



OAKLANDS COLLEGE

## Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy

### Policy Statement

The College is committed to helping all employees learn and develop in order to improve their effectiveness in their job role and contribute towards the College's mission and strategic aims.

### Scope and purpose

This policy aims to provide an overview of observations of teaching learning and assessment at Oaklands College. Support, guidance and expectations of staff in relation to ensure students and apprentices engage in effective teaching, learning and assessment practice that helps their next steps are set out in the [Support for Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook](#). This policy should be read alongside the Handbook which sets out minimum expectations relating to teaching, learning and assessment. Where these expectations are not met at any point in the year, the College will introduce appropriate measures to performance manage staff. If staff are unclear about any of the details, they should contact a member of the quality team in person or via [quality@oaklands.ac.uk](mailto:quality@oaklands.ac.uk) for clarification.

Both this policy and the STLA Handbook were revised in 2022 with the intention of addressing areas for development and improvement identified through the College's self-assessment processes, and the requirements of external scrutiny, such as OFSTED's Education Inspection Framework, awarding organisations' regulations and processes and the requirements of funding bodies.

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## Observations

### General principles

- All observers will be trained and validated.
- 1 formal observation of all teaching staff will take place during the academic year. A further formal observation will only take place if either the observation 'did not meet expectations' or any concerns of practice are raised in year. These concerns could be, but not exclusively as a result of Student Survey results, Curriculum Review analysis, complaints, Student Review Board process, poor student attendance, Employer feedback, External Verifiers feedback, Internal Quality Assurance processes.
- Observers will only use ProObserve and approved documentation detailed on the procedures part of this document to record observations.
- All feedback to observees will be provided within 3-5 working days of the observation.
- Observations will be graded as either the standard of teaching learning and assessment in the session 'meets expectations' or 'does not meet expectations.' (LSA and SSA observations will be graded as 'effective' or 'ineffective')
- Where sessions do not meet expectations or are graded 'ineffective' a period of Intensive support will be triggered. Triggers may include:
  - No evidence of planning: No detailed SOW. No student profile linked or used to individualise learning
  - Students are not engaged
  - Insufficient evidence of learning
  - Inadequate checking of learning (weak or no assessment methods)
  - Not following up on previous actions and targets (not engaging in the process)
- Thematic learning walks will be used as a tool to support staff with improvements to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers will be supported to improve their practice with the support of their Quality Improvement Facilitator who will provide regular one to one support and bite size training sessions. Quality Assurance Facilitators will support teachers with the assessment of learning and moderate grading decisions.
- Thematic learning walks may be carried out throughout the academic year without notification and will be supportive. Themes will be determined by the needs of the College. The learning walks will not form part of any capability process for individual staff. However, if there is a cause for concern as outlined above for example because of a student complaint, this may trigger a formal observation.
- Probationary lecturers will be in scope for observations during curriculum reviews. Probationary staff will also be subject to developmental and supportive learning walks and observation during their 2-, 4- and 6-month probation periods. These will be assigned to and conducted by the appropriate Curriculum Team Manager. Identified actions and support will be given to the individuals prior to their formal observation.
- As part of student voice within the College there will be a Student Observation team. Students will be invited to join observers during lesson observations and learning walk activities. As a key stakeholder they will gain a wider perspective of teaching practice within the College and help to inform relevant and appropriate support and training that will assist the continual improvement of teaching, learning and assessment across college.

## Observers

The observation team will consist of the Deputy Principal for Curriculum, Performance and Student Experience, the Vice Principal for Quality, Innovation and Digital Transformation, Directors and Deputy Directors of Faculty, the Head of Quality, the Quality Assurance Facilitators (QAF's) and Quality Improvement Facilitators (QIF's). Observations in LIFE and the ILS section may also be conducted by the Director of Faculty LIFE and Skills for LIFE , Head of ILS and Curriculum Team Managers and by externally sourced expert advisors, where appropriate. If required, the College will employ external observers to undertake observations. The observation team will undergo regular training and will be supported to regularly update their observation skills and techniques. Observations and reports will be moderated for quality assurance purposes and to ensure consistency in findings.

The Quality Team will lead on observations and identify themes for observations and learning walks. Learning walks may be conducted by members of the Corporation.

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**Types of observation:**

**1. Learning walk**

**2. Thematic learning walk**

**3. Formal observation**

- Taught class
- Workshops
- 1-2-1 Personal Development Review (PDR)
- Group PDR
- Blended Learning
- Online sessions
- Project based learning Assessors
- LSA and SSA
- Validation- to ensure the quality of session observations
- Reobservations – when the standard of teaching learning and assessment in a session delivered by a staff member ‘did not meet expectations’ or when the standard of support provided by an LSA/SSA was ‘ineffective’

**4. Informal observations**

- Peer or joint- ungraded observations by a colleague or a quality improvement facilitator to provide mutual support and share good practice- these include snapshot observations, typically carried out by QIFs.
- To support the development of new teachers practices ungraded observations form part of the new teacher induction process. New teachers to the college will have a supportive peer observation from their QIF during their induction. They will also participate in a joint observation with their assigned QIF. Trainee teachers can access support from QIF’s prior to the observation windows but, will also undergo the College’s formal observation cycle.

**Staff in scope for observations during curriculum reviews or external development reviews**

Some colleagues may be due reobservations, be in a probationary period, or undertaking teacher training qualifications. The following table identifies who will be observed and if so, whether the session observed will be graded:

Staff circumstances	What will happen
If you are a colleague who has <b>completed</b> their period of support following an observation where college expectations were not met	You will be seen as part of a curriculum review and the observation would count as your reobservation

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<p>If you are a colleague who has <b>not completed</b> their period of support following an observation where college expectations were not met</p> <p>or</p> <p>If you are a colleague currently in their probationary period</p>	<p>If you are teaching on one of the courses that will be looked at in detail during the curriculum review, then you may be observed in order to gather evidence of the quality of education received by students but this wouldn't be a reobservation, and the observation will be ungraded.</p> <p>If you are teaching on any other course in the area, you won't be observed during the curriculum review</p> <p>In both cases, you will be re-observed only once your support is complete</p>
<p>If you are a colleague undertaking their level 3 or level 5 teacher training qualification</p>	<p>You will still be observed and the session you deliver will be graded as to whether it meets College expectations</p> <p>Teacher Training observations and Curriculum review observations are for different purposes and use different criteria, so you could be observed for both in a curriculum review week</p>

#### Other points to note about observations during curriculum reviews

- The curriculum review team will be undertaking a range of observations of students in classroom, practical, GCSE, functional skill, blended and online learning, and PDR sessions. Some staff may therefore be seen more than once but we aim to ensure that graded observations are where a member of staff is delivering a session where the focus is on the vocational area, be it classroom based or a practical session.
- Functional Skill and PDR sessions will be ungraded, but an observation report will still be produced identifying strengths and areas for development. Where appropriate, an action plan for support will be produced and could be investigated as part of a trigger if there are concerns.
- Evidence of blended learning and the appropriate/relevant use of the Colleges Digital Toolkit is expected to provide an integrated learning experience through the lesson observations and themed learning walk activities. These are expected to be used to develop an enriched curriculum, where digital literacies are valued, with the flexibility needed to enable both an engaging classroom experience and opportunities for independent learning.
- Through the observation process there will be a particular focus on students' skills development, in line with the Ofsted Enhanced Inspection framework. Observers will be looking to see that students have acquired the relevant skills they should have, at the particular stage in their studies that the observation takes place. Are the skills that students are gaining through their studies effectively preparing them for their next steps, whether for employment or further study, and not solely to enable them to

achieve their qualification.

- If you are teaching on one of the courses that will be looked at in detail during the curriculum review, then an observer may visit more than one of your sessions within a curriculum review week – they will identify clearly to you whether or not they are observing you or whether they are gathering evidence of the quality of education received by students. In the latter case, no observation report will be produced.
- Student voice will be gathered following lesson observations. This will give students the opportunity to reflect on their wider experience on course and enable students to share their views on their teaching and learning.
- Colleagues working for subcontractors delivering College programmes will be observed, reports and actions shared with their managers, with support available from the College.

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## Preparation

The observer is expected to prepare for the observation by establishing what subject/unit is expected to be taught in the session; the number of students on the register; the start and end times and location plus any other factors that will help the observer gain a better understanding of the context of the observation.

Observers should arrive and introduce themselves to the member of staff before the start of the observation. During curriculum reviews, observers may interrupt sessions at an appropriate time to talk to students and teachers and may potentially require the teacher to leave the room, so that learning can be better assessed. Observers should judge the effectiveness of the session on the requirements of the Ofsted education inspection framework and minimum college expectations.

It is recommended as good practice that staff being observed have planning documentation (namely a scheme of work, session plan and group profile) available to hand to observers but only a scheme of work and group profile are mandatory. Whilst observers may request additional paperwork or information during or subsequent to an observation they will only do so to arrive at a better informed judgement and will be mindful that they do not make unreasonable requests of staff that will not help inform their judgement.

## Judgements

The criteria used for Formal Observations, reobservations, curriculum reviews and external development reviews will depend upon the provision and session type and the staff role as set out in the [Support for Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook](#). Observers will make judgements against each criterion, identifying whether each was a strength or as an area for improvement in the observed portion of the session. Observers will make an overall judgement of whether the standard of teaching, learning and assessment 'met' or 'did not meet' College expectations and provide a summary statement. LSA and SSA observations will be graded as 'effective' or 'ineffective' and a summary statement provided.

## Feedback

Feedback after a formal session observation should normally be given within 3-5 working days of the observation. Only in exceptional circumstances should this be extended and not without the observer notifying the observee. Feedback from a thematic observation or learning walk should be given within the week. All observers should provide teachers with feedback at a mutually convenient time and in private, away from distractions or interruptions.

The observer should lead the discussion. To ensure a common approach and consistency of feedback, all observers will feedback on the list of items below:

- Listing of key strengths
- Listing key areas for improvement
- Whether the observee meets expectations or does not meet expectations.



Feedback should form part of a professional dialogue between the observer and observee which enables the observee to build and develop their teaching learning and assessment practices.

The agreed actions will be shared with their Curriculum Team Manager or Curriculum Team Leader who will discuss with the member of staff how best to support them to meet the actions on their individual Teaching Learning and Assessment Development Plan.

## Appeals against observation outcomes

If a member of staff observed wishes to appeal against the outcome of an observed session, they should discuss with the observer in the first instance. Appeals may be made on two grounds

1. Procedural irregularity (e.g. conduct of observer or incorrect notice period given)
2. Insufficient or inconsistent evidence provided to support the outcome

If agreement cannot be reached between the observer and member of staff there will be a 5 working day limit of a right of appeal to the Head of Quality \*, who will investigate and then feedback to the appellant.

The appeal outcome should be reached within 5 working days of receipt and communicated to the appellant. The appeal may lead to further clarification of strengths, areas for development or action plan components.

The appeal cannot amend the overall outcome awarded for a session but can revoke the outcome awarded completely and arrange for a fresh observation to take place. If the appeal outcome is a further observation, then that observation will be undertaken by another member of the observation team, will normally\*\* take place within four working weeks of the appeal outcome being reached and the outcome at this stage will be final.

\* If the observer was the Head of Quality, the appeal should be forwarded to and heard by the Vice Principal for Quality, Innovation & Digital Transformation

\*\* Subject to delivery and or teaching still taking place at this date and an appropriate member of the observation team being available.

## Sharing of good practice

Exemplary practice will be identified and shared. Identified staff will share their experiences and their session with their teams and /or others during staff development activities.

## Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Logging and Practice

Staff are expected to complete.... hours of CPD within the academic year to support the continual development of teachers. This should be a mix of external and internal CPD activities.

Content of CPD should include:

- External Professional Development relevant to role and responsibilities
- Departmental Inset CPD days
- Cross College Staff Conference Days

- College Improvement Day activities
- Internal training/workshops which relate to identified individual, team or cross college areas for improvement/ development

CPD will be logged through Staff Development. Prior to staff applying for External CPD, Staff are expected to outline how the College will benefit from the completion of the particular CPD activity. Upon completion of the CPD activity, staff will be expected to log how they will use the acquired knowledge and skills within their role. The member of staff will subsequently log the actual impact this CPD has had on the College, student experience and achievement.

CPD activities are a fundamental component of all staff's performance management and the associated appraisal process. The setting of targets for the year ahead and reflection on the impact of the CPD after completion is a requirement of all staff.

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## Monitoring of Teaching Learning and Assessment Development Plans

Observers will identify strengths, areas for improvement and state actions from a teachers' observation in their Teaching Learning and Assessment Development Plan, these will be uploaded to the college's ProObserve system.

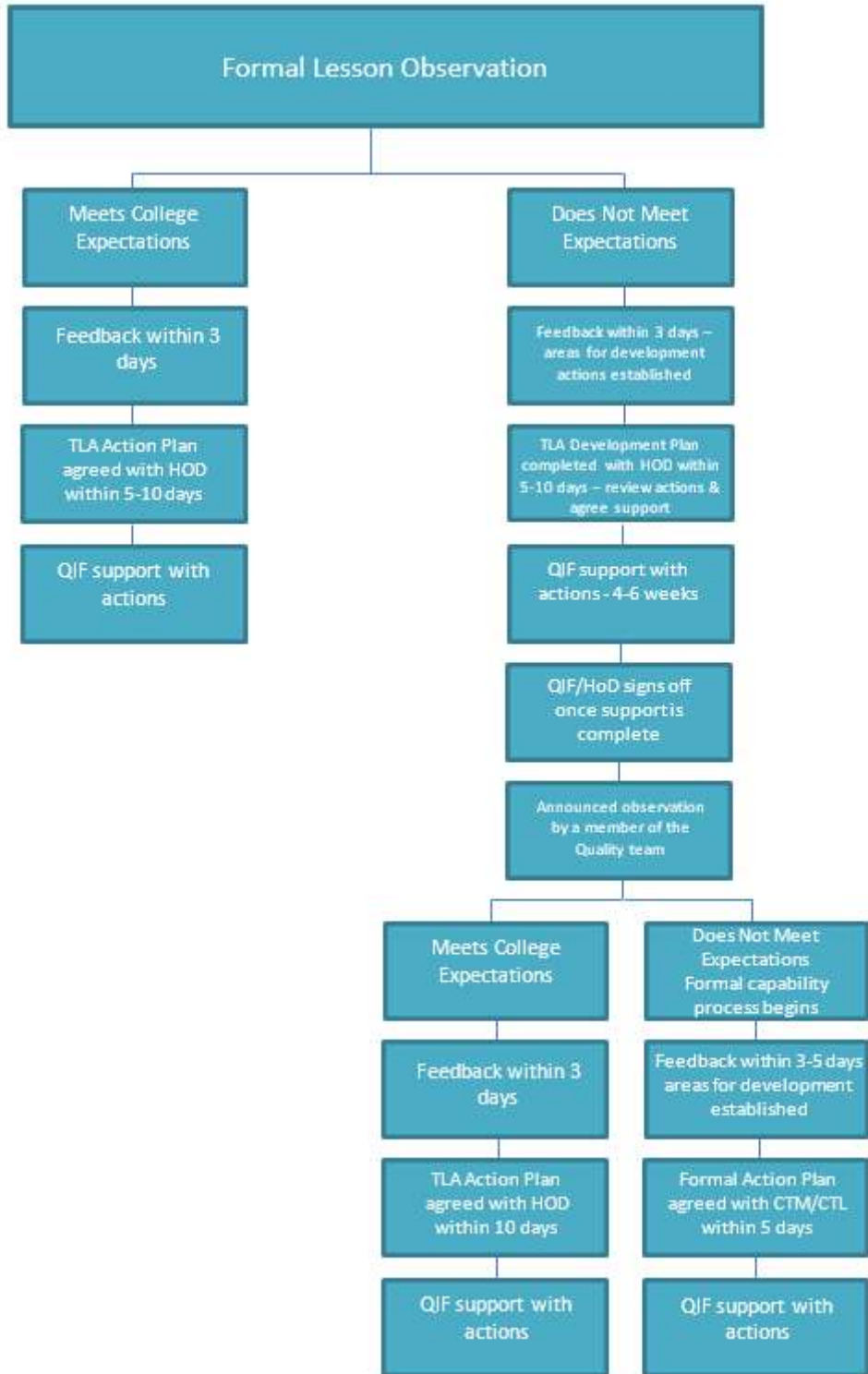
The Curriculum Team Manager or Leader will conduct a one to one meeting with observed staff where their individual Teaching Learning and Assessment Development Plan will be discussed. The Curriculum Team Manager or Leader will assign actions from the observation to support improvement to either themselves or the QIF allocated to the member of staff. Where the standard of teaching, learning and assessment in a formal observation 'does not meet expectations', the member of staff will receive intensive support from their Curriculum Team Manager or Leader and/or assigned Quality Improvement Facilitator for a period of 4 to 6 weeks, to help them address the actions identified from the observation.

The Curriculum Team Manager or Leader or assigned QIF will record all interventions, support and development on the Teaching Learning and Assessment Development plan. Plans must be updated with clear demonstration of action taken to achieve the target and the impact of those actions. Curriculum Team Manager or Leader will receive feedback and a detailed log of all support and development given by the assigned QIF, this will be on ProObserve. Curriculum Team Manager or Leader will use the findings from the support provided to inform their staff appraisals and 1-2-1 meetings. The actions will be monitored by the quality team.

The relevant Curriculum Team Manager or Leader and/or assigned QIF will sign off actions set once the identified support needed is complete, signalling that the staff member is ready for re observation. The re observation will be arranged and conducted within two to four weeks by either the Vice Principal for Quality Innovation & Digital Transformation, the Head of Quality

### Managing teaching performance:

The only acceptable standard of performance is that the standard of teaching, learning and assessment 'meets expectations' or that LSA or SSA support was 'effective'. The College is committed to ensuring all sessions provide students and apprentices with exceptional experiences to ensure that all reach their full potential. Therefore, staff who do not meet expectations will be supported and monitored to improve. However, if subsequent observations show no significant improvement in performance, capability procedures may commence.





It is hoped that all observation activity and curriculum reviews will proceed as stated above, with the majority of activity being face-to-face. Some activity may still be conducted remotely where it is more appropriate to do so (for instance, observing assessors interacting with apprentices and employers).

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