

Observation of Teaching, Learning and Observation Policy

Purpose

The primary purpose of lesson observation is to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the College. The salient features of the policy are given below:

- Lesson observations are ungraded to enable a more productive dialogue between teachers and observers;
- Teachers' self-evaluation is a significant element of the process;
- The post observation meeting is focused on constructive developmental dialogue
- Development plans identify step-by-step time limited actions
- Greater focus on follow-up support

The College aims to ensure that lesson observation contributes to the continuing commitment to professional development. Lesson observation activity makes a significant contribution to this overarching aim through:

- Developing our College-wide shared understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching and learning;
- Supporting teachers with high expectations for the benefit of the learners' achievement;
- Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning across the board; identifying areas of good practice and aspects where improvement is needed;
- Informing development planning and other quality improvement processes;

Lesson observation findings, together with other key performance indicators such as outcome data (success rates, value-added) and student voice will inform appraisals of teaching staff.

Roles and responsibilities

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that there are comprehensive, appropriate and robust processes for lesson observation activity, recording of findings and monitoring of impact.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that a central record of lesson observations is maintained and the outcome observations are reported to the Academic Committee.

Observations will also continue to be carried out to ensure that all teaching staff benefit from formal lesson observations to support them in reflective practice, identification of strengths and development planning.

All observation activity will be informed by the College expectations of teaching and learning using the guidance provided for formal observations as a context for all evaluations and discussions.

The Principal is responsible for ensuring that all teachers are informed about the College lesson observation process as outlined in this document.

Types of lesson observations

Lesson observation activity is comprised of:

- Formal lesson observations
- Drop-in lesson observations
- Peer lesson observations

1) Formal lesson observations

All teaching staff are entitled to and should expect a formal lesson observation each year to support them in reflective practice, identification of strengths and development planning. Formal lesson observations are ungraded with one week's notice given of the lesson to be observed and the name of the observer. The reasons for additional formal observations where teachers are observed more than once will be clearly explained and discussed with the teacher; for example as a method of assessing progress with individual development plans.

Normally observations of a team will be spread over the year, enabling a more continuous review of teaching and learning in the area but may in some cases be clustered where a particular curriculum area focus at one time is beneficial. Scheduling of observations will be front-loaded as far as possible to provide time for good practice to be shared and development needs to be met.

Teachers are required to provide observers with a lesson plan and scheme of work previously completed.

Newly appointed teachers

All new members of the teaching staff will be observed within six weeks of their employment, irrespective of whether they are already professionally qualified and/or experienced teachers. This will be a full formal observation. A second formal observation will take place later on in the year within probationary review, appointment support review or appraisal review as appropriate.

More detailed information about formal observations can be found in **Appendix 1**.

2) Drop-ins

Drop-in observations complement the system of formal lesson observations. The College views drop-ins as an essential activity to enable teachers to gain an informed understanding of the teaching and learning in their areas. Drop-ins can be announced with notice given but do not have to be. They are not graded and feedback will normally be verbal rather than written and may be directed at whole team rather than individual level.

The duration of drop-in observations will vary, some will be brief at around 10 minutes, others longer and may on occasion extend to a similar length to formal observations.

Teachers will not be asked to present their lesson plans unless they have been notified of this in advance.

Drop-ins serve an important purpose by enabling College leaders/managers to:

- sample the day to day staff/student experience
- actively engage in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning
- discuss teaching and learning approaches with staff
- quickly identify good practice or concerns
- support teachers experiencing difficulties with appropriate guidance and support

3) Peer observations

Peer observations provide teachers with valuable opportunities to reflect on practice observed within and outside their immediate teaching team. The aim is to support development by providing opportunities for teachers to:

- experience different styles of teaching and evaluate impact on learning
- learn from each other's practices
- provide a stimulus for discussions of teaching and learning with colleagues from within or outside own subject specialism
- receive unbiased and non-judgemental feedback on teaching and learning

The aim is to encourage and facilitate interactions between teaching staff that promote sharing of good practice and support team and individual development. Directed peer observation may be agreed as part of an individual's development plan following a formal observation.

The College recognises the benefits that peer observations can bring and the importance of introducing this practice into the work and culture of all individuals and teams.

Appendix 1: Procedure to be followed for formal observations

Pre-observation

Managers have responsibility for ensuring that all teachers are briefed on the observation process and paperwork prior to observations taking place, for example through team meetings at the start of the academic year or as part of the induction process.

Observers will notify teachers by email of the lesson to be observed one week in advance of the observation. Observers will send the following documents as an attachment to the notification email:

Lesson observation briefing	A brief summary of the lesson observation process
Lesson plan form	The standard College form to be used by all teachers
Evaluation Guide	A guide to evaluating teaching and learning A reference guide for observers and teachers
Observer's Assessment of teaching and learning	The observation report form completed by the observer
Development Plan Form	The development plan generated as a result of the observation
Teacher's Assessment of teaching and learning	The self-assessment form for teachers to complete following the observation and bring to the post observation discussion

There is no negotiation of the lesson to be observed unless there are exceptional circumstances. In cases where observations are not able to go ahead as planned an alternative observation will be scheduled as soon as possible. Where the reason for postponement is outside the control of the teacher, for example, lack of observer availability on the day, the normal notice period will be upheld unless agreed otherwise by the teacher. In other cases, for example where a timetable change has not been communicated in advance, the normal notice period may be waived in the interests of completing the observations in the agreed timescale.

Observers will include the date/time of the post observation meeting in the email sent to teachers informing them of the lesson observation. This will be scheduled to take place within one week of the observation. Teachers have responsibility for raising any difficulties with feedback meeting dates/times on receipt of email as later requests for postponement can be impossible to accommodate within the agreed timescale.

The lesson observation

Observations will begin at the start of the lesson, or after a break in a longer class session and last around 30 minutes. The observer will aim to sit where they have a good view of the students and how they are engaging with the lesson. Observers will write extensive notes during the observation to capture 'the story' of the lesson. They will also record individual student engagement including how many times individuals answer or ask questions and/or their participation in group work.

Observers will move around where this is possible without causing disruption to enable them to assess students' engagement and learning progress. Opportunities will be taken to look at students' work and teacher feedback on marked work.

Post-observation meeting between observer and teacher

This takes place within one week of the lesson observation, preferably within a shorter timescale if at all possible. The meeting is used for two-way professional discussion between teacher and observer.

Observers will support teachers in reflective practice to identify key strengths and priorities for improvement in the lesson observed. All teachers will have a development plan as a result of the observation which identifies actions with timescales for completion. The development plan will provide a step by step series of actions that support the improvement sought. It is important that appropriate methods are agreed to measure the impact of actions. Normally these will include further lesson observations with a focus on the element identified for improvement.

The Development Plan is signed by both observer and teacher to confirm that the post observation meeting has taken place. Teachers are able to use the form to comment on the observation process.

Post-observation development

Observers will make an assessment of teachers' development needs on the basis of the lesson observed and the post observation discussion. These broad categories of 'development pathway' will be applied:

- Independent and Contributing;
- Supported Development;
- Intensive Development;

Independent Development

Teachers will independently manage their own development through seeking and accessing development opportunities at the College and externally. Teachers are encouraged to facilitate and contribute to development of others through leading workshops or other methods of sharing good practice including allowing others to peer observe.

Supported Development

Normally, a drop-in observation will be carried out by the same observer to assess progress following the post observation meeting. Development needs will then be reassessed. If Supported Development is still appropriate the responsibility for further development is passed to the Principal. Key areas for development will be confirmed and actions for development agreed. These may include:

- support for development from manager, and/or other team members;
- directed attendance at Professional Development workshops;
- directed peer observations;

Formal Lesson Observations Records

The following completed forms are saved with restricted access:

- Observer's assessment of Teaching and Learning;
- Observation of Teaching and Learning Development Plan

A central record will be maintained by Quality which summarises for each individual:

- Strengths and areas for development
- Summary judgements and Development pathway

The purpose of the central record is twofold:

- To enable analysis of strengths and areas for development
- To track progress

Confidentiality

All individual lesson observation records are treated as confidential and will be handled appropriately and professionally.

The lesson observation forms will only be made available to:

- the teacher
- Manager / Head with line management responsibility for the teacher.

Also available to:

- Human Resources
 - for appraisal records
 - Professional Development - to inform planning of development activities
- Admin office
 - for monitoring quality of lesson observation reports
 - to maintain central record summary of formal observation

The lesson observation documentation and any improvements made following the development plan should be included in any review meeting (probationary/appraisal) between the manager and the teacher.