**SCS Teaching Observation Scheme Annual Report 2017-18**

# Background

2017-18 represents the third year of a Faculty observation scheme that follows the University’s most recent [Learning and Teaching Framework](https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/~/media/sample-sharepoint-libraries/policy-documents/144.pdf?la=en). The majority of staff have now acted in an observer or observee role in the previous two years and, in alignment with guidance from the Teaching and Learning Academy, online guidance only was provided for staff that had not previously undertaken an observer role.

The form used to record observation reflections and feedback, shared between observer and observee only, was identified within the Faculty as Form A. Observers were again invited to use the Faculty’s DISCO prompts when observing sessions:

* Delivery
* Inclusivity
* Structure
* Content
* Operational (e.g. manipulation of AV, blackout, control of environment, safety)

Rather than individual boxes to record responses to prompts, Form A was re-designed to that a single box could be used to record the observer’s overall sentiments about the session. After consideration of these five interconnected themes, observers are asked to respond to this question on Form A, “Overall, were students engaged during this session?”

The form returned to the Associate Dean Education (ADE) remained unchanged (Form B) and it has the same format as that suggested in the University’s framework. It was used by the ADE to confirm that the observation had taken place.

At the start of each year, School Directors or nominees were invited to allocate observation pairs, the ADE identifying those staff due to take observer or observee roles based on the scheme’s biennial cycle. Any observations that did not take place in the preceding year were rolled-over into the current year if both observer and observee remained eligible. Observers were emailed in September/October with their observation partner and the scheme was summarised with the expression;

*“When one observes, two learn.”*

# This phrase conveys neatly the confidential and developmental principles underlying our scheme.

# Summary for 2017/18

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Faculty-scheduled observation\* | PGCert- scheduled observation | Total scheduled observations | Actual observations | % of Observations completed\*\* |
| NSP | 48 | 5 | 53 | 48 | 91% |
| PBS | 36 | 3 | 39 | 38 | 97% |
| SPS | 25 | 1 | 26 | 26 | 100% |
| SCS | 109 | 9 | 118 | 112 | 95% |

\*Includes 10 observations carried over from the previous year. \*\*6 Incomplete observations to be carried into next year.

One School attained the Faculty LTA plan target of 100% and the overall annual Faculty observation rate represents an all-time high. This exceptional performance is attributed to FMT-agreed [explicit arrangements](http://wowie.ljmu.ac.uk/FacultyLTA/Teachingobservationscheme/Summary%20of%20Faculty%20of%20Science%20Teaching%20Observation%20Process%20for%20Observers.docx) for addressing incomplete observations during Semester 2. Notably, the involvement of Directors and Subject Leaders was critical in following-up observations where no scheduled date for the activity had been recorded within the Faculty’s online declaration tool, introduced for the first time this year.

Comments from the nine Faculty PGCert observations remain confidential and are not considered here. Almost 10,000 words of comments have been collated from 109 Faculty observation forms.

## Issues beyond control of observee

The full set of issues are listed in the [Appendices](http://wowie.ljmu.ac.uk/FacultyLTA/Actionplansandreports/201718%20Teaching%20Observation%20Scheme%20Report%20Appendices.docx) and are assigned to six identified themes, the proportion of sessions reporting an issue being shown below (with last year’s figure in brackets). For the first time since this this style of reporting was adopted three years ago, issues were reported in the majority of sessions; 54% (35%).

* Noise, 5% (5%): Reported to Estates

e.g. BS/329*: “Air conditioning was quite loud. X had to raise his voice above this (the room would not usually require a microphone).”*

* Lighting, 2% (0%): Reported to Estates

e.g. BS/137: *“Lighting level in the student section was too low”*

* Classroom design, 12% (6%): Reported to Estates

e.g. BS/103*: “A difficult room to lecture in due to the long / thin design and lack of gradient on the front rows of seats.”*

* Temperature, 13% (10%): Reported to Estates

e.g. Marybone Lecture Theatre: *“Temperature of the room (too high), students would find it difficult to concentrate for full session.”*

* Anthropogenic, 3% (3%):

e.g.Peter Jost ULT: *“Late arrival of many students, reason unknown.”*

* Timetabling, 12% (6%) Reported to SCS Timetabling officer

e.g. BS/307 *“[this] is a tiered lecture theatre – a non-fixed furniture classroom may have worked better for student’s group discussion session.”*

* Classroom AV and fittings 10%, (11%): Reported to Byrom-AV

e.g. BS/102: “AV stand lacked HDMI input port while most others in this building seem to have them – the tutor had to run and get an adaptor which was fine as they were early, but consistent AV units across teaching rooms would help tutors be prepared.”

An initial response has been received from all contacted teams:

* Byrom-AV: All the issues that Byrom-AV have control over either have been, or are scheduled to be, resolved.
* Estates: Reported that this was “very valuable” feedback. It is being shared with the Capital Projects, Maintenance and Soft FM Teams. Estates will start to review the list, with the expectation that some of the issues will need more investigation and discussion.
* Timetabling: Timetabling and Teaching and Learning Academy to liaise over the best way to address concerns raised.

## Dissemination of observed good practices

These were reported in 93% (86%) of sessions and the full set of comments will be redacted over the summer and shared at the next Faculty annual practice exchange event. In addition, redacted comments will ultimately be added to the [Appendices](http://wowie.ljmu.ac.uk/FacultyLTA/Actionplansandreports/201718%20Teaching%20Observation%20Scheme%20Report%20Appendices.docx).

Nine staff attended the 2017/18 practice exchange event on the morning of Thursday 15th Sept. Attendance rose to 22 for an external speaker in the afternoon session after an appeal on the day. [Feedback](http://wowie.ljmu.ac.uk/FacultyLTA/Actionplansandreports/1718LTADDfeedback.docx) on this event was overwhelmingly positive, with 12 respondents expressing 100% satisfaction and the event led to the setting up of the PowerPoint-Teaching project led by attendee Becky Murphy.

*“It was great to have the opportunity to hear about colleague's ideas and experiences to optimise the teaching and learning experience at LJMU.”*

Practice exchange survey respondent

Attendees suggested that more time should made available to view good practice comments from the 2016/17 observation scheme (that were printed on posters around the room). This will be incorporated into the 2018/19 event. Survey respondents also acknowledged that the session would have been better if more staff had attended. Given the very low attendance (less than 5% of those eligible), the ADE subsequently surveyed all SCS staff and outcomes from 88 respondents were reported to FMT:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Reason for absence | n | % |
| I did not have the time to devote to it\* | 45 | 53 |
| I needed to work off-site on 15/9/17\* | 11 | 13 |
| N/A I did attend\* | 11 | 13 |
| I was on annual leave on 15/9/17 | 10 | 12 |
| The event clashed with another meeting\* | 8 | 9 |
| The event was not relevant to my work | 2 | 2 |
| I was unaware that the event was happening | 0 | 0 |

\*Includes responses originally inputted under ‘Other’ and classified based on context provided.

Of the staff that did not attend and who were not on leave, the vast majority (97%) identified time as the limiting factor, either because of time needed for ‘informal’ activities (e.g. teaching preparation) or ‘formal’ activities (e.g. scheduled commitments at LJMU and off-site). Event awareness was not an issue.

The survey asked colleagues to suggest how we might develop our community of educators within the Faculty. In terms of advertising future development events, the involvement of Subject Leaders and emphasising the local/Faculty nature of the practice exchange was proposed and will be explored. Suggestions for WAM/CATAC hours for attending development events and mandating attendance provide sobering insights into the position that we find ourselves in. One survey respondent summarised the feelings of many;

*“… there is no time when other duties do not appear to be given greater urgency and priority,”*

Practice Exchange follow-up survey respondent

To enhance attendances at this event, and to foster greater engagement with LTA activities in general, the following measures are proposed;

i) moving the Practice Exchange event to Directed Study Week in November (September, December and January dates have already proved sub-optimal),

ii) greater perceived reward and recognition for teaching and learning (noted that Education Committee June 2018 agreed to review promotion criteria),

iii) exploring how key staff might be supported to advance the LTA agenda within local settings.

## Conclusion

The exceptionally-high participation rates and volume of comments (~10000 words) returned in Form B indicate that staff engaged with the scheme in 2017/18. This provides sufficient evidence to suggest that the principal objectives of the scheme, “To provide an opportunity for staff to reflect on their practice and to engage academic staff in self-reflection and critical discourse” are being realised.

**Phil Denton, ADE, 21/6/18**

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