure the observation activity is having a positive impact on improving teaching, learning and assessment practice. It aims to:

- review the consistency in approach to observing tutor/assessors
- review the consistency in rating, reporting and action planning
- ensure sharing of good practice
- monitor the effectiveness of quality improvement systems
- inform self-assessment processes (SAR).

Quality assurance records will be scheduled and held online; MESMA-ENQUIRE. The enquiry will involve:

- paired observations to moderate judgements
- review of the impact of observer training sessions and CPD activity
- observer team meetings (where appropriate)
- formal sampling of observation forms

Documents associated with this procedure

| Name | Stored |
|---|---|
| Ofsted inspection framework – Please refer to the current Inspectors handbook | https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook |
| Observation Form | Use the template in MESMA-OBSERVE |
| Paired Observation -Reflection Form | Use the template in MESMA-OBSERVE |
| Quality Assurance Enquiry Form | Use the template in MESMA-ENQUIRE |

GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Guidance for Observers for Paired Observations.

Paired observations with observers aims to support provide support and development to observers as well as enabling observers to moderate judgements:

- review the consistency in approach to observing tutor/assessors
- review the consistency in rating, reporting and action planning
- ensure sharing of good practice
- monitor the effectiveness of quality improvement systems
- inform self-assessment processes (SAR).

It is recommended that All new observers undertake a paired observation.

Process

- Observation is arranged in the usual way.
- Observers meet briefly prior to the observation to review available planning documentation, examples of learner's work, ensure shared understanding of the purpose, process and protocols
- The feedback will be given by the most appropriate person e.g. if the observer is experienced, they will feed back to the tutor/assessor whereas an inexperienced observer may prefer to observe the feedback being given.
- Following the observation, observers compare their findings and agree brief verbal feedback to be given to tutor/assessor. The observers may agree a rating but should not share this with the tutor/assessor until the feedback meeting.
- Observers will both write up a reflective log which can be found in MESMA-OBSERVE. This should record if there judgements changes as a result of the moderation discussion and outline how they will change their practice as a result of the paired activity.

Person Specification for Observers of Teaching and Learning

| | Essential | Desirable |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Experience | | |
| Experience of teaching 16-18yrs and/or 19+ learners in community learning settings | X | |
| Experience of 16-18yrs and/or 19+ learners curriculum / management specialism | X | |
| Classroom observation experience | | X |
| Mentoring/supporting young people and/or adult educators | | X |
| Qualifications | | |
| Subject specific or professional qualification as appropriate | X | |
| QTLS; or Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training; or Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training; or PGCE; or Cert Ed; or PCET; or DTLLS | X | |
| Abilities/Aptitudes | | |
| Able to deliver high quality teaching and learning to adult learners and/or young people | X | |
| Excellent communication skills | X | |
| ICT literate | X | |
| Understanding of the criteria contained in the Common Inspection Framework/FE Inspection Handbook | X | |
| Commitment to promoting all aspects of Equal Opportunities and good Safeguarding practice | X | |
| Able to attend initial and ongoing training for observers of teaching and learning | X | |
| Able to attend ongoing standardisation meetings | X | |
| Sensitivity towards a range of learning needs | X | |
| Able to work flexibly in terms of time and location | | X |
| Own transport | | X |
| Other | | |
| | | |

Guidance to Observers on Classroom Protocol during an observation

- Ensure you always carry identification with you.
- Switch off your mobile phone before you enter the class.
- If you are observing the first part of the class, aim to arrive ten minutes before the start.
- The tutor/assessor should be aware of the reason you are there, but if you have not confirmed details with the tutor/assessor by phone or email, check that they are aware that the observation is taking place and what you would like to do (e.g. look at learners' work, talk to learners), and how long you expect to be there.
- Explain the feedback process including the plans for sharing good practice across the service and explain how your judgements will contribute to the report about the whole service's provision.
- If you are observing from the mid-point of the class, you will need to have had email or telephone contact with the tutor/assessor to confirm arrangements so that any disruption to the class caused through your arrival is minimised.
- Remind the tutor/assessor that you are there to observe the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the experience of the learners.
- Ask the tutor/assessor to introduce you to the group or if they would like you to do that.
- Take notes during the observation to record your findings. Do not be obtrusive in your note taking, but make sure you can create an accurate record, including quotes from learners, as a result of the visit
- Schedule an appropriate time with the tutor/assessor to give feedback and invite the line manager so that they understand and agree any ongoing support and development.
- Do not participate in the learning activities.
- Ensure that the tutor/assessor knows that you will wish to speak to the learners. Ask the tutor/assessor when there will be an appropriate time to do so.
- Always be aware of personal sensitivities of the learners and the tutor/assessor; ensuring that all individuals feel they have been treated with the appropriate dignity and respect during an observation, this is relevant in all types of provision.
- Plan your exit to minimise disruption to the class and try to have a brief word with the tutor/assessor to say thanks. If your exit will cause distraction (e.g. during a tutor/assessor led activity) do the best you can to minimise this distraction. Don't feel you have to stay until the end.
- Visits should normally last for approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour.

Guidance when carry out formal samples of observation records

The following is a list of questions you can aim to answer when reviewing observation records.

- Are there any issues such as poor behaviour management which have impacted on learning and attainment?
- Is the evidence sufficient to support the judgements?
- Is there sufficient evidence about learning progress?
- Are examples used to support judgements?
- Is the evidence consistent with the rating? Are there any contradictions?
- Does the 'narrative' match the key strengths and areas for improvement?
- Is there a summary? Does this start with a clear judgment on the lesson?
- Is there any good practice identified?
- Are clear actions to maintain or improve the quality of teaching and learning recorded?
- Are all data sections completed?
- Have there been any appeals?
- How effectively are the actions monitored by tutor/assessors and line managers? And, most importantly;
- How effectively is the observation process in securing improvements in teaching practice.