

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Observation Policy

To be read in conjunction with Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy

1. Introduction

High quality teaching, learning and assessment and the success and future progression of our students is at the heart of Halesowen College. Inspiring learning experiences for students are essential to ensure high attendance and achievement but also that students enjoy their learning and are challenged to reach their full potential. Excellent learning experiences making every session unmissable will also ensure that students can successfully progress into sustainable employment or higher levels of study and also develop their confidence, aptitudes and capacity for lifelong learning.

Overall, improving teaching and learning is key to improving student success. Teaching and learning observations however are only one source of evidence about quality and impact of teaching, learning and assessment. Other sources include: attendance, retention and achievement [showing impact of good TLA practice, marked work, VLE, Schemes of Work and records of student progress, discussions with students].

Observations are needed to provide a profile of the quality of teaching and learning, although it is recognised that this represents a snapshot of pre-notified sessions and needs to be triangulated with other evidence such as student feedback to outcomes for a holistic picture.

A number of frameworks and standards have been used to inform this policy:-

- The OFSTED Education Inspection Framework (Sept 2019)
- The HE Teaching Excellence Framework
- Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England

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

2. Core Principles

- 2.1 Judgements relating to all observation activities are focused on exploring how what has been observed has impacted on learners and how instrumental it has been in supporting their progress over time.
- 2.2 All observation activity aids the College's understanding of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment that it delivers, including lesson visits.
- 2.3 Where aspects of good practice are identified, they will be celebrated and shared with others in a timely way so that staff can learn from each other and encourage similar practice to be adopted across the College.

- 2.4 Observing teaching, learning and assessment is a highly privileged activity. Providing effective feedback to staff 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 role with confidence.
- 2.5 One of the key outcomes of observation 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.
- 2.6 Types of observation: -
- Formal observation, linked to Teaching and Learning Standards (Annex 1)
 - Lesson Visits
 - Peer Observation

3. Policy Statement

3.1 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. Throughout the year, teachers may also participate in Lesson Visits (as part of Divisional Review) and Peer Observations.

Developmental observations will be undertaken across the range of FE, HE and 14-16 provision within Halesowen College and will include practical and theory sessions, progress reviews, assessments, workshops and tutorials and will take place across all levels of programme and all age groups.

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

3.2 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 Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards, the Cross-College Observation team comprises the Teacher Development Managers, Head of Professional Development, Quality Assurance Manager and the Assistant Principals, and Heads of Division. All members of the Cross-College Observation Team are fully qualified teachers.

3.3 Developmental Observation

Prior to the Developmental Observation:

- Observees will receive five working days' notice of their observation window between 8.00 am and 10.00 am 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.

- Observees will be offered the opportunity to have a pre-observation discussion with their Observer, prior to the observation window commencing. The pre-observation discussion could be via email, telephone or face to face. Observees may wish to use 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 the previous action plan or to outline student progress on programme. If the Observee is aware of any factors that may affect the timetables as detailed on EBS/CELCAT (for example: a student visit, a planned exam, a guest speaker) they should make the Observer aware of this.
- Where an Observer is unable to conduct an observation during the specified observation window (for example: due to sickness) an alternative Observer will 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 (for example: due to insufficient sessions occurring, a period of sickness or pre-planned visit, guest speakers, examinations), the Observee should notify their Head of Division who will liaise with the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards. 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.
- 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 and the teacher where appropriate, asking open questions.

The Observer will require the following documentation for the observed session: -

- Group profile
- Scheme of Work and evidence of planning which should contain evidence of planning learning according to the needs of the students or other evidence of such planning where it is not 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 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 EQA is reviewing activity, 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: -

- Reflect on the observed session in readiness for their post-observation meeting with the Observer.
- 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.

Following the Developmental Observation, the Observer will: -

- Write the developmental observation report and associated action plan, meet with the Observee and send final report including Action Plan to the Observee and Head of Division.

Post-observation Meeting Following a Developmental Observation: -

- Following the observation, the Observer and the Observee will arrange a mutually convenient time to meet to discuss the session, the observation feedback and the associated report. This meeting should be held as soon as possible after the observation. This will normally be in person, although in exceptional circumstances it may be by telephone.

During the Post-Observation meeting, the Observer will: -

- Support the Observee to discuss the observed session and reflect on the progress that individual students were making.
- Explore the Observees reflections on the session.
- Provide feedback on the observed session, highlighting key strengths and key area for development and discuss the content of the written observation report.
- Discuss possible strategies as to how teaching, learning and assessment could be further improved or enhanced.

Following the post-observation meeting, where appropriate, the Observer has an opportunity to revisit the report based on the professional dialogue with the Observee (for example: to capture the under context of the session or specific student needs).

[This may include appropriate CPD activities, sources of support to develop practice and, where appropriate, agreement to share practice.]

Timeframes:-

Within 10 working days of the observation, the developmental observation report will be written, the post observation meeting will have taken place and the report will have been sent to the member of staff. 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, the Observee will: -

- Have the opportunity to work with a Teacher Development Manager where areas for development and support needs have been identified.
- Be invited to share their practice with other colleagues.
- Take positive action to address areas identified for development and meet targets as part of the observation action plan. Evidence of improvement should be presented as part of their appraisal with their line manager.

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 and as a result the students have not made the progress they are capable of or should have made within the lesson.

3.4 Process of Re-Observation and Support

Normally the following process will be followed to support individual teachers where significant aspects within the observation are noted to require support and development:-

- Following the Observee receiving the report, the Head of Division will meet with the Observee within 10 working days and review the feedback and associated action plan.
- The teacher will have access to a Teacher Development Manager who will support them with their development and fulfilling their action plan.
- Following a period of support, a re-observation will normally be undertaken by a different member of the observation team between 6-12 weeks after observation, but may be arranged earlier with the consent of all parties following the process in 3.3.

3.5 Outcomes of Re-Observation

Where the re-observation 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 addressed: -

- No further re-observation is required
- The Observee will develop a new action plan with their Observer and access CPD opportunities to further improve and share best practice.

There are still significant aspects within the session that require support and development and the students were not making the progress that they are capable of or should have made within the session: -

- 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 for that year for the teacher will be at the request of the line manager following discussion with the teacher on what the next steps are.

3.6 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 Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards 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 Deputy Principal by submitting an appeal 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 Deputy Principal 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 Deputy Principal 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 or a workplace colleague.

3.7 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 and include: -

- Annual training of the Observation Team
- Observation reports are moderated by a small central moderation team. Termly moderation activity for the observation moderation team will take place.
- Joint observation activity with the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards, members of the observation team and on occasion, external consultants.
- Mentoring, training and joint observations to support new members of the cross-college observation team.

3.8 Probation

Heads of Division will arrange a developmental observation for probationary teachers during the first term of their appointment and provide the necessary level of mentoring and support. In the second term of the probationary period and before the probationary period can be signed off, Heads of Division will conduct a formal observation of the teacher, which will be assessed as “pass” or “fail” ie significant aspects within the session are noted to require support and development 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. Heads of Division should contact HR and the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards 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.

3.9 Further Development Approaches to Improve Teaching, Learning and Assessment

3.9.1 Lesson Visits

Lesson visits 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.

Lesson visits will also take place as part of the Faculty Review weeks scheduled within the Quality Calendar or may also take place throughout the year as part of quality improvement plans or in response to arising themes

Where lesson visits take place in a formal learning space and lasts approximately 10-15 minutes, individual teachers will be provided with written feedback following the learning walk.

Lesson visits will be undertaken by Heads of Division, Teacher Development Managers, the Head of Professional Development, members of the College Leadership Team and External Consultants.

3.9.2 Peer Observations

Peer observations can take various forms and may involve colleagues providing supportive feedback and suggestions for improvement whilst not compulsory, teacher 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.

4. Records

Observation reports may be shared with Heads of Division, Head of Professional Development and the College Leadership Team and Teacher Development Managers who will store this information confidentially and not share it with those not entitled to see it in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). On occasion, reports may be shared with external agencies where this is a requirement.

Records from College observations will be stored in a secure file on the Shared Drive. This will be overseen by the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards.

Reviewed / Approved	By	Date
Reviewed by	Jo Williams/Craig Tucker	May 2024
Consulted with	-	
Approved	-	
CLT approved	Yes	15.05.24
Website	No	
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