

# QUALITY ASSURING THE LEARNING JOURNEY

## STRATEGY FOR THE OBSERVATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

<b>Line Manager Responsible:</b>	Director of Education & Quality
<b>Department:</b>	Quality
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## ***Introduction and Context***

This strategy will promote a “whole organisation” approach to both the experience and service our learners and stakeholders receive. The strategy will determine the ethos behind the quality assurance mechanisms and activities engaged throughout the year.

Our processes need to be dynamic, and they need to respond and react to current and future initiatives surrounding education and training. This includes; developing skills which employers value, responding to the influence of government policy, the increasing influence of the Local Enterprise Partnerships and changes to funding through devolution and efficiency drives. We are committed to continually improving our provision to achieve and maintain excellence.

The quality assurance processes will focus on the following themes:

- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Progression
- Developing skills for employment
- Employability
- Professional conduct and behaviours
- The learning environment
- Promotion of British values and citizenship
- Learning efficiencies including ILT utilisation

To complement the continuing journey towards outstanding, the quality assuring of the learning journey will support and uphold the following pledges:

1. Deliver an outstanding teaching, learning and assessment experience
2. Prepare learners for work and life
3. Anticipate and embrace future expectations
4. Enhance professional development
5. Pioneer outstanding leadership and management

Quality assuring the learning journey will be the constant that ensures consistency in all aspects of our service and provision across Free2Learn.

### ***1 Our Pledges***

- 1.1 Ensure we contribute and support our learners to become self-assured, confident and competent in every aspect to take their next step; be it education, employment, self-employment or training.
- 1.2 Provide the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and operational staff with clear and accurate evidence, which reflects the quality of teaching, learning and assessment where applicable.
- 1.3 Quality Team to proactively review the standards of teaching, learning and assessment, and set both individual and team targets to continually drive improvement. We will also ensure

this informs initiatives for workforce development to continually drive the improvement of standards to outstanding.

- 1.4 Lead by example in the planning and delivery of developmental, innovative and experimental teaching, engaging and enthusing learners and staff alike to positively impact on learning outcomes and progression.
- 1.5 Seek out, celebrate outstanding practice, and work with all teams to cascade these practices across the organisation.
- 1.6 Lead and quality assure both internal and external quality assurance arrangements and processes.
- 1.7 Support the development, planning, implementation and review of self-assessment and quality improvement planning with all teams.
- 1.8 Identify and act upon underperformance in a fair, consistent and supportive manner.
- 1.9 Provide a well-informed basis for the development of the cross-organisation staff development programme.
- 1.10 Contribute to and nurture a culture where staff embraces the quality assurance process as supportive and developmental.
- 1.11 Support the effectiveness of the Annual Review process.

## ***2 Principles***

- 2.1 All staff involved in the delivery of teaching, learning and assessment will be required to have at least one standard observation during the academic year.
- 2.2 Other processes are also subject to observation for example; ILPs, feedback, learner progression.
- 2.3 All tutors will be expected to improve specific aspects of their teaching. High levels of support will be provided to enable this improvement.
- 2.4 Freelance staff will follow the same process and will be expected to undertake ongoing professional development.
- 2.5 Overall effectiveness will be informed by criteria in the Education Inspection Framework (EIF)
- 2.6 All delivery staff will be responsible for managing the quality and improvement of teaching, learning and assessment in their area, measuring the impact on learners' learning and progression. This will be in conjunction with the Quality Team.
- 2.7 A whole organisation approach to quality assurance will be introduced to monitor and improve the quality of all services to our learners and stakeholders.
- 2.8 The strategy will be measured against the KPIs identified in the organisation's Strategic Plan. Additional evaluation will be undertaken in order to assess the impact on the overall effectiveness of provision and services to all learners and stakeholders.

## ***Observation of Teaching, Learning & Assessment***

With effect from the 2018/19 academic year, we have not been awarding individual numerical grades for teaching, learning and assessment observations, but rather an indicative level of development. The primary purpose of a lesson observation is to engage in professional dialogue to improve the quality of teaching and learning for learners.

The impact of this change is creating learning conversations that:-

- Develop cutting edge practice
- Inspire tutors to invest in the development of their pedagogy
- Create a more productive post observation dialogue
- Nurture tutors' intrinsic motivation for improvement
- Collaborate in supportive step by step individualised development plans
- Promote self-sufficient communities of practice
- Develop a more holistic approach to establishing what constitutes an outstanding practitioner
- Re-energise the delivery of teaching and learning and see demonstrable improvement for learners.
- Achieve the delivery of the strategy for observation of teaching and learning.
- Remove the concerns amongst teaching staff that a standard observation is linked in isolation to capability

### ***3 Learning Communities***

Staff will be required to be proactive in observing/shadowing others to develop their own reflective practice; this includes supportive observations to help staff reflect on how to improve the impact of their teaching strategies. The process will also encourage teaching staff to identify and improve on elements where they feel they are having the least impact on learning and the outcomes of their learners. Wider considerations will need to be made with regards to what impact the tutor is having on the learners in individual lessons, between lessons, and throughout their journey as a whole. This could be through learner progress, attendance, achievement and feedback for learning, for example.

### ***4 Observation Team***

The observation team will include some staff being given moderation roles. Inclusion in this team will be dependent on qualifications and experience.

Lesson observation activity is comprised of:

- Standard lesson observations
- Joint lesson observations
- Short focus drop in observations
- Learning walks
- Peer lesson observations/shadowing

**a) Standard Lesson Observations**

All teaching staff will receive at least one standard lesson observation each academic year to support them in their reflective practice, identification of strengths and areas for development. Standard lesson observations will not be awarded individual numerical grades but rather an indicative level of development; tutors will receive one working week's notice of the observation. Should there be a need for an additional standard observation this will be clearly explained and discussed with the tutor; for example, as a method of assessing progress with individual development plans and targets focussing on a specific theme to raise the standards of teaching, learning and assessment.

Tutors will be provided with same day verbal feedback if possible, followed by a written report and development plan within 5 working days.

Normally observations will be spread over the year, enabling a more continuous review of teaching and learning in the area but may, in some cases, be more concentrated where a particular focus is required.

Additionally, it is standard practice for joint observations involving Free2Learn and our funding partners to take place throughout each academic year.

As in previous years, tutors are required to provide observers with "evidence of planning", therefore a lesson plan, scheme of work and a learner profile is expected. Alternative planning strategies can be discussed prior to the observation, if necessary.

All new members of the teaching staff will be observed within 12 weeks of employment commencing, irrespective of whether they are already professionally qualified and/or experienced tutors. This will be a full standard ungraded observation.

**b) Short focus drop-ins**

Short focus drop-in observations complement the methodology of standard lesson observations. Short focus drop-in observations can be announced with notice given but do not have to be. Feedback will normally be verbal rather than written and may be directed at whole teams rather than an individual level to address departmental themes. The duration of short focus 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 standard observations. Tutors will not be asked to present their lesson plans unless they have been notified of this in advance, observers making it clear that it is a short focus observation.

Short focus drop-ins may be conducted by any of the observation team at any time, or where this has been agreed as part of a development plan following a standard observation where supported development was required. Normally the date and time of the drop-in is agreed in

advance and specified on the development plan, this is to confirm that development points have been addressed.

Observers may also carry out short focus drop-in observations where this has been agreed as part of the development plan following a standard observation.

### **c) Learning Walks**

Learning walks consist of a series of short focus activities typically during a new contract being started. Opportunities will be taken to talk to learners and staff where this can be done without any disruption to teaching and learning.

As part of the developmental support mechanism for new tutors, new teaching staff will receive a learning walk within the first 6-8 weeks of employment, to identify their strengths and areas for development. Same day verbal feedback is provided, followed by a written report within 5 working days.

The purpose of a learning walk is to:-

- Gain an informed understanding of the strengths and areas for development of new tutors.
- Provide the opportunity to sample the staff and student experience first-hand; engage with learners to ask key questions regarding their learning experience.
- Enable particular themes to be explored e.g. learning environment, company initiatives and contribute to us addressing our pledges within the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.
- Provide the opportunity for good/outstanding practice to be recognised and to note any issues for further consideration.
- Help to set the context for improvement in planning.
- Evaluate the impact of development plans.

### **d) Peer Observations/Shadowing**

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

Peer observations/shadowing provides tutors 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 tutors to:-

- Be exposed to 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

- Give and receive unbiased and non-judgmental feedback on teaching and learning with a view to continually improve.

Free2learn recognises the benefits peer observations/shadowing can bring and the importance of introducing this practice into the work and culture of all individuals and teams. A new initiative is being introduced to facilitate embedding peer observation/shadowing by establishing communities of practice teams.

## ***Annex 1 – Review Structure and Associated timings***

Review teams will comprise of the staff required to effectively review the particular area, below is a suggested review team for a operational area with associated roles and responsibilities:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Notes</b>
Director of Education and Quality Head of Teaching and Learning	Lead on review activities, provide timely feedback Collate feedback and findings Coordinate feedback activities Overall lead on activities agreed for review Lead feedback activity to teams	Lead on identification of review themes and ensure these are in line with company QIP Coordinate paired observations
Head of Teaching and Learning Line Managers	Assist in review Provide support to own teams Act as a point of contact for review team	Deliver review briefing to area once themes and timelines are confirmed Paired observation Provide information where requested
OTLA Manager	Conduct agreed review activity provide associated feedback/reports	Provide feedback where appropriate to SLT/Centre Manager/review staff



## ***Annex 2 – Standard Observation***

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

It will be the responsibility of the observer to manage their caseload of observations. This will be in line with the time frames communicated by the Head of Teaching and Learning. Observers are required to notify tutors by email one working week in advance of the observation. This will state the date in which the observation will take place, the session to be observed will be identified. Observers will send the following documents in the notification email:-

- Lesson Observation Advance Notification
- Free2learn T&L Observation Report Standardised Template
- Free2learn Learner Profile Standardised Template
- Details of planning evidence requirements

The appropriate Centre Manager will be copied into the notification email.

There will be no negotiation relating to the week identified for the observation unless there are exceptional circumstances. In cases where observations are not able to go ahead as planned, an alternative observation date will be scheduled as soon as possible. Where the reason for postponement is outside the control of the tutor, for example lack of observer availability on the day, the normal notice period will be upheld unless agreed otherwise by the tutor. 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 agree the date/time of the post observation meeting with the tutor. This will be scheduled to take place within five working days of the observation.

### **The Lesson Observation**

Most observations will begin at the start of the lesson and last between 45 minutes to an hour; on occasions, this may be longer. The observer will aim to sit where they have a good view of the learners and how they are engaging with the lesson. The observer may move around the room during the observation and talk to learners as long as the teaching and learning is not interrupted as a consequence. Opportunities will be taken to look at learners' work and tutor feedback on marked work.

Questions for learners may include, but are not limited to:

1. How does this session relate to your last session in this subject?
2. Does your tutor return work promptly with feedback?
3. What new knowledge do you feel you have from this session?
4. How well are you progressing in this subject and how do you know?
5. How does your tutor set you targets and are these followed up?

6. Do you feel safe at Free2Learn?
7. What plans do you have for when this course finishes and how is Free2Learn supporting you with those plans?

## ***Post-Observation***

### **Post-observation meeting between observer and tutor:**

This will take place within five working days of the lesson observation. The meeting is used to facilitate a two-way professional discussion between tutor and observer.

Observers will support tutors in their reflective practice to identify key strengths and priorities for improvement in the lesson observed. All tutors will have a development plan as a result of the observation, which identifies actions with timescales for completion. The development plan will be further developed by the tutor's line manager, unless the development is independent in nature. In instances where a re-observation is required, this will be discussed and organised with the tutor and their line manager.

### **Post-observation development:**

Observers will make an assessment of tutors' development needs based on the lesson observed and the post observation discussion. Development needs will be categorised in the three headings below:-

- Independent Development
- Supported Development
- Focused Development

### **Independent development:**

Tutors will independently manage their own development through seeking and accessing development opportunities within the organisation and externally. This would be appropriate in instances where the development requirement is minor and is not impacting on the learners' experience or progression negatively. A record of this will be evidenced and reflected upon in the agreed development plan. Tutors will be encouraged to support and contribute to the development of others through good practice events or other methods of sharing good practice including allowing others to peer observe/shadow.

### **Supported development:**

Development and assistance will be sought to address the development requirements on a case-by-case basis. This would be an appropriate measure if the development points raised would, if not already, impact negatively on learners' experience or progression. A short focus observation/learning walk will then be carried out to assess progress following the post observation meeting and opportunity to develop has been allowed. This short focus

observation/learning walk will take place within 6 weeks of the initial observation. Development needs will then be reassessed. If supported development is still appropriate, the responsibility for further development is passed to the Centre Manager with support from the Quality Team. Key areas for development will be confirmed and actions for development agreed. These may include:-

- Support for development from the Quality Team
- Directed attendance to professional development events
- Directed peer observations/shadowing of identified good practitioners
- Directed participation around specific themes

Another standard observation will be carried out if the initial development needs are not addressed in the short focus observation/learning walk.

**Focussed development:**

In some instances, it may be necessary to provide more focused and responsive development and the observer will suggest one-to-one development support from the Quality Team. This would be an appropriate measure where the development needs raised are impacting negatively on learner experience and progression. A detailed development plan will be collaboratively drawn up between the tutor and the Quality Team and this will be communicated to the Centre Manager.

A second standard observation will be conducted after a 6-week support programme.

## ***Annex 3 – Quality Assurance of Judgements***

### **Assuring the quality of judgements**

The following approaches will be used to assure the quality and consistency of judgements about teaching, learning and assessment and how these are used to inform development planning:

- Develop a “whole organisation” understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment practice.
- Support tutors in becoming more reflective practitioners with high expectations for what learners can achieve.
- Monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across areas of provision; identifying areas of good practice and aspects where improvement is needed.
- Ensure on-going dialogue between observers about teaching and learning practice, and the process of making judgements.
- Moderate the judgements of observers.

### **Training of observers**

All staff involved in the observation of lessons will be fully trained to ensure professional standards and consistency. As well as the initial training of all observers, there will be on-going training, linked to the identification and understanding of standards related to teaching and learning and the way in which observation evidence should be judged against those standards. Training will also focus on developing observers’ skills in providing developmental feedback and supporting effective improvement planning in conjunction with the quality team.

### **Training for tutors**

Training for establishing communities of practice will be provided along with development days. Ongoing development training will also be available along with other opportunities to ensure that teaching staff are supported in their self-assessment of teaching and learning.

### **Joint Observations**

Joint observations are a critical element in supporting the development of observers’ skills and in standardising judgements. All observers will undertake at least one joint observation with a colleague observer during the course of a year, preferably in the earlier part of the observation cycle. The observers will discuss and agree their judgements before the post-observation meeting with the tutor.

All new observers will also undertake one lesson observation accompanied by a moderator, this will be the OTLA Manager or an external expert, who will discuss the judgements made by the observer, and agree on any actions for development, which will be documented.

Joint observations will be agreed between both observer parties in advance; tutors will be notified of the possibility of a joint observation taking place when the lesson observation date/time is confirmed.

Joint observations involving Free2Learn and our funding partners take place throughout each academic year.

### **How to raise concerns about the lesson observation process**

Observers should raise any urgent concerns they may have relating to teaching and learning, or engagement of the tutor in the observation process, to the relevant line manager and the Head of Learning and Development.

Tutors who have a concern about how the observation process was conducted and wish to raise this formally should do so through the Head of Teaching and Learning. Any concerns must be made by the tutor in writing within five working days of the post observation meeting taking place.

## ***Annex 4 – Performance Management***

The outcome of standard observations will not directly result in the capability process being applied, managers will be expected to review all aspects of staff performance i.e. student attendance, achievement, retention and progression (amongst other operational requirements) in order to assess in collaboration with HR, if the formal capability process should be applied.