



Observation of Teaching Learning and Assessment (OTLA) POLICY

Aim / Scope:

The aim of the policy is to set out the objectives and the key features of teaching, learning and assessment observations for MSTRS staff, any partners involved in the education, learning and skills and training of learners including any sub-contracting partners, employers, and work experience providers.

The policy sets out broad expectations and is one of a series of policies which underpin the performance management framework of Manley Summers.

Supporting procedures and documentation set out how MSTRS will manage the process of observing teaching, learning and assessment activity and will ensure this process drives improvement in the learning experience for current and future learners.

Target audience	All Staff
How communicated to users / location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff shared drive ▪ Staff team meetings ▪ IQA meetings ▪ Quality assurance framework ▪ Self assessment report ▪ Quality improvement plan
Review interval (years)	1
Date of Next Review (month and year)	April 2017

Policy context and rationale

The policy:

- Underpins the Manley Summers Mission: 'To be recognised as an exceptional learning and skills employment focused and training organisation, providing life changing skills and experiences for individuals, businesses and communities' The policy directly supports key values of Excellence (relentless pursuit of excellence in everything we do) and Commitment (being the best we can be...with loyalty and pride)
- Responds directly to Manley Summers focus on teaching, learning, training and assessment as part of the new Common Inspection Framework 2015.

Overall Aim:

- The aim of this policy is to provide accurate and comprehensive judgements based upon sector benchmarks on the overall effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment across all provision supported by a peer referencing process and which supports the development of staff in their teaching/training/assessment roles.

Principles on which the policy is based:

- There are five general principles which inform the approach to assessing the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment.

- The process should be conducted in an **open and transparent** manner applicable to all observed staff across the organisation;
- assessing the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment should result in **standardised judgements**, consistent with those made by Ofsted in order to command the support and confidence of the teaching staff and Organisation management;
- only **approved, experienced and trained** observers should be engaged;
- the **scope** of the policy should include all key aspects of managing learning and supporting learners in organisation and in the workplace;
- The process should support the drive for **quality improvement** and be integrated within staff appraisal, self-assessment and staff development.
- There is a defined process to allow **an appeal** against an observation grade;

Objectives:

- To improve the quality of learners' learning and training through a robust and rigorous observation process which highlights best practice to be cascaded cross college but also facilitates prompt intervention where the standard of teaching or assessment needs improvement;
- To drive the principle of 'classrooms without walls' where formal observation, informal learning walks and peer observation to share best practice become the Organisation norm;
- To continually improve the standard of learning, teaching and assessment across the Organisation in order to share best practice in good or outstanding sessions and eradicate all inadequate teaching;
- To drive the 'grade profile' as one of a set of key performance indicators triangulated to judge the effectiveness of Leadership team and organisation provision
- To inform the annual organisation development plan.
- To inform and shape the staff training and development plan with outcomes from the observation process identifying key areas for improvement as a cohesive approach linked to the appraisal process

Observation activity:

In line with the recent announcement of a two day notice period of Ofsted inspection MSTRS will move to a shorter notice period of observation of between two and five working days and staff will receive notification by email. All staff will receive one formal, graded observation per year but could also be subject to ungraded themed learning walks and peer observation activity which will include developmental feedback in order to share best practice. A team of external experienced subject specialist observers will undertake a sample of observation activity during the first term in order to identify strengths (in order to share best practice) and areas for improvement (in order to make timely intervention). In addition, the external team will undertake the training and development of a core team of Organisation observers to ensure the internal observation team are consistent in their judgments through paired observation with the externals and that knowledge is current and in line with the new Ofsted Common Inspection Framework.

Teaching, learning and assessment will be judged by focusing on how well:

- Learners benefit from high expectations, engagement, care, support and motivation from staff
- staff use their skills and expertise to plan and deliver teaching, learning and support to meet each learner's needs
- staff initially assess learners' starting points and monitor their progress, set challenging tasks and build on and extend learning for all learners
- learners understand how to improve as a result of frequent, detailed and accurate feedback from staff following assessment of their learning
- teaching and learning develop English, mathematics and functional skills, and support the achievement of learning goals and career aims
- appropriate and timely information, advice and guidance supports learning effectively
- equality and diversity are promoted through teaching and learning

Monitoring and Evaluation:

Monitoring and evaluation of performance, policy and procedures is undertaken through the following means:

The monitoring and evaluation team can consists of the leadership and the IQAS Team.

- Termly and Annual reports to the leadership team
- Annual review of quality assurance and improvement processes, procedures and documentation
- Termly quality monitoring
- Emerging themes reports to the senior leadership team

groups.

- Standing agenda item at leadership team meetings.
- Annual observer moderation activity.

SUPPORTING PROCEDURES FOR THE OBSERVATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. Management of the observation process

The Quality Assurance and Improvement will oversee the observation process. In scope will be full time and substantive part time Learner Responsive and Employer Responsive provision.

2. The Observation Team

A new central observation team will carry out the schedule of internal observations. Observers must be experienced and qualified subject specialist teachers or internal verifiers depending on the area of provision being observed. In addition, all observers must have relevant training prior to carrying out observations or must be paired with a trained observer until moderated and their grading agreed as being accurate and robust. Standardisation sessions with the IQA team focusing on activities on grading procedures and processes using the OTALA guidance documents to ensure that at MSTRS, we are applying standardised criteria when observing sessions. Joint and peer observations will be undertaken in accordance with the OTLA framework, cycle and guidance to provide a full support model for staff and continuous improvement in teaching, learning, training and assessment practice

2.1 Observer Training and Moderation

Observers will have annual update training. Observers will receive guidance documentation revised annually in line with latest, relevant Ofsted policy on observation of learning, teaching and assessment.

An annual external moderation exercise will occur to ensure observation is undertaken to national standards. Moderation will consist of:

- One paired observation with the external subject specialist observer who will act as Moderator. The internal observer will receive both verbal and written feedback. If there is disparity between the grade given by the internal observer and that given by the external Moderator then the internal observer will receive further training and re-moderation, undertaken by the MSTRS strategic adviser.
- Review of grade profiles and completed documentation to ensure that the feedback and grading are consistent with national standards.

2.2 Number of lesson observations per year

All full time and substantive part time staff can expect as a minimum requirement to receive 3 formal graded observation per year but could also be subject to ungraded themed learning walks and peer observation activity in order to share best practice. Staff colleagues will be selected based on their risk banding red/amber/green RAG system

3. Observation Cycle

Observation in the context of this policy will focus on learning, teaching and assessment however, themed learning walks will be conducted as part of a planned programme of reviews, for example: to measure the impact of tutorials and learner progress reviews, to check the embedding of equality and diversity in the learning journey, to check learners' understanding, levels of attendance, target setting or stretch and challenge to extend learners knowledge, understanding and application to their workplace setting.

A termly cycle of observations will be produced by the central quality team and agreed with leadership colleagues.

For new staff, developmental observations will be carried out in the first six weeks by their line manager with the focus on support measures that can be offered to the teacher prior to and after their first formal assessment. New staff will be allocated a mentor. The formal observation takes place after 12 weeks of delivery by a member of the observation team. If the formal observation is not graded 1 or 2, the process will be repeated at three monthly intervals. Any teacher/assessor can request a developmental observation at any time. Staff should contact the quality team in the first instance to arrange a developmental observation.

Where developmental observations are being carried out via a teacher training programme, the leadership team will need to identify periods where it is inappropriate for staff undertaking teacher qualifications to be observed to ensure that there is not overload of observations in any one period.

4.

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Notice period for Observations

At MSTRS the leadership team are planning to limit the use of sessional staff, this year. It is felt that colleagues may not always commit to training & development and in some cases quality of evidence slips

Staff teaching on full time or substantive part time courses or assessing in the workplace will receive notice of when they will be observed. Notification by email will be sent to the teacher/assessor informing him/her of the dates before 9am on the Thursday before the week of the actual observation taking place observation. The notification will identify the observer and observation details and will refer staff to the observation policy and practitioner's guide which are located on the z drive. In the interests of the environment, staff will be expected to use electronic documentation where possible.

4.1

Appeal against a potential observer

In the observation profoma, the right to appeal is detailed at the base of the form. If a member of staff believes that an observer would not be appropriate they should notify the leadership team to ensure that the observer in question is not allocated to the observation. They will need to detail the reasons why the observer should not be allocated. Having given consideration to all aspects, the final decision will rest with the leadership team.

5.

Preparation for session observation

Observation will be undertaken in a way that minimises disruption to learning, teaching, learning, training and assessment. Observers will not take part in sessions however, when suitable opportunities arise, observers may talk informally with learners or examine their work. The session/assessment/learner progress review or other activity observed will be part of the learners' normal programme of work. When they enter a classroom or place of assessment, observers will ask the teacher/assessor for the register (if relevant), the scheme of work, evidence of lesson planning and records of student progress and the ILP (if appropriate). Where relevant student files and profile of learners will be seen. Observers may ask for information that enables learners of different age-groups or programme type to be identified. Observers will make a record of the observation and may feedback at a later time (see point 6).

Sessions observed may include formal/informal classroom sessions, workshop/practical sessions, group tutorials, mixed sessions/blended learning self-study sessions, revision sessions, one to one tutorials/progress reviews, workplace training sessions (Apprenticeships), trips, visits and enrichment activities. Observers will not give teachers/assessors advance notice of the specific lesson they will observe.

Observers may stay for the whole or part of a session and will spend enough time in sessions to enable them to make a valid judgment on the quality of learning, teaching, training and assessment. Normally this will be an average of 45 minutes. Each lesson observed will be graded on the current Ofsted four point scale.

Observations of very small groups or 1:1 sessions will take full account of potential sensitivities. This will particularly apply to activities where the presence of an observer may have an adverse effect on the learners or inhibit the quality of the interactions.

Observers will respect boundaries of single sex groups and cultural differences when carrying out observations in certain community venues and certain classes.

6. Verbal and written feedback

Staff will be given verbal feedback by the observer as soon as possible after the observation and in exceptional circumstances by electronic means. Feedback will include a judgement statement based on evidence gathered throughout the observation, an overall grade and a proposed action plan for improvement or how best practice can be shared. Written feedback **must** be given within **five working days** of the observation. Protocols in the observer guide and training reflect the importance of ensuring verbal and written feedback is developmental.

In certain circumstances during observation, factors outside the control of the teacher/assessor impact negatively on the learning experience of the learners. In these circumstances as in any Ofsted inspection, the member of staff will receive feedback in line with the policy but will be supplied with a detailed explanation of why the external factors impacted negatively on the learning experience of the learner along with recommendations that would improve the outcome. If staff are dissatisfied with the grade they can request a re-observation.

The line manager will then finalise the action plan with the teacher observed. It is the line manager's responsibility to ensure the action plan is implemented and actions completed timely.

Session observations are part of the review of learning/assessment and progress review events managed by a number of staff during the year. As such it is an element of feedback to be used within the appraisal process alongside self assessment, student feedback and other evidence.

7. Peer Observation

The aim of peer observation is developmental, to enable staff to enhance their own teaching and assessment through sharing their best practice with colleagues.

The organisation is keen to foster a culture of excellence and self-improvement where staff feel able to openly discuss their professional practice with colleagues and as such all staff may be subject to peer observation

Peer observation is intended to:

- provide information from a trusted colleague on selected characteristics of teaching quality.
- encourage discussion between colleagues in order to support the planning and implementation of changes in practice.

Where best practice has been identified during an observation, the teacher/assessor will be encouraged by the observer to disseminate this practice through peer observation. This will be co-ordinated through the quality team. Peer observation may be internal to focus on subject specialism, or cross-Leadership team.

Peer observation is developmental and should form part of the continuing professional development of staff and should be recorded as such on individuals' CPD logs. Peer observations are ungraded and peer observers should use the experience to reflect on their own practice and identify any good practice that can be incorporated to enhance their own teaching and learning style. Good practice should be shared as part of the development of the team or potentially through a 'buddy' /peer system.

This guidance can be adapted by the leadership team in order to meet their individual needs and build on existing good practice.

Peer observation training will available for all staff during 2013.

8. Grade 1 outcomes

Where it has been agreed during appraisal that a teacher/assessor has achieved outstanding performance during the academic year **and** that his/her performance includes a Grade 1 observation the teacher will be encouraged by the Observer to disseminate this practice through peer observation and sharing using the z drive.

9. Grade 3s and Grade 4 outcomes

In the organisation's journey to become exceptional, improvement needs to be effected quickly to ensure that teaching, learning and assessment across the organisation is of the highest standard. To this end, it is proposed that a member of teaching/assessment staff who receives a grade 3 for an observation is allocated the support of an advanced practitioner/mentor who will provide intensive support around the areas identified for improvement and/or actions identified in the action plan. Re-observation will take place within 4 weeks from the date of the first support session unless the teacher, guided by the advanced practitioner, requests the observation to be carried out within a shorter period. The re-observation will be a full formal observation but will pay specific attention to the areas for improvement previously identified. If that re-observation produces a Grade 3 then the teacher/assessor will continue to be supported to improve and will be re-observed again within 4 weeks. If a third Grade 3 or a Grade 4 is observed then human resource (HR) ~~capability~~ procedures could be invoked following a comprehensive teaching and learning performance review.

For Grade 4 session observations, an action plan initially proposed by the Observer will be developed with the individual, the line manager and the leadership

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team which includes advanced practitioner support. A further observation will take place within a 4 week timescale using a different observer. If the teacher/assessor receives another Grade 4 then HR capability procedures could be invoked following a comprehensive teaching, learning and assessment performance review.

In addition as part of the developmental process staff graded 3 or 4 will be obligated to undertake the new TLA self-assessment software to inform the action plan. As part of its commitment to driving forward excellence in teaching, learning and assessment staff who have improved the most may be nominated for a organisation 'excellence' award.

10. Appeals Procedure

If the teacher/assessor observed wishes to appeal against their grade or feedback, they should discuss with the observer in the first instance. If agreement cannot be achieved between the observer and teacher/assessor there will be a 10 working-day limit of a right of appeal to the leadership team, who will follow up and investigate the complaint and will then feedback to the observer and teacher/assessor. If the outcome is a further observation, then that observation will be undertaken by an independent observer and the outcome at this stage will be final.

11. Record-keeping

A model observation record format will be in place, with amended versions to reflect peer observations, individual/group tutorials and observations of employer responsive provision. All forms will be available centrally via the organisation z drive

Completed observation records will be stored electronically using a central database which will allow analysis and tracking of grades. It is anticipated that records will be kept for up to 3 years.

12. Reporting Structure

Emerging themes will be reported to the leadership team at the end of the external observation process. In addition, a summary report will be produced at the end of each year for strategic review, to feed into the self assessment and quality improvement processes.

Data produced for analysis will be anonymous and individual staff names will not be identified in reports. Personal information will remain confidential to the system.

Appendices:

- Observation Profoma
- Quality cycle demonstrating when OTLA activity is taking place
- OTLA cycle and calendar
- OTLA report
- Guidance for observers
- Staff handbook
- Action Plan proforma
- Appeals form
- Coaching and mentoring model
- OTLA peer review framework