

LAINE
THEATRE ARTS

TEACHING OBSERVATION
POLICY
2024-2025

TEACHING OBSERVATION POLICY

Policy Overview

The purpose of the Learning and Teaching Observation Policy is to clearly identify the way that lesson observations are used and managed at Laine Theatre Arts. Our approach provides staff with the opportunity for reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. As an organisation, Laine Theatre Arts places a high value on the quality of its learning and teaching and encourages peer observation of teaching in order to provide opportunities for feedback, reflection, mentoring, and to share good practice. Our aim is to develop a culture of critical self-reflection that is effectively supported by peer feedback and provides opportunities for staff to continually develop and enhance their practice taking account of up-to-date pedagogical research and good practice.[GU1] Written criteria on key aspects of practice to consider are provided to accompany feedback forms for use in peer lesson observations. [RM2]

Scope

This policy applies to all teaching staff at Laine Theatre Arts, including full-time and part-time staff.

Strategic Overview

The primary objectives of this policy are aligned to the strategic aims and principles laid out in the College's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy:

AIMS

- To create and implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching, and promote a shared understanding of this approach among staff and students;
- To promote the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in our approach to learning and teaching;
- To ensure that courses are well designed, and that learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes;
- To engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality assurance of their experience of training at the College and its ongoing development and enhancement;
- To ensure that everyone involved in the teaching or support of student learning is appropriately qualified/experienced, supported and developed;
- To provide every student with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.

PRINCIPLES

Outstanding Teaching and Learning

- All approaches to learning and teaching adopted by the College will be flexible, inclusive and appropriate to the skills and needs of individual students.
- Assessment and feedback will enable learning through an approach that allows for reflection and dialogue, developing meta-cognition (awareness of one's own thought processes and motivations/preferences in the context of learning) and recognising the shared responsibility of students and teachers in the process of giving, receiving and using feedback.
- Data and quality assurance processes will ensure that the College is able to monitor and respond to trends and make evidence-based interventions in order to maintain standards and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

- The College will work to incorporate a greater use of technology enhanced and blended learning in its teaching as appropriate in order to support students.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning

The College encourages teaching staff to adopt innovative and inclusive approaches to academic and vocational pedagogy by promoting:

- A culture of best practice where students and professionals from the theatre industry can interact and learn from one another;
- Visible learning, where both students and teachers are engaged in the evaluation of their own practice as learners/teachers;
- Frequent opportunities for students to practice the skills that are being taught
- The importance of meaningful, constructive feedback as a powerful tool in student learning
- A culture of flexibility and openness, where teachers serve as subject matter experts, mentors, facilitators, and collaborators in the learning process.
- Learning experiences that occur beyond the studio or core curriculum and enhance the effectiveness of students' formal training.
- The creation of educational experiences that resonate with students, foster their creativity and encourage them to become innovative practitioners

Teaching Observations - Primary Objectives

The primary objectives of peer teaching observations are as follows – to:

- Develop new teachers as teaching professionals in line with sector expectations and both general and subject-specific educational and vocational best practice.
- Ensure that experienced teachers are fully supported in their studio practice and their professional development.
- Maintain appropriate professional standards in line with the UKPSF and ensure and enhance the quality of the learning experience for all learners.
- Foster dynamic approaches to learning and teaching that are: student centred, holistic, creative, and innovative.
- Recognise and value the variety and quality of learning, teaching and assessment practice.

The Lesson Observation Scheme – How it Works

Context

Lesson observations are an integral part of Laine Theatre Arts' Personal Development Review process for teaching staff, which also includes a Job Chat and a Line Manager Interaction Survey. The outcomes of the Lesson Observation and Job Chat are recorded to complete the Personal Development Review. This process is designed to foster a culture where personal development is a shared commitment between the organisation and its employees, working together to unlock their full potential.

Observation Cycle

Lesson observations run on a three-year cycle. The College adopts a risk-based approach to quality-assuring standards of teaching, allowing for the frequency of evaluations to be tailored to the needs and experience of teaching staff. For instance, experienced staff who consistently demonstrate high-quality teaching are observed every three years, reflecting their established competence and reliability. In contrast, new staff members are observed twice during their first year to provide them with the support and feedback

necessary to develop their skills, with the goal of transitioning them to the three-year cycle as they progress. Staff identified as needing developmental support are observed annually—or more frequently—until they effectively address any concerns, ensuring that they receive the guidance and monitoring required to enhance their performance. This approach balances the need for oversight with the recognition of individual staff members' abilities and development stages.

Observation Process

Lesson observations are conducted by two observers, each with a distinct focus to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of the teaching and learning experience. Observer 1 focuses on the quality of teaching demonstrated within the classroom, assessing factors such as instructional techniques, student engagement, and classroom management. This observer provides insights into how effectively the teacher delivers the lesson and interacts with students. Observer 2 examines the content of the lesson through the lens of curriculum design and implementation, evaluating how well the lesson aligns with curriculum objectives, the appropriateness of the material, and how effectively it integrates into the broader educational framework. Together, these two perspectives offer a holistic view of both the teaching process and its alignment with curricular goals, ensuring that both pedagogical quality and curriculum integrity are maintained.

Implementation

Responsibility for implementing these objectives in course delivery is held by the Academic Board which works with all course communities to ensure that criteria and approaches used are suitable and effective in achieving the objectives of this observation policy, considering the relevant educational and legislative frameworks, and approaches to teaching and learning specific to each area.

Operating

Operation of the Lesson Observation Scheme is the responsibility of the Vice-Principals, with the Director of Studies reporting to the Academic Board on its implementation and outcomes. It is recommended that all teaching staff be provided with at least one observation opportunity during a three-year observation cycle. These observations will be undertaken by members of a team of observers whose training is delivered by a combination of internal and external staff; overseen by the Director of Studies.

Training

Observers must undergo training and regular refresher sessions to stay current with the observation scheme and to develop their skills in facilitating reflective dialogue to support the teachers they observe. New observers are required to co-observe until they feel confident working independently. Observers are expected to listen, engage, and respond to the needs of the teachers, addressing concerns, aspirations, and important topics either directly or by escalating them to relevant management. Additionally, observers will address areas for improvement with positive, proactive suggestions and will document all decisions and agreements reached during the review process.

Support and Resources

Laine Theatre Arts is committed to providing the necessary resources and support for the successful implementation of this policy, including:

- Access to professional development funds
- Provision of time for staff to engage in CPD activities
- Access to internal and external expertise in learning, teaching, and assessment
- Opportunities for collaboration and networking within and outside the College

Reporting and Feedback

Observers do not collect or share data from individual observations but instead focus on identifying key themes for discussion within college teams. Departmental reports are compiled by the Director of Dance and Director of Musical Theatre and submitted to the Director of Studies, who then presents a summary to the Academic Board. The impact of CPD activities is documented and evaluated, with findings reported to the Academic Board to inform continuous improvement.

Assessing Observations

Teaching Observations are measured on a scale of 1-4. The following statements are used to determine performance against the specific observation criteria used by the individual assessors (see Annexes 1 and 2 on pages 7 and 8 for the specific criteria used by Observers 1 and 2) and are averaged to arrive at a categorical judgement for overall teacher performance.

Level 1: Fully Meeting Expectations	
Specific Application	The observation provided evidence that the specific criteria were fully met.
General Application	The observation provided evidence of consistently strong teaching practices.
Level 2: Mostly Meeting Expectations	
Specific Application	The observation provided evidence that the specific criteria were mostly met but with some areas requiring development.
General Application	The observation provided evidence of some strong teaching practices.
Level 3: Partially Meeting Expectations	
Specific Application	The observation provided evidence that the specific criteria were partially met but there were significant areas requiring development.
General Application	The observation provided evidence of inconsistent teaching practices with significant areas requiring development.
Level 4: Not Meeting Expectations	
Specific Application	The observation did not provide evidence that the specific criteria were met and the teaching practice observed did not meet the expected standard.
General Application	The observation provided evidence that immediate and substantial development is required to meet the expected standard.

Procedures for Escalating Concerns Arising from an Observation

The outcome of an observation will be identified as being 'of concern' if a grade of 3 or 4 is given following an observation. These procedures ensure that observations are graded fairly against clear benchmarks and that ample opportunities for improvement are given while educational standards are maintained.

Concerns about the outcomes of an observation will be escalated as follows:

Stage 1: Initial Concern and Informal Feedback

- Identification of Concern: If an observation is graded at Level 3 or 4 during an observation or review, the teacher's line manager or Head of Department will document specific issues.
- Informal Meeting: The teacher's line manager or Head of Department will hold an informal meeting with the teacher to discuss the concerns, provide feedback, and outline the expectations for improvement to reach at least Level 2
- Action Plan: An informal action plan will be created and a follow-up meeting will be scheduled within 4-6 weeks to review progress.

Stage 2: Formal Review

- Formal Review Meeting: If observations continue to be graded at Level 3 or Level 4, a formal review meeting will be held with the teacher, their line manager or Head of Department, and HR.
- Documentation: The concerns will be formally documented, and the teacher will be given an opportunity to respond. A detailed improvement plan will be developed, outlining clear objectives for achieving at least Level 2, along with timelines and support mechanisms.
- Monitoring and Support: The teacher's progress will be monitored, with regular check-ins to assess improvement. Additional support, such as mentoring or professional development, may be provided.

Stage 3: Escalation and Final Warning (observations continue to be graded at Level 3 or 4)

- Review of Progress: If observations continue to be graded at Level 3 or Level 4 despite the improvement plan, a further review meeting will be held. The teacher will be informed that failure to achieve at least Level 2 could lead to further disciplinary action.
- Final Written Warning: If there is no improvement, a final written warning will be issued. This warning will specify the areas where improvement is still required, the expectations for achieving at least a Level 2 in a formal observation setting, and a final deadline.
- Continued Support: The teacher will continue to receive support, but the consequences of not achieving a satisfactory performance level will be clearly communicated.

Stage 4: Formal Hearing and Consideration of Dismissal

- Formal Hearing: If an observation is graded at a level 3 or 4 despite the final warning, a formal disciplinary hearing will be convened. A senior management panel, including HR, will review all documentation and evidence.
- Teacher's Defence: The teacher will have the opportunity to present their case, including any mitigating circumstances, and may be accompanied by a colleague or union representative.
- Decision: The panel will decide on the appropriate course of action, which may include dismissal if the teacher has failed to achieve a meet the required standards (Level 2 or higher) despite ongoing support and warnings.

Stage 5: Dismissal

- Notification: If dismissal is decided, the teacher will be formally notified in writing. The letter will outline the reasons for dismissal, specifically linking it to the failure to achieve at least a Level 2 rating, the date of termination, and any entitlements.

- Right to Appeal: The teacher will be informed of their right to appeal the decision. The appeal process will be conducted by a different panel to ensure fairness.

Stage 6: Post-Dismissal

- Exit Procedures: HR will manage the exit process, including the return of school property, settlement of final pay, and necessary documentation.
- Review and Reflection: Senior management will review the case to ensure that all procedures were followed correctly and to identify any lessons learned for future cases.

LESSON OBSERVATION FORM 1 - TEACHER ASSESSMENT

KEY TO RESPONSES: 1 = YES, 2 = MOSTLY YES WITH ELEMENTS OF NO, 3 = MOSTLY NO WITH ELEMENTS OF YES, 4 = NO

1	Class Conduct and Rapport with Students		
1.1	Is the teacher creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere?	1	2 3 4
1.2	Does the teacher have a good rapport with the students?	1	2 3 4
1.3	Is the teacher respectful and encouraging of the student voice?	1	2 3 4
1.4	Is the teacher encouraging self-discipline in a way that is appropriate to the class?	1	2 3 4
<i>If you have circled 3 or 4 for any of the questions, please provide an explanatory comment:</i>			
2	Teaching Methods		
2.1	Is the teacher communicating their objectives clearly to students?	1	2 3 4
2.2	Is the teacher providing an appropriate level of challenge to all students?	1	2 3 4
2.3	Is the class equally accessible to all students?	1	2 3 4
2.4	Is the teacher able to differentiate according to the learning needs of individual students?	1	2 3 4
2.5	Is the class balance appropriate for the intended outcomes?	1	2 3 4
<i>If you have circled 3 or 4 for any of the questions, please provide an explanatory comment:</i>			
3	Industry Relatedness		
3.1	Is the teacher demonstrating command of appropriate professional vocabulary?	1	2 3 4
3.2	Is the teacher drawing on industry examples to contextualise student learning?	1	2 3 4
3.3	Is the teacher encouraging students to further their own industry knowledge?	1	2 3 4
3.4	Is the teacher nurturing an appreciation of industry values in their conduct of the class?	1	2 3 4
<i>If you have circled 3 or 4 for any of the questions, please provide an explanatory comment:</i>			
4	Checking for Learning		
How is the teacher checking for understanding throughout the class? (i.e. question and answer, student demonstration, other forms of reflective practice?)			
5	Feedback		
5.1	Are varying styles of formative feedback taking place – i.e. group/individual/peer?	1	2 3 4
5.2	Is the feedback offered student-specific and goal-orientated?	1	2 3 4
5.3	Is feedback expressed clearly, accessibly, and appropriately?	1	2 3 4
<i>If you have circled 3 or 4 for any of the questions, please provide an explanatory comment:</i>			

LESSON OBSERVATION FORM 2 - OBSERVATION OF CURRICULUM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

KEY TO RESPONSES: 1 = YES, 2 = MOSTLY YES WITH ELEMENTS OF NO, 3 = MOSTLY NO WITH ELEMENTS OF YES, 4 = NO

1 Content		
1.1	Is the material selected engaging the learners?	1 2 3 4
1.2	Do the students appear to be stimulated by the choice of music/visuals/text used?	1 2 3 4
1.3	Is the work suitable for the academic level?	1 2 3 4
1.4	Does the work accurately reflect the aims, objectives and learning outcomes set?	1 2 3 4
<i>If you have circled 3 or 4 for any of the questions, please provide an explanatory comment:</i>		
2 Sequencing		
2.1	Does the lesson build on previous lessons an/or relate to those planned in the future?	1 2 3 4
2.2	Has this lesson been shaped by the outcomes of previous assessments?	1 2 3 4
2.3	Are the students on track to pass the level required by the end of the academic year?	1 2 3 4
<i>If you have circled 3 or 4 for any of the questions, please provide an explanatory comment:</i>		
3 Instruction		
3.1	Is the teacher referencing current industry practice and/or expectations?	1 2 3 4
3.2	Are the modes of instruction suitable for the achievement of learning outcomes?	1 2 3 4
3.3	Is the teacher referencing other cultures and influences?	1 2 3 4
3.4	Are there creative/collaborative opportunities in the class?	1 2 3 4
<i>If you have circled 3 or 4 for any of the questions, please provide an explanatory comment:</i>		
4 Skills		
4.1	Does the teacher have the appropriate disciplinary knowledge to deliver this class effectively?	1 2 3 4
4.2	Does the teacher have the appropriate teaching skills to deliver this class effectively?	1 2 3 4
4.3	Does the teacher need further support to create the best possible learning experience for the students?	1 2 3 4
<i>Please recommend areas for growth or improvement</i>		

Policy reviewed by academic board. Date for review: September 2027