

Quality Code for Higher Education

HE Teaching Observation Policy

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Date: August 2022

Date of Implementation: August 2022

Originator: Higher Education & Skills Department
Approval by: Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee

Date for Review: July 2023

Description: This CoP sets out the RNN Group HE policy and procedure for the observation of teaching. The procedures apply in all RNN Group Colleges.

NOTE: Where the awarding body has different requirements this will take precedence over the College's Code of Practice

Responsibilities: Curriculum Director / Curriculum Managers
Higher Education & Skills

Applications for exemptions to: Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee

Report Exemptions to: Higher Education Learning & Teaching Committee

Links to UK Quality Code for HE: [Chapter B3](#)
[Chapter B4](#)

Aims of the Policy

- a. To develop and then maintain outstanding outcomes and learning experiences for all students
- b. Help our staff to develop their professional capabilities to the highest possible level
- c. Assure Governors, all College staff and managers that the quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment continues to develop and improve to meet student needs
- d. Comply with the Quality Assurance Agency and the Office for Students quality policies and procedures.

Staff involved

1. All staff providing teaching or training to RNN Group registered students will be formally observed, at minimum, once per academic year.
2. Those staff that teach Higher Education level students will either be observed following the QI CAR method, or the HE Peer Observation method.
 - a) At the start of each academic year the Director of Higher Education & Skills will meet with Curriculum Managers to determine which academic staff member will be defined as 'HE academic staff' and will follow the HE Observation Process rather than the CAR process.
 - b) Staff may not be observed under the same process in subsequent academic years.
3. The roster of Higher Education teaching staff who will be observed ('observees'), as well as observers, will be agreed by QI, CDs, CMs, and the Director of Higher Education & Skills at the start of each academic year and updated monthly by QI, with information from Human Resources (HR), to reflect changes in staffing within the College.
4. All members of staff involved in the process should demonstrate:
 - a. Courtesy and objectivity in the conduct of all observation activities
 - b. A respect for the confidentiality of any information gained in the course of carrying out observations and giving feedback
 - c. A respect for students and staff, the principles of Equality and Diversity and Health and Safety in all aspects of the Peer Observation Process.

Training and orientation

5. Observers will receive ongoing training and coaching to develop their observation practice.
6. Observees will receive guidance and support regarding their role in the process.

Observation

7. Observees will be informed, at most, two weeks before the observation week(s) will commence for Peer observation.
8. Observees will not be aware in advance of the specific session(s) or time(s) when observation(s) will take place by their peer.
9. Observations will have durations as follows within the 'observation week':
 - One observation of at least 40 minutes or
 - Two observations of around 20 minutes
10. The observer will complete, during and/or after the observation, an observation form (Annexe 3A).
11. Observations may review any part of a scheduled learning or assessment session e.g. start, middle or plenary. The observer may elect to see part of the lesson (e.g. the start), leave the room and then return later (e.g. to see how the lesson ends).
12. Observers may talk to students to ascertain their views and confirm their judgements about learning (with minimal disruption to the learning experience).
13. Observers will not take an active part in the lesson being observed.

Professional dialogue and feedback

14. The observer and observee will arrange a feedback meeting in the week following the observation. At least 30 minutes should be allowed for this.
 - a) If the observer wishes the observee to bring additional evidence to the feedback session, this can be requested in advance.
 - b) The observer should state at the start that the written feedback they have brought to the meeting is not 'set in stone', but could be altered if they (the observer) feels this is appropriate as a result of the discussion e.g. events observed being better understood / rationale explained
15. The observee must complete a written reflection document (Annexe 3c) containing their perspective on the periods of observation and bring this to the feedback session.
16. The feedback session will start with the observee talking through their reflections with the observer.
17. The observer can then ask to see any further evidence they wish to.
18. The observee and observer will then discuss the observer's feedback:
 - a) When the grid section towards the end of the form is reached, it is advisable that this is filled in during the feedback session, as a result of discussion.
 - b) Both parties should sign the feedback document to acknowledge their participation in the process and (normally) their agreement with the content.
 - c) The observee will be able to provide a written comment on the feedback they receive and, should they have any disagreements with their feedback, state these.
19. Feedback will be ungraded, i.e. unrelated to the Ofsted scale, and both observer and observee should refrain from seeking or making comparisons to the Ofsted scale, instead focussing on the key strengths or areas to develop in relation to the learning and progress made by learners.
20. In weaker lessons, observers will identify an 'Areas for Development' judgement, this highlights that learners did not make sufficient progress or develop new skills in the session observed and requires a further formal re-observation.
21. An action plan for the further development of the observee's practice will be completed by the observee and their CD/CM. This will normally be through agreement, however the manager has the right, if necessary, to insist on reasonable actions being included in the action plan. If the observation is not carried out by the observee's line manager, then the observer will liaise with the line manager so that the line manager is involved in the setting and following through of the action plan (Annexe 3B).
22. Actions may be completed through a number of methods, including self-development, peer work and observation and/or the creation of documents and materials, as is appropriate.
23. All actions should have appropriate timescales set by the CM/CD. Timescales should not normally extend beyond 8 term-time weeks (after feedback) at maximum and may be much shorter. If timescales extend beyond 4 weeks, the CM/CD should schedule a brief interim review of progress with the observee at an appropriate point (usually half way).
24. The action plan will normally be integrated with the observee's PDR (Personal Development Review) document when the PDR or PDR update are completed.
25. The CM/CD is responsible for signing off the completion of actions by the observee.

Professional development

26. The observee is expected to complete all reasonable actions agreed/set to the standards required within the timescales agreed/set.

27. Importantly, the College wants to strongly encourage voluntary, on-going Professional Development by staff e.g.
- a. Through further peer observations
 - b. Through a management observation
 - c. Participation in Learning Community/ Sets
 - d. Tutors requesting extra informal observations from managers for agreed lessons to get assistance
 - e. Participation in College and area Staff Development sessions
 - f. As independent activity:
 - i. to follow up, answer and resolve aspects of practice that can be developed further
 - ii. to share practice

We believe that once embraced and practised by all staff, autonomous professional development will be a very effective way of maintaining and assuring outstanding quality.

Further observations (see Diagrams 1 and 2)

28. If an 'Areas for Development' judgement is felt necessary, the observer will specify (to the CM and the observer) that a further, formal observation of the observee will occur, in order to provide assurance that specific issues observed have been overcome or dealt with.
29. This should take place within a window of between 2 and 6 weeks after formal feedback from the previous observation. The CM/CD will determine the appropriate interval before re-observation within the 2-6 week period using their judgement and allowing time for the observee to access developmental support from colleagues and QI to improve their professional practice.
30. The observee will be given notice as per their original observation (i.e. 2 working days).
31. The re-observation must be undertaken by a CM, CD and / or a member of the Quality Team.
32. If the re-observation results in a second 'Areas for Development' judgement, the observers will specify that a further, second formal re-observation of the observee will occur within 4 weeks. The CM will liaise with HR team to agree a formal development plan closely aligned to the improvements in professional capability required.
33. The second formal re-observation must be undertaken by a member of SLT with / without QI input. Should this observation result in a third 'Areas for Development' judgement, the member of staff will be required to have a formal professional practice review meeting with their CM and HR to review the development plan and discuss next steps. Formal proceedings may begin from this point.

Moderation & standardisation

34. The college will moderate a percentage of learning observations by having a second observer participate in the process, to assure that procedures are consistent across the observation team and the College. This process will be planned so that all observers are moderated at some point during their employ at RNN Group.
35. The moderator will be present for the observations, feedback and will also see the Action Plan sheet.
36. On occasions paired observations may also take place as part of external validation processes involving peer observers from other colleges or external agencies.
37. With agreement, other tutors and staff may participate in the observation process, as observers, as part of their professional development. However, control over feedback and actions will remain with the lead/authorised observer.
38. The quality of observation records will also be checked retrospectively by approved observers within the Quality Improvement team and the HE Department. Anonymised observation forms will be reviewed occasionally by the observation team within training events, to improve practice.

Appeals

39. The observee is entitled to lodge an appeal regarding aspects of observation feedback. This must be submitted within the working week following the week in which the feedback meeting occurs.
40. The appeal must be requested in writing to the Executive Office, giving details of the main reasons why the observee cannot agree with aspects of the feedback.
41. The appeal will be heard by the Director of Higher Education & Skills, or an appropriate member of SLT (who was not involved in the original observation as observer or moderator) at the earliest opportunity and normally within the two working weeks after the week in which the appeal is lodged.
42. The observee may bring a colleague or union representative to the appeal hearing if they wish.
43. The outcomes of the appeal will be either:
 - a. The original feedback and actions are confirmed
 - b. The original feedback and actions are altered
 - c. The observation is declared null and void, in which case the member of staff will re-enter the policy and be observed again under its terms.

Timescales (overview)

Week

- | | |
|-----|--|
| -1 | Observee given notice of observation (Thursday 8.30am-10.00am) |
| 0/1 | Observation week(s) |
| +1 | Observation and feedback week (College delivery) |
| +2 | Observation and feedback week (College delivery) |
| +3 | Observation and feedback week (Workplace delivery) |
| | Window for a 'Areas for Development' formal re-observation opens |
| +4 | Any appeal heard |
| +5 | |
| +6 | |
| +7 | Any formal 'Areas for Development' re-observation should be completed |
| +8 | |
| +9 | All actions required of the observee should be completed and confirmed to QI by CMs. |

Learning Walks

44. We will continue to assure learning quality and support colleagues by regularly undertaking unannounced 'learning walks' of learning sessions.
45. Unannounced learning walks (10-15 minutes in duration) may take place in any session at any time.
46. Learning walks will be undertaken by authorised college observers, or by staff or visitors authorised by the Vice Principal. For example, colleagues from other colleges involved in peer reviews may participate, as may tutors or staff involved in the Curriculum Area Review (CAR) process.
47. The informal learning walks may review learning, progress and assessment in a class, or more broadly to review specific courses, areas or themes e.g. use of technology, employability skills, embedding of Equality & Diversity or English and maths.
48. Staff will receive informal feedback from learning walks where this will be relevant and helpful.

Please note: Observations of other categories of staff will be observed via the QI Observation policy 3.1.

Diagram 1 – Peer Observer Process

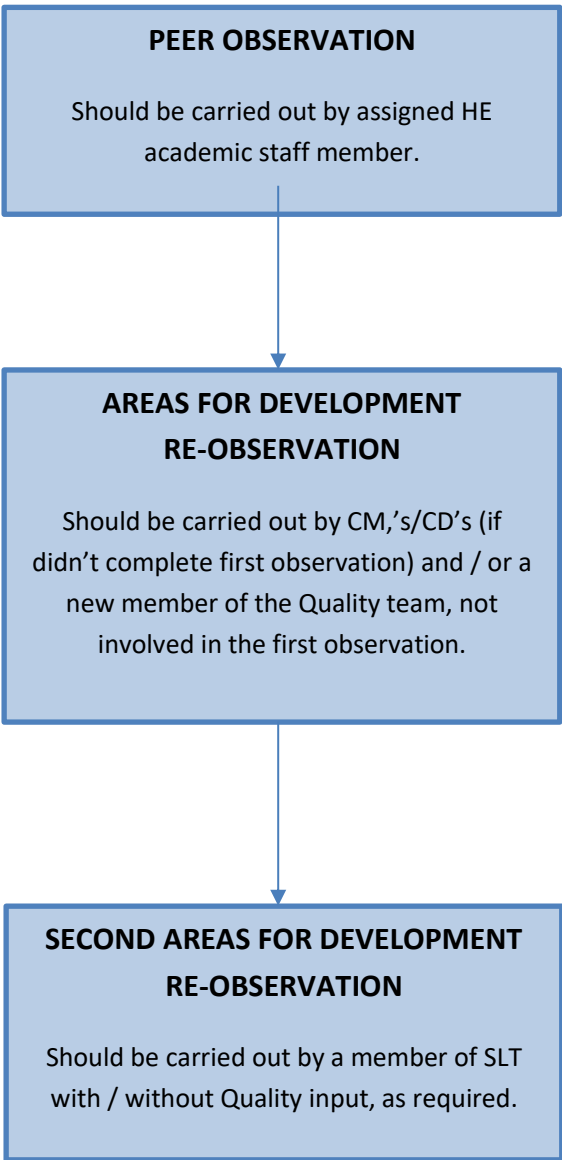


Diagram 2 – Peer Observation process-expanded

