



OBSERVATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

Policy Number	New or Reviewed	Date of next Review	Responsibility
HCP049	June 2020	June 2021	Principal

Empowering learners to shape their future

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OBSERVATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY

1. Context

- 1.1 This document seeks to set out the arrangements for the observation of teaching, learning and assessment.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The primary purpose of lesson observation is to improve the quality of teaching and learning across Horizons College. The lesson observation arrangements include the following:
- a. Lesson observations developed to enable a productive dialogue between Tutors and observers.
 - b. Teachers' self-evaluation being a significant element of the process.
 - c. The post observation meeting focusing on constructive developmental dialogue.
 - d. Development plans identifying step-by-step time limited actions.
 - e. Substantial focus on follow-up support.
- 2.2 Horizons College aims to ensure that lesson observation contributes to the creation, and forms part, of a culture of reflection and continuing commitment to professional development.
- 2.3 Lesson observation activity makes a significant contribution to this overarching aim through:
- a. Developing a Horizons College-wide shared understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
 - b. Supporting Tutors in becoming more reflective practitioners with high expectations for what learners can achieve.
 - c. Monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across areas of provision.
 - d. Identifying areas of good practice and aspects where improvement is needed.
 - e. Informing development planning and other quality improvement processes.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Principal is responsible for ensuring that there are comprehensive, appropriate and robust processes for lesson observation activity, recording of findings and monitoring of impact.
- 3.2 The Vice Principal with support from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will conduct lesson

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observations across Horizons College and is responsible for team development and standardisation activities. The Vice Principal and SLT are responsible for ensuring that a central record of lesson observations is maintained and for the production of reports.

- 3.3 Observations will ensure that all teaching staff benefit from formal lesson observations to support them in reflective practice, identification of strengths and development planning.
- 3.4 All observation activity will be informed by the Horizons College expectations of teaching and learning using the guidance provided for formal observations as a context for all as outlined in this document. The Principal and SLT have responsibility for the performance management of their staff and are actively engaged in development planning and assessing of impact. Additionally, they will use the findings from lesson observations together with other performance indicators such as outcome data and learner voice to conduct formal staff reviews.

4. Types of Lesson Observations

4.1 Lesson observation activity is comprised of:

- a. Formal lesson observations.
- b. Peer lesson observations.
- c. Learning walks.

4.2 Formal Lesson Observations:

- a. All teaching staff are entitled to and should expect two formal lesson observations each year to support them in reflective practice, identification of strengths and development planning. Formal lesson observations are graded with no notice of the lesson to be observed and the name of the observer. The reasons for additional formal observations where Tutors are observed more than once will be clearly explained and discussed with the Tutor; for example, as a method of assessing progress with individual development plans.
- b. Normally observations of a team will be spread over the year, enabling a more continuous review of teaching and learning in the area but may in some cases be clustered where a particular curriculum area focus at one time is beneficial. Scheduling of observations will be front-loaded as far as possible to provide time for good practice to be shared and development needs to be met.
- c. Tutors are required to provide observers with a *group profile, lesson plan and scheme of work* completed using standard Horizons College forms. These together with the observation do need to provide the observer with all they need to know to assess teaching and learning progress – just as is the case during Inspection – as there will be no pre-observation meetings for exchange of information. Observers will also need to see the register and a print out of class attendance over the year to date.

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d. Newly Appointed Tutors:

- All new members of the teaching staff will be observed within six weeks of their employment, irrespective of whether they are already professionally qualified and / or experienced Tutors. This will be a full formal observation. A second formal observation will take place later on in the year within probationary review, appointment support review or appraisal review as appropriate. In the case of unqualified teachers, these observations will be in addition to any carried out as part of initial teacher training.

e. More detailed information about formal observations can be found in the following Appendices:

- Appendix 1: The procedure to be followed for formal observations;
- Appendix 2: The range of approaches used to assure the quality and consistency of observers' assessments of teaching and learning.;
- Appendix 3: How to raise concerns about the lesson observation process.

4.3 Learning Walks:

- a. Learning Walks complement the system of formal lesson observations. Horizons College views drop-ins as an essential activity to enable the Principal and SLT to gain an informed understanding of the teaching and learning in all areas. Drop-ins can be announced with notice given but do not have to be. They are not graded and feedback will normally be verbal rather than written and may be directed at whole team rather than individual level. The duration of drop-in observations will vary, some will be brief at around 15 minutes, others longer and may on occasion extend to a similar length to formal observations. Tutors will not be asked to present their lesson plans unless they have been notified of this in advance.
- b. Learning Walks serve an important purpose by enabling the Principal and SLT to:
 - Sample the day to day staff / student experience;
 - Actively engage in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning;
 - Discuss teaching and learning approaches with staff;
 - Quickly identify good practice or concerns;
 - Support Tutors experiencing difficulties with appropriate guidance and support.
- c. Learning Walks will also be conducted by the Principal and SLT where this has been agreed as part of a development plan following a formal observation. Normally the date and time of the learning walk is agreed in advance and specified on the development plan. The purpose of the learning walk is to assess progress with the identified areas of development.

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- d. The Principal and SLT will also carry out learning walks where this has been agreed as part of the development plan following a formal observation. The purpose of these learning walks is to assess progress with the areas of development identified in the formal observation. The team will also carry out paired drop-ins for standardisation and development purposes.

4.4 Peer Observations:

- a. Peer observations provide 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:
 - Experience 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;
 - Receive unbiased and non-judgemental feedback on teaching and learning.
- b. The aim is to encourage and facilitate interactions between teaching staff that promote sharing of good practice and support team and individual development. Directed peer observation may be agreed as part of an individual's development plan following a formal observation.
- c. Horizons College recognises the benefits that peer observations can bring and the importance of introducing this practice into the work and culture of all individuals and teams. This initiative is used to facilitate embedding of peer observation by inviting staff to signal that they are 'open' for peer observation.

4.5 Learning Walks:

- a. Learning walks consist of a series of drop-in observations over the period of a day or part day. Normally this will be a collaborative activity between the Principal, Curriculum Leader and members of the SLT. Curriculum leader participation as part of the observer team is highly desirable; the planning of learning walks should enable this wherever possible.
- b. Each learning walk is planned and led by the Principal / SLT who will:
 - Notify teaching team of the focus of the learning walk
 - Plan the activity for the learning walk.
 - Carry out learning walks without notice to continue developing the culture of teaching and learning
- c. Learning walks will normally include learning walks of teaching and learning. Learning Walks will tend to be around 15 minutes and will not necessarily include the start of

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sessions. There is no requirement for formal lesson plans or schemes of work to be provided to observers unless specifically requested by the Principal / SLT with a minimum of one week's notice. Opportunities will be taken to talk to learners and staff where this can be done without any disruption to teaching and learning.

- d. Each learning walk ends with an observer team feedback discussion. The team's discussions are summarised by the Principal / SLT and key points shared with the teaching team either as a brief written summary report or verbally at a team meeting. Feedback shared with the teaching team will be pitched at team level without identification of individual Tutors. The Principal / SLT may provide individual feedback but this should not be a normal expectation.
- e. Learning walks serve an important purpose by:
- Providing opportunity for the Principal / SLT to sample the staff and learner experience first-hand; engage with learners to ask key questions regarding their Horizons College experience;
 - Enabling particular themes to be explored e.g. promotion of independent learning and equality and diversity;
 - Providing opportunity for good / outstanding practice to be recognised and to note any issues for further consideration;
 - Helping to set the context for improvement planning;
 - Evaluating the impact of development plans.

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Appendix 1 - Procedure to be followed for Formal Observations

1. Pre-observation

- 1.1 The Principal / SLT have responsibility for ensuring that all Tutors are briefed on the observation process and paperwork prior to observations taking place, for example through team meetings at the start of the academic year or as part of the induction process.
- 1.2 The SLT will publish the observation windows at the beginning of each academic year. The Principal / SLT will send the following documents as an attachment to the reminder email:

Lesson observation briefing	A brief summary of the lesson observation process
Lesson Plan Form	The standard College form to be used by all Tutors
Evaluation Guide	A guide to evaluating attainment, learning and teaching. A reference guide for Observers and Tutors
Observer's Assessment of Teaching and Learning	The Observation Form completed by the Observer
Action Plan Form	The development plan generated as a result of the observation
Tutor's Assessment of Teaching and Learning	The Self-Assessment for Tutors to complete following the observation and bring to the post observation discussion

- 1.3 There is no negotiation of the lesson to be observed unless there are exceptional circumstances. In cases where observations are not able to go ahead as planned an alternative observation 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.
- 1.4 Observers will include the date / time of the post observation meeting in the email sent to Tutors informing them of the lesson observation. This will be scheduled to take place within one week of the observation. Tutors have responsibility for raising any difficulties with feedback meeting dates / times on receipt of email as later requests for postponement can be impossible to accommodate within the agreed timescale.

2. The Lesson Observation

- 2.1 Observations will begin at the start of the lesson and last 30 minutes. The observer will aim to sit where they have a good view of the learners and how they are engaging with the

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lesson. Observers will write extensive notes during the observation to capture ‘the story’ of the lesson. They will also draw a seating plan and use this to record individual learner engagement including how many times individuals answer or ask questions and / or their participation in group work (where appropriate). Opportunities will be taken to talk to learners (where appropriate) without disrupting the lesson. These are the types of questions that may be asked (where appropriate):

- a. Can you explain what you have been asked to do?
- b. How does this lesson relate to what you were studying last lesson?
- c. What type of feedback are you given (verbal, written) and how helpful is it in explaining what you are doing well and how to improve?
- d. How well are you are progressing in this subject and how do you know?

2.2 Observers will move around where this is possible without causing disruption to enable them to assess learners’ engagement and learning progress. Opportunities will be taken to look at learners’ work and Tutors feedback on marked work.

2.3 Post-Observation:

- a. Between Observation and Post-Observation meeting:
 - Observers and Tutors evaluate the session with reference to the Evaluation Guide using the College forms in preparation for the post observation meeting.
- b. Observer’s Assessment of Teaching and Learning:
 - Front page - Strengths and Areas for Development are summarised as bullet points with a reference code identifying the element referred to in the Evaluation guide;
 - Next section - Summary evaluations of learning, attainment and teaching in the lesson observed which contextualise the strengths and areas for development identified;
 - Learner feedback (where appropriate) gained during the lesson is also summarised;
 - Summary judgements – Indicated in boxes to provide summary judgements as shown below:

Learning – Learners acquired new knowledge and skills, met the learning objectives and understood how to improve	Select: All / Most / Some / Few
Attainment – Learners are working at the appropriate standard for level and stage of programme	Select: All / Most / Some / Few

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Teaching – Individual learning was checked effectively in the session using a variety of approaches including self and peer assessment. Learners receive feedback on their individual progress (where appropriate) and understand what they need to do to improve (where appropriate)	Select: Very Confident Fairly Confident Not Confident
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3. Tutors Self-Assessment of Teaching and Learning

- 3.1 Tutors are first asked to provide a summary evaluation of learning and attainment, selecting from the following options: *all learners / most learners / some learners / few learners*. A summary evaluation of teaching is then asked for – focusing on checking of individual learning and feedback – with options for selection relating to level of confidence: *Very confident / Fairly confident / Not confident*.

4. Post-Observation meeting between Observer and Tutor

- 4.1 This takes place within one week of the lesson observation, preferably within a shorter timescale if at all possible. Tutors are encouraged to bring their completed self-assessment forms to the meeting. The meeting is used for two-way professional discussion between Tutor and Observer.
- 4.2 Observers will support Tutor in reflective practice to identify key strengths and priorities for improvement in the lesson observed. All Tutor will have an action plan as a result of the observation which identifies actions with timescales for completion. The development plan will provide a step by step series of actions that support the improvement sought. It is important that appropriate methods are agreed to measure the impact of actions. Normally these will include further lesson observations with a focus on the element identified for improvement.
- 4.3 The Development Plan is signed by both Observer and Tutor to confirm that the post-observation meeting has taken place. Tutor are able to use the form to comment on the observation process.

5. Post-Observation Development

- 5.1 Observers will make an assessment of Tutors development needs on the basis of the lesson observed and the post observation discussion. These broad categories of 'development pathway' will be applied:
- Independent and Contributing.
 - Supported Development.
 - Intensive Development.

6. Independent Development

- 6.1 Tutors will independently manage their own development through seeking and accessing development opportunities at Horizons College and externally. Tutors are encouraged to facilitate and contribute to development of others through leading workshops or other

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methods of sharing good practice including allowing others to peer observe.

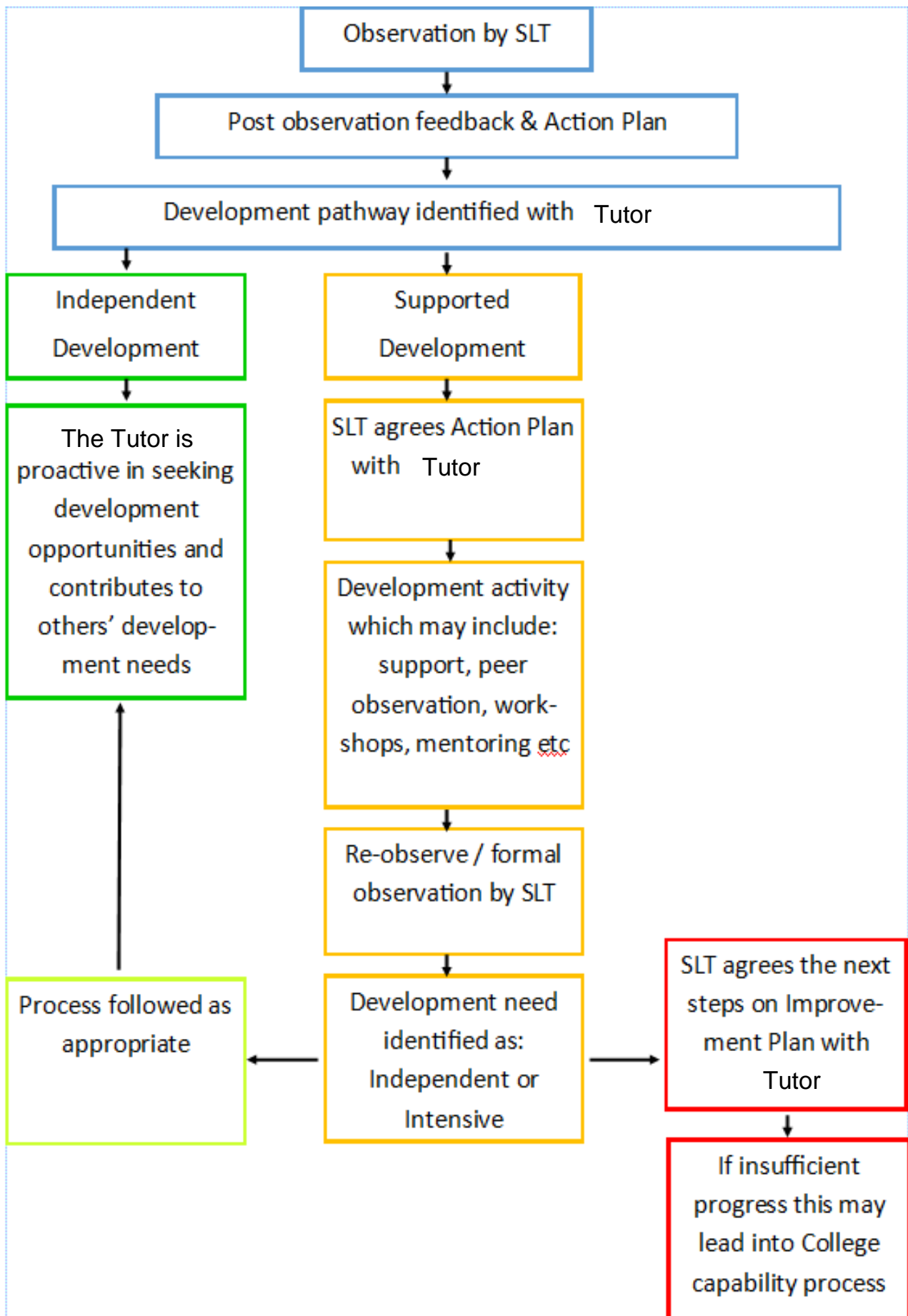
7. Supported Development

- 7.1 Normally, a learning walk will be carried out by the same Observer to assess progress following the post observation meeting. Development needs will then be reassessed. If Supported Development is still appropriate the responsibility for further development is passed to the Principal / SLT. Key areas for development will be confirmed and actions for development agreed. These may include:
- a. Support for development from the Principal / SLT and / or other team members.
 - b. Directed attendance at Professional Development workshops.
 - c. Directed peer observations.
 - d. 'Light touch' support from Professional Development with discrete elements of practice.
 - e. Directed participation in Learning Communities around specific themes.
- 7.2 The Principal / SLT will carry out a further formal observation with re-evaluation of summary judgements and development pathway to assess progress at a later date, normally between 4 and 6 weeks following the first formal observation.

8. Intensive Development

- 8.1 The Principal / SLT will request 1-2-1 development support from the appropriate professional which will result in an agreed detailed development plan.
- 8.2 A second formal observation will be conducted after a 4-6 weeks support programme by the Principal / SLT.

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9. Formal Lesson Observations Records

- 9.1 The following completed forms are saved with restricted access:
- a. Observer's assessment of Teaching and Learning.
 - b. Observation of Teaching and Learning Development Plan.
- 9.2 A central record will be maintained which summarises for each individual:
- a. Strengths and areas for development.
 - b. Summary judgements and Development pathway.
- 9.3 The purpose of the central record is twofold:
- a. To enable analysis of strengths and areas for development.
 - b. To track progress.

10. Confidentiality

- 10.1 All individual lesson observation records are treated as confidential and will be handled appropriately and professionally.
- 10.2 The lesson observation forms will only be made available to:
- a. The Tutor.
 - b. Principal / SLT with line management responsibility for the Tutor.
- 10.3 Also available to these areas:
- a. Human Resources - for appraisal records.
- 10.4 The lesson observation documentation and any improvements made following the development plan should be included in any review meeting (probationary / appraisal) between Principal /SLT and Tutor.

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Appendix 2 – Assuring the Quality of Judgements

1. Overview

- 1.1 The following approaches will be used to assure the quality and consistency of judgements about teaching, learning and attainment and how these are used to inform development planning. They encompass the need to:
- a. Develop Horizons College-wide shared understanding of what constitutes good and outstanding teaching, learning and assessment.
 - b. Support Tutors in becoming more reflective practitioners with high expectations for what learners can achieve.
 - c. Monitoring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across areas of provision; identifying areas of good practice and aspects where improvement is needed.
 - d. Create a culture of reflective practice amongst observers, which emphasises rigorous self-evaluation, sharing of practice and focus on personal professional development.
 - e. Ensure on-going dialogue between observers about teaching and learning practice, and the process of making judgements about them.
 - f. Moderate the judgements of observers.

2. Training of Observers

- 2.1 All staff involved in the formal 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.

3. Training for Tutors

- 3.1 Development days and other opportunities will be used to ensure that teaching staff are supported in their self-assessment of teaching and learning.

4. Paired Observations

- 4.1 Paired observations are a vital element in supporting development of observers' skills and in standardising judgements. All observers will undertake at least one paired observation with a colleague observer during the course of an academic year. The observers will discuss and agree their judgements before the post-observation meeting with the Tutor.
- 4.2 All observers will also undertake one lesson observation accompanied by a moderator e.g. external expert, who will discuss the judgements made by the observer, and agree any actions for development, which will be documented.

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- 4.3 Paired observations will be agreed between both observer parties in advance; Tutors will be notified of the possibility of a paired observation taking place when the lesson observation date / time is confirmed.

5. Standardisation Meetings

- 5.1 Standardisation meetings will take place during the academic year where nominated observers will come together to share their observation documentation, and discuss issues relating to judgements about teaching and learning. The meetings will be facilitated by the Principal. Attendance at these meetings is mandatory for all observers.

6. Sampling of Documentation

- 6.1 Lesson observation reports will be sampled at least once a year by SLT, leading to written feedback, including recommendations for development. Where there appear to be serious issues arising from the documentation, a meeting will be called with the observer to discuss the issues, and agree any actions for development. Information gathered from the Tutor's feedback on the process (within Observation of Teaching and Learning Development Plan) will also be used.

7. Annual Review of Documentation

- 7.1 There will be an annual review of completed lesson observation documentation by SLT, leading to a report encompassing good practice, and areas for development. The outcomes should inform observers' own developing practice, but also plans for training and development sessions and other developmental activities for groups of observers.

8. External Review

- 8.1 Arrangements will be made for periodic review of lesson observation procedures, and of the implementation of the observation process, by external reviewers.

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Appendix 3: How to Raise Concerns About the Lesson Observation Process

1. Process

- 1.1 Observers should raise any urgent concerns they may have relating to teaching and learning or engagement of the Tutor in the observation process.
- 1.2 Tutors who have a concern about how the observation process was conducted and wish to raise this formally should do this through the Principal. Any concerns must be made by the Tutor in writing within a week of the post observation meeting taking place.

Signed Principal

Signed Chair of Governors

Date