

Academic Policy Statement APS19

Teaching Observations

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Middlesex University is committed to developing the standards and quality of its education. It is also committed to investing in its staff by providing opportunities for training and development to enable them to respond positively to the changing needs of students. The aim of this Policy is to contribute to the enhancement of good teaching practice by developing a culture of teaching observation for all academic staff, including full time, fractional and part-time hourly-paid (working an average of 80 hours a year). We are working towards all colleagues participating in peer teaching observation once a year. The emphasis is on first achieving this for less experienced staff.
- 1.2. The aim of teaching observation is developmental and outcomes should be discussed and agreed between observer and observee. The key objective of this process is to agree action and development that may be undertaken to enhance professional practice.
- 1.3. Ideally, the observer should observe an entire/whole session to gain a complete picture (see paragraph 2.2 which describes the different types of classes or sessions that may be observed).

2. Scope

- 2.1. There are three different types of teaching observations. Whilst the overall purpose is developmental the function of each of these observations is different
 - a) Teaching observation for probation/progression/promotion
 - b) Session observation for the PG Cert HE
 - c) Peer observation for ongoing development
- 2.2. The teaching session to be observed in all types of observations could include a large group, small group, one to one, tutorial, seminar, lecture, laboratory, workshop or studio-based work, group on-line, e learning materials, within the work place / practice setting etc. It could also include discussion of assessment practices or plans for other innovations. The same proforma should be used for all types of observation.

A Teaching Observations as part of probation/progression/promotion

- 2.3. As part of the probationary report for new members of staff, two teaching observations must take place to assess the performance of the member of staff. Teaching observations are also required for progression through the lecturer to senior lecturer scale and also for all academic promotion purposes (except to Senior Manager). After each observation the observer will provide a detailed analysis of the teaching observation for the Dean of School.

B Session Observations for the PG Cert HE

- 2.4. Observations form an important part of the PG Cert HE, their purpose is developmental. Four observations take place over the year of the programme, these can include observations required as part of probation. Each year a tutor or tutor-associate (someone who has already completed the programme) shall observe the participant and each participant of the programme shall observe and be observed by other participants on the course. These, together with the participant's reflections on the observation event, will be included in each stage of portfolio submission. Additional optional observations may be included in the portfolio if participants wish.

C Peer Observation for ongoing development

- 2.5. The purpose of peer observation is developmental and intended to enable lecturers to become better practitioners. Observation is expected to be beneficial to both for the observer and the observee and shall help to share good practice across the University. Both observer and observee may wish to discuss the use of observation as a development tool in their annual appraisal discussion. The observation is non-judgemental, it is supportive, and it helps staff critically to reflect upon their teaching. It can result in staff trying out new ideas, reaffirming what is being done or modifying existing practices. Staff are encouraged to use peer observation to identify individual teaching related development needs and discuss these in their annual staff appraisal.

3. Responsibility

- 3.1. The Dean has responsibility for ensuring that teaching observations take place for:

- probationary members of staff
- staff due to progress from lecturer to senior lecturer
- academic staff promotions from lecturer to senior lecturer and from senior to principal lecturer (excluding Senior Managers);

The Dean will delegate responsibility for organising these observations to Heads of Department.

- 3.2. For peer observations, **whilst the University is working towards annual observations for all academic staff**, the Head of Department has responsibility for ensuring that staff are observed at least once every three years (experienced staff) and every one/two years for less experienced staff or staff known to need further planned development. During annual appraisal discussions staff should discuss with their appraiser ways in which peer observation could support development. This should be included in their individual Development Plan.
- 3.3. Each participant on the PG Cert HE is responsible for organising his or her own teaching observations. They should discuss with the Head of Department where it is appropriate to also use a PG Cert HE Teaching Observation for peer observation.
- 3.4. The plan for all types of observations and general recommendations on staff development needs from Section D of Observation forms should be included in the Departmental Staff Development Plan. These needs will then feed into the School Plan.
- 3.5. Staff who observe teaching shall be trained as observers (see paragraph 7). Probation observations will normally be undertaken by someone more senior/experienced than the person being observed and the observer shall not be the person who is his or her induction mentor.
- 3.6. ***An appropriate Associate Dean (normally the AD Learning and Quality Enhancement or AD Academic Development) shall be responsible for producing School Reports based largely on the anonymised peer observation forms (although other kinds of forms, suitably anonymised, also inform the report). This report shall detail strengths, good practice and weaknesses within the School and identify any actions required. This report shall form part of the School Annual Monitoring Report. Commenting on the operation of peer observation in the School, and any matters arising. As part of the Quality Monitoring Report.***

4. Confidentiality

- 4.1. Teaching observation forms for probationers, those progressing from lecturer to senior

lecturer and academic staff promotions are seen by the line manager, the Dean and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The forms are kept in the staff member's file.

- 4.2. Peer observations remain confidential between the parties involved unless the observed member of staff decides otherwise. For example, the observee may wish to share the feedback form with their appraiser or line manager or include it in their portfolio during a promotions round. However, Sections A and D (the non-evaluative sections) of the observation form are returned to the Head of Department to confirm observation has taken place and for staff development purposes.
- 4.3. ***Sections C and D (which are anonymous) shall be sent to the relevant Associate Dean for compiling School or subject reports. The forms shall held in a confidential file for monitoring purposes by the Associate Dean .***
- 4.4. Session observations for the PG Cert HE are confidential to the participant and programme tutor, unless they are also being used for probation. A participant may choose to include them in support of an application for progression or promotion or share them with their appraiser.

5. PROCEDURES

Frequency

- 5.1. Observations for probation shall be undertaken twice during the probationary period.
- 5.2. Observation for progression from lecturer to senior lecturer and for promotion from lecturer to senior lecturer and from senior lecturer to principal lecturer shall take place when required.
- 5.3. Peer observations should be undertaken at least once every three years for experienced staff and every year or every two years for less experience staff or staff known to need further planned development.

Organisation

Probation/Progression/Promotion

- 5.4. The Dean shall circulate a list to Heads of Department of those staff who are to be observed for probation/progressions/promotions. The Head of Department shall organise observers and ensure that observations take place within the time-scale requested by the Dean. The Head of Department shall inform observees when an observation is required and, where necessary, who shall be the observer.
- 5.5. The observer shall contact the staff member to be observed and the observer and observee shall agree which session(s) shall be observed. They should agree what to observe e.g. type of teaching/learning session, type of student, full-time/part-time etc. The observation should ideally be an entire session but can be, for example, the first hour of a two-hour session, the staff involved should discuss the best scenario. The observer should also review the use of e-learning materials, where appropriate.
- 5.6. There should be a meeting (about ten minutes), preferably immediately prior to the observation, to discuss the learning objectives of the session and to give the observer any materials that the student shall receive (including the module handbook, where appropriate).

Peer Observation

- 5.7. The Head of Department draws up a list of staff to be observed in each term. This is circulated to the department in September and included in the Departmental Staff Development Plan.

- 5.8. The Head of Department draws up a schedule of observations, following discussion with the members of staff, listing who is observing whom and shall circulate this at the beginning of each term to members of the department. This should not always be senior staff observing junior staff but should be a mix, for example, junior staff observing senior staff and staff on similar grades observing each other.
- 5.9. The observer shall contact the staff member to be observed and the observer and observee shall agree which session(s) shall be observed. They should agree what to observe e.g. type of teaching/learning session, type of student, full-time/part-time etc. The observation should ideally be an entire session but can be, for example, the first hour of a two-hour session, the staff involved should discuss the best scenario. The observer should also review the use of e-learning materials and formative assessment, where appropriate.
- 5.10. There should be a meeting (about ten minutes), preferably immediately prior to the observation, to discuss the learning objectives of the session and to give the observer any materials that the student shall receive (including the module handbook, where appropriate).

6. Follow up action

- 6.1. The following action is recommended after session observations for probation/progression/promotion and peer observation (excluding PG Cert HE which are confidential between the participant and programme tutor):
 - The Associate Dean shall evaluate the organisation of and any general recommendations arising from the observations with the Head of Department. This should include assessing staff development needs and organising appropriate staff development events at School level. I
 - in addition, the Associate Dean shall publish examples of good practice in Quality Monitoring Reports..

7. Training

- 7.1. Workshops on teaching observation, agreed by Schools with the support of CLQE, shall be provided on a regular basis. It is expected that all observers should attend a workshop prior to undertaking any observations. The Head of Department may agree exceptions to this.

Associated documents

Session Observation Form
Staff Development Plan

Associated Policies

Probation HRPS13
Appraisal
Recruitment and Selection (Appendix 3)
Coaching and Mentoring

This Policy was originally developed through consultation with Schools and NATFHE. It was approved by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the Academic Board on 17 July 2003. It was

reviewed in the Academic Year 2004-05 and amendments approved by the Academic Board in March 2005. It was again reviewed in the Academic Year 2008-09 and the amendments approved by the Academic Board in November 2008. It is due for further review in 2011.