

Higher Education Teaching Observation Policy

1. Purpose

This paper sets out the policy of Walbrook's Higher Education teaching observations. Reference should also be made to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, which sets the wider framework within which teaching observation operates.

For Apprenticeship provision, teaching staff and tutors should refer to the Apprenticeship Teaching Observation Policy.

2. Context

Organisations holding degree-awarding powers are expected to have academic staff development and appraisal opportunities. Walbrook has formal processes for staff development and appraisal as set out in the Academic Staff Development Policy. Walbrook recognises that teaching observation, whether administered centrally for coaching or more informally in the context of peer observation, comprises a significant developmental opportunity, enabling the identification of best practice and promoting dialogue relating to learning theory and instruction.

3. Principles

Observations are supportive and developmental. The broad purpose of observation is to identify and share best practice in learning and teaching. The observer, who invariably has both academic teaching experience and significant relevant subject knowledge is present to support the observed, offering encouragement of their existing practice, while identifying areas the observed may wish to reflect upon and, if applicable, areas where there is scope for improvement. The observer may also share with the observed examples of good practice they have witnessed in other observations, or current research that may be relevant to the lecturer's practice. Academic teaching staff can expect to have their teaching observed at least once every year, regardless of their mode of delivery.

4. Definitions Process

4.1 Observation of face-to-face teaching

Where the session being observed is delivered face-to-face, the observer will attend the lecture, seminar or workshop in person for its duration. Observation sessions for face-to-face classes are arranged in advance by the Higher Education Services team. Each observation normally covers one lecture, seminar or workshop of between one and two hours' duration and is recorded using the Observation Feedback Form. Which is completed during or immediately after the session and, where practicable, will share initial impressions with the observed colleague at the end of the session.

4.2 Observation of online and digital teaching

Where the module being observed is delivered online, the observer will overview the lecturer's input on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), as appropriate to the mode of delivery and tutor expectations. The observer will complete the Observation Feedback

Form within a reasonable period of joining or reviewing the session, applying the same principles set out in this policy as for face-to-face observation.

4.3 Coaching observation

Coaching observation will be undertaken for each member of academic faculty at least annually by the Academic Lead, or, on occasion, the Academic Dean. The Observation Feedback Form will be completed by the observer and observee and shared with all parties mentioned above. This will be followed up by discussions around enhancing skills and developing knowledge and expertise within one-to-ones. Those colleagues who teach but are not members of academic faculty (for example librarians and careers professionals) will also be offered an observation annually.

4.5 Peer observation

Peer observation will be undertaken for each member of teaching staff at least annually. Therefore, everyone should expect to observe, and be observed, at least once every year. It comprises academic community members observing each other's classes to enable reflective learning, the sharing of best practice, and ongoing professional dialogue relating to learning and teaching. The Observation Feedback Form will be completed by both parties for their own reflection and action, though they may choose to discuss the outcomes with their Academic Lead in relation to developmental conversations.

4.6 Completion and record-keeping

All observations, whether coaching or peer, face-to-face or online, are recorded on the Observation Feedback Form. Completed forms are shared with the observer and observee and, for coaching observations, with the Academic Lead or Academic Dean as appropriate. Forms are retained in accordance with Walbrook's record retention requirements for staff development records. Records of observations having taken place (not the forms themselves) should also be submitted to the Quality Office for purposes of annual monitoring.

5. Document Governance

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