

DOCUMENT DETAILS

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Summary	This policy sets out to support the provision of good practice and high quality teaching and learning for all Nottingham College students and to facilitate continuous improvement.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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1. INTRODUCTION

High quality teaching, learning and assessment, and the success and future progression of our students are at the heart of Nottingham College. The delivery of excellent and inspiring learning experiences to our students is essential to ensure that they not only attend and achieve a qualification, but enjoy their learning and engage with an experience which challenges them and helps them to reach their potential. This is essential for our students to successfully progress into sustainable employment or higher levels of study and also to develop their confidence, aptitudes and capacity for lifelong learning. This policy aims to support teachers to fulfil this commitment to our students, through developmental observation and the provision of high quality feedback to drive improvements in individual practice.

2. OBJECTIVE

- To support the improvement of teaching, learning and assessment for our students
- To support the development of an aspirational culture which embraces continuous improvement, reflective practice and critical self-evaluation at all levels
- To support teachers with reflecting on and further improving their practice
- To identify college, team and individual strengths and development needs
- To recognise and share good practice
- To inform professional discussion regarding an individual practitioner's performance at performance review meetings between the practitioner and their line manager
- To ensure that the college fulfils its commitment to students
- To provide managers and course teams with an insight into the quality of teaching and learning as reported through lesson observations in their area and across college in order to inform the self-assessment process, future developments and CPD activity.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

Teachers

To take responsibility for the development of their own teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) and their professional practice, which includes:

- Ensuring that TLA and the quality of the student experience is the main priority
- Engaging in dialogue to improve practice
- Reflecting on practice with others such as coaches, colleagues, managers and students
- Participating in a variety of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities to improve practice
- Experimenting with a range of teaching practices
- Sharing good practice and supporting others to improve
- Meeting targets as agreed within the observation action plan and Personal Development Review (PDR) process and redressing identified areas for development.

Cross-College Observation Team

- To undertake a caseload of observations
- To support observees with reflecting on and evaluating their practice
- To agree challenging and achievable targets as part of the action planning process
- To signpost observees and managers to appropriate CPD opportunities.

Learning and Development Coaches

- To undertake a caseload of observations
- To support teacher development and facilitate the sharing of best practice
- To provide coaching
- To signpost teachers and managers to appropriate CPD opportunities
- To facilitate teacher-led experiments, collaborative development and sharing of good practice
- To assist Faculty Area Managers in supporting their team members
- To undertake Learning Walks.

Faculty Area Managers

- To ensure that teaching, learning and assessment and the quality of the student experience is the main priority of the Faculty Area
- To facilitate and support regular dialogue with and between team members on how to improve teaching practice
- To undertake a holistic review of performance at any point in the year with team members, and routinely during PDR
- To support team members with the development of their practice
- To identify support needs and provide CPD opportunities to enable team members to improve
- To effectively manage the performance of team members and the Faculty Area
- To encourage team members to reflect on their practice
- To undertake Learning Walks.

Heads of Faculty

- To take responsibility for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their Faculty
- To ensure that teaching, learning and assessment is the main priority for Faculty Area Managers
- To ensure that Faculty Area Managers possess the skills to manage this policy, maintaining the spirit of the policy at all times
- To facilitate and support regular dialogue with the team and between members of the team on how to improve teaching practice
- To encourage team members to reflect on their practice

- To facilitate teacher-led collaborative development and sharing of good practice
- To undertake Learning Walks.

Senior Leadership Team

- To participate in termly Learning Walks as appropriate
- To support the implementation of this policy.

External specialists

External specialists may be engaged from time to time to observe practice in place of the Cross-College Observation Team, or they may be used to meet the requirements of other accreditation schemes, for example the British Council. Specialists will use this policy, college guidelines and paperwork when observing lessons.

Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement

- To ensure that this policy is effectively implemented and adhered to
- To manage the observation and re-observation process
- To ensure that the Observation Team are fully trained and have successfully obtained their 'licence to practise'
- To manage the moderation of the observation process
- To undertake a caseload of observations and undertake Learning Walks
- To support observer and staff development
- To signpost observees and managers to appropriate CPD opportunities
- To assist Faculty Area Managers with supporting and developing their team members
- To facilitate appeals and disputes.

Director of Quality

- To ensure that this policy is reviewed annually
- To ensure that HR policy and good practice underpins the application of this policy
- To facilitate appeals and disputes where observations have been completed by the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement.

Vice Principal & Director of Curriculum

To ensure that Faculty management teams focus on the continuous improvement of teaching, learning and assessment.

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Scope of the Observation Policy

The majority of teachers and staff who deliver or assess will normally have at least one, ungraded developmental lesson observation each year where appropriate. Throughout the year, teachers may also participate in Learning Walks, Informal Developmental Observations and Peer Observations (see below).

Developmental observations will be undertaken across the range of FE provision within Nottingham College and will include both practical and theory sessions, progress reviews, assessments, workshops and tutorials, and will take place across all levels of programme and all age groups, with the exception of HE programmes, which will be observed as part of the HE Peer Review Process.

Where the outcome of a developmental observation indicates that there are further support needs, delivery staff will normally be observed more than once each year.

Note: This policy does not cover observations and inspections carried out by external agencies for example Ofsted, HE, British Council, City Council and so on. Colleagues may be observed within an inspection or other external review regardless of whether they have already been observed.

4.2 The Observation Team

All developmental observations will be undertaken by a member of the Cross-College Observation Team or, on occasion, by an external specialist. Led by the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement, the Cross-College Observation Team comprises the Quality team and also a number of Heads of Faculty, Faculty Area Managers and relevant Partnership, Apprenticeship, and Enterprise (PAE) Managers. All members of the Cross-College Observation Team are fully qualified teachers and have recent, relevant teaching experience (within the past 5 years).

4.3 Developmental Observation

Prior to the Developmental Observation:

- Observees will be offered the opportunity to have a pre-observation discussion with their observer, prior to the observation window commencing. Observees may wish to utilise this opportunity in different ways, for example: as an initial introduction, to discuss strategies that they are currently trialling, to discuss their planning rationale, to review examples of planning learning, to advise the observer of the current learning context, to discuss the progress they have made against their previous action plan, or to outline student progress on programme.
- Observees will receive five working days' notice of a one-week observation window.

- The Quality team will provide observees and their FAM with notice of their observation window between 8am and 10am on the Monday prior to the week of the observation. Observees will receive notification via their college email address and notice will only be given during term time.
- Where available, observers will review the observee's previous observation action plan to support them in reflecting on and identifying progress made with their professional development.
- If the observee is aware of any factors that may affect the timetables as detailed on EBS (e.g. a student visit, a planned examination, a guest speaker) they should make their observer aware of this.
- Teachers will have access to ongoing support from members of the Quality team and are encouraged to obtain support from their peers and Faculty Area Manager. The types of support that are available are outlined in the Coaching Protocols.

Where an observer is unable to conduct an observation during the specified observation window (e.g. due to sickness), the Quality team will arrange for an alternative observer to undertake the observation. Where this is not feasible, the observee will be informed at the earliest opportunity that the observation will not take place and that they will receive a new notification once their observation has been rescheduled.

Where notification of an observation window has been given to an observee, but there is a valid reason not to proceed during that time (e.g. due to insufficient sessions occurring, a period of sickness or pre-planned visits/guest speakers/examinations), the observee should notify their Faculty Area Manager who will liaise with the Quality team. Where appropriate, the observee will be informed that the notification has been retracted and that they will receive a new notification once their observation has been rescheduled.

Where appropriate, adjustments according to medical grounds should be agreed in line with HR policies and procedures.

During a Developmental Observation the observer will:

- Make notes to assist them in identifying strengths and areas for development to ensure that this process is thorough, helpful and guides improvement
- Be unobtrusive within the class
- Sit in a position where they can observe the students and the lesson
- Stay in the class for at least 45 minutes and not usually for longer than one hour
- Talk to students where appropriate, asking open questions without disrupting the flow of the class.

The observer will require access to the following documentation for the observed session:

- The Register
- The Group Profile

- The Scheme of Work and evidence of lesson planning (which should contain evidence of planning learning according to needs of individual students, or other evidence of such planning where this is not included in the Scheme of Work).

If a teacher believes that the session may not be appropriate for observation, the teacher should discuss this with the observer. If appropriate, they should draw the observer's attention to the relevant part of the Scheme of Work so that the observer can understand and discuss the context with the teacher before deciding if the session is appropriate for observation.

On the rare occasion where an observer judges that the session is not appropriate for a developmental observation (for example if there is a crisis with a student in progress, an Internal or External Quality Assurer is reviewing the activity or students are participating in planned controlled assessment activity), the observer will not proceed with that observation and will inform the teacher accordingly at an appropriate point.

Following the Developmental Observation:

The observee should:

- Agree a time to receive initial verbal feedback.
- Where planning documentation was not available within the observed session, the observee should email it to the observer or advise them on where it can be found and agree a time to meet with the observer for verbal feedback.

The observer will:

- Normally provide initial verbal feedback within 48 hours. This may be face to face, via skype, or by telephone. During the feedback the observer will:
 - Support the observee to discuss the observed session and reflect on the progress that individual students were making.
 - Provide feedback on the observed session, highlighting key strengths and key areas for development and, where appropriate, discuss next steps.
 - Discuss possible strategies as to how teaching, learning and assessment could be further improved or enhanced.
 - Suggest appropriate CPD activities, sources of support to develop practice and, where appropriate, encourage the sharing of practice.
- Write the developmental observation report and draft action plan and send to the observee, FAM, Lead Coach and Quality team within 5 working days. There may be exceptional circumstances which delay these timeframes and where this impacts on the observee every effort will be made to communicate this to them.

Upon receipt of the observation report and action plan:

- Where positive teaching and learning has been observed and no re-observation is required, the observee and FAM should review the draft action plan and, where appropriate, suggest additions and changes to the action plan (e.g. based on findings from other performance indicators, preferred CPD options and opportunities to share practice). Suggestions, where appropriate, should be approved by the FAM within 3 weeks following receipt of the observation report and the FAM should send the final copy of the action plan to the Quality team within 4 working weeks. The observee's progress against their action plan will be reviewed as part of the ongoing Professional Development Review process.
- Where significant aspects within the observation were noted to require significant support and development or rapid support and a re-observation is required, the FAM will meet with the observee within the re-observation support timeframes stipulated below.

Following the Observation:

The observee will:

- Have the opportunity to work with a Learning and Development Coach where areas for development and support needs have been identified. The Learning and Development Coach will support them to further improve their teaching, learning and assessment practice and to engage with CPD and collaborative development opportunities. Whilst 'Lead Coaches' are assigned to Faculty Areas, teachers may access support from any of the Learning and Development Coaches and / or from other colleagues as appropriate.
- Be invited to work with a Learning and Development Coach to share their practice with other colleagues.
- Take positive action to address areas identified for development and meet targets as agreed as part of the observation action plan. Evidence of improvement should be presented at their Personal Development Review meeting (PDR) with their line manager.

The Faculty Area Manager will:

- Support and monitor the progress of their teachers in addressing areas identified for development and in sharing best practice.
- Utilise the observation report and associated action plan as part of the ongoing PDR process.
- Work with the relevant Learning and Development Coach to ensure that the support offered by the Quality team and the Faculty Area are aligned.

Re-observation

Re-observation in year will normally only be required in the event of the following;

There are **significant aspects** within the observed session that are noted to **Require Support and Development** or **Require Rapid Support** and as a result **students have not made the progress that they are capable of or should have made within the session.**

4.4 Process of Re-observation and Support

Support and Development Requirements

This process will normally be followed to support individual teachers where significant aspects within the observation are noted to Require Support and Development:

- Following the observee receiving their report, the Faculty Area Manager will meet with the observee within 10 working days to review the feedback and develop the associated action plan. A copy of the action plan should be sent to the Quality team within 3 weeks of receiving the observation report.
- The teacher will have access to a Learning and Development Coach who will support them with their development and fulfilling their action plan.
- The Faculty Area Manager will support and monitor the progress of the teacher in addressing areas identified for development and ensure that they have access to sufficient support.
- Following a period of support, a re-observation will normally be undertaken by a different member of the Observation Team between 6 and 12 weeks after the observation, but may be arranged earlier with the consent of all parties, following the process in 4.3.

Rapid Support Requirements

Although rare, there are occasions where significant aspects of a lesson are identified as Requires Rapid Support. Given the impact of such practice on students, follow-up action will be taken as detailed in the re-observation section below. The primary aim of this procedure is to understand the issues of concern and any relevant personal or external factors in order to quickly improve practice.

- The Faculty Area Manager (or in their absence the Head of Faculty) will meet with the teacher within 3 working days of receipt of the written report and draft action plan.
- The Faculty Area Manager will review a range of performance indicators with the teacher to gain a holistic view of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and identify further support needs
- At the meeting, the Faculty Area Manager will review the draft observation action plan, and discuss and agree any additional support needs that the teacher may have and document these on a support plan. A copy of the support plan will be provided to the teacher, Head of Faculty and the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement and should be approved by the Head of Faculty.
- The teacher will have access to a Learning and Development Coach who will support them in their development.

- The Faculty Area Manager must ensure that the teacher is able to access support or training that has been identified to improve performance.
- The Faculty Area Manager will inform the teacher that they are to be re-observed in week four, from the date of receiving the written report and following a period of intensive support.
- The Faculty Area Manager should put in place interventions to minimise the impact of identified poor practice on the student experience.
- The Faculty Area Manager will support and monitor the progress of the teacher in addressing areas identified for development and ensure that they have access to sufficient support.
- Another member of the Observation Team will undertake a re-observation during week four.

4.5 Outcomes of Re-Observation

Where the re-observed session indicates that:

Students are making strong and sustained progress, there has been progress made in the areas for development previously identified, and actions as outlined within the previous action plan have been appropriately redressed.

- No further re-observation is required.
- The observee and FAM should review the draft action plan and, where appropriate, suggest additions and changes to the action plan (e.g. based on findings from other performance indicators, preferred CPD options and opportunities to share practice). Suggestions, where appropriate, should be approved by the FAM within 3 weeks following receipt of the observation report and the FAM should send the final copy of the action plan to the Quality Team within 4 working weeks. The observee's progress against their action plan will be reviewed as part of the ongoing Professional Development Review process.

There are still significant aspects within the session that Require Support and Development or Rapid Support, and students were not making the progress that they are capable of or should have made within the session.

- The Quality team will share the re-observation outcomes with the FAM and HOF for consideration. The next steps that are required to support that teacher will be discussed with them (with the aim of reaching agreement), and a detailed support plan will be developed.
- The process of supporting the teacher will continue, and any further observations in that year for the teacher will be at the request of the FAM/HOF following discussion with the teacher on what the next steps are.

4.6 Appeals and Disputes

In the event that a teacher is concerned about procedural error, conduct of the observer or the accuracy of the report, the Faculty Area Manager will facilitate a further discussion between the observer and the observee and a discussion should take place between all parties.

Where discussions with the observer do not resolve the issue, the observee has the right to appeal to the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement by submitting a Lesson Observation Appeal Form within 10 working days of receiving their electronic lesson observation report. Appeals shall normally only be permitted on grounds of:

- Procedural error
- Conduct of the observer
- Materially incorrect report

The Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement will review the evidence presented and investigate further. In the event where concerns cannot be resolved through discussions with the two parties, a second observation may be scheduled and conducted by a different observer. Where the appeal is upheld next steps will be agreed with the observee, for example, this could result in the revision of the report, action taken with the observation team or an alternative observation opportunity provided.

The decision of the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement is final. This does not prevent the member of staff from following College policies and procedures that are appropriate to the situation. Individuals considering or preparing for an appeal are entitled to consult with their Trade Union representative and or a workplace colleague.

4.7 Moderation

The Observation Team undertakes ongoing development to ensure that its practice remains current. In addition, the team operates common working practices, including regular sharing of information to ensure consistent application of the developmental observation across the college. Moderation processes aim to ensure that consistent standards are maintained across the college and include:

- Annual training of the Observation Team.
- Observation reports moderated by a small central moderation team. Termly moderation activity for the observation moderation team will take place.
- Joint observation activity with the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement, members of Observation Team and, on occasions, Associate Ofsted Inspectors.
- Mentoring, training and joint observations to support new members of the Cross College Observation Team.

4.8 Probation

Faculty Area Managers will arrange a developmental observation for probationary teachers during the first term of their appointment and provide the necessary level of mentoring and support. Towards the end of the probationary period and before the probationary period is signed off, Faculty Area Managers will conduct a formal observation of the teacher. This will be assessed as 'pass' or 'fail', i.e. **significant aspects** within the observed session that are noted to **Require Support and Development or Require Rapid Support** and as a result **students have not made the progress that they are capable of or should have made within the session.**

Where the session observed is assessed as 'fail', the probationary period may be extended. Faculty Area Managers should contact HR for guidance on the application of the policy should they be considering an extension to the probationary period and follow the relevant policy and procedure as appropriate. Advice will be given on the appropriateness of an extension and if appropriate the period of extension, developing an action plan and identifying the support to be provided.

4.9 Further Developmental Approaches to Improve Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Learning Walks

Learning walks are used to support the development of teaching, learning and assessment and the purpose of a learning walk is to gain an insight into the student experience. As a result, learning walks can take place in formal learning spaces such as classrooms, workshops, studios and informal learning spaces such as the library, or areas where students undertake independent study or project work.

Learning walks will take place as part of six planned learning walk weeks within the Quality Calendar or may also take place throughout the year as part of development plans or in response to arising themes.

It is not intended that staff should expect that this will equate to six classroom based learning walks per year though, as the planned learning walks will also be taking place in informal learning spaces. Where staff have concerns about the frequency or conduct of the learning walks they should speak to their line manager or the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement.

Where learning walks take place in a formal learning space and lasts approximately 15-20 minutes, individual teachers will be provided with brief, informal feedback during and/or following a learning walk. A teacher may also request further feedback from the learning walk should they wish to use the opportunity to further support their own personal development.

Learning walks will be undertaken by curriculum management (FAMs/HoFs/Director of Curriculum/Vice Principal Curriculum) or the Quality team (LDCs/Head of Quality/Quality Manager/Director of Quality) or peers as part of a developmental process. The wider senior leadership team may engage in learning walks as planned in the Quality Calendar, usually accompanied by members of the Quality or Curriculum Management Team.

4.10 Mock Inspections

It is possible that the College will engage in some mock inspections. In these instances learning walks and developmental observations may be undertaken by external qualified observers. This sort of activity would only take place once per year, if at all, and would follow this policy.

4.11 Peer Observation

Peer observations can take various forms and may involve colleagues providing supportive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Whilst not compulsory, teachers are strongly encouraged to engage in peer observation within their teams and across the college in order to continually reflect on and improve teaching and learning practice.

Peer observations are both owned and conducted by teams and they are informed by team and individual teacher priorities or outcomes from their developmental observation. Peer observations are considered as scholarly activity for colleagues who teach on higher education programmes. The Learning and Development Coaches can support teams and individuals, through offering training and a number of tools to support the peer observation process and through facilitating cross-college pairings.

4.12 Informal Developmental Observation

Informal developmental lesson observations are available to improve individual teaching, learning and assessment practices. Informal developmental observations enable the teacher to develop or to test out new strategies and feedback is informal and intended to support improved practice. A teacher may request an informal developmental observation as a CPD strategy, or the suggestion may come from Faculty Area Manager, who will support the process.

An informal developmental observation may be carried out by an appropriate colleague, a Faculty Area Manager, a member of the Quality team or a Head of Faculty and the class to be observed, the observation process and the follow-up activities should be agreed with the teacher in advance.

Following an informal developmental observation, the teacher and observer will agree how to take forward the outcomes of the informal development observation.

4.13 Communication

Copies of this policy and subsequent updates are available on the college Intranet which can be accessed [here](#).

Communications regarding updates/changes to the guidelines will be communicated via colleague communications on the Intranet and email.

5. RECORDS

Retention of information

Observation reports may be shared with Faculty Area Managers, Heads of Faculty and Learning Development Coaches, who will store this information confidentially and not share it with those not entitled to see it in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations. On occasion, reports may be shared with external agencies where this is a requirement of contractual quality assurance arrangements.

Records from all college observations will be held in a secure file by the Quality team. This will be overseen by the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement and Director of Quality.

6. REFERENCES

- Common Inspection Framework for Further Education and Skills 2015

7. EVALUATING THE POLICY

The college is committed to evaluating this policy to ensure that its aims are met. In keeping with the principle of reflective practice, a mixed model of evaluation will be used. The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored and measured in a variety of ways. These will include:

- Regular reporting on outcomes of the Policy to the Governing Body and College Management Teams
- An electronic survey will be forwarded to each observee when they are sent a copy of their written developmental observation report and their draft action plan. An anonymised copy of collated results will be provided to UCU annually.
- Following the observation of a Faculty Area, a meeting will be convened by the Head of Faculty and/or the Faculty Area Manager, the Head of Teaching, Learning and Improvement and the Faculty Area Observation Team to review observation findings and review feedback of the observation experience, informed by feedback elicited from the teaching team.
- The observation process will be subject to ongoing review through a cross-college quality working group with the Quality team, HR, trade union representatives and curriculum representatives and the group will meet twice per year.
- Any material changes to this policy will be negotiated via the JCNP working group.