**SCS Teaching Observation Scheme Annual Report 2016-17**

# Background

2016-17 represents the second year of the revised Faculty observation scheme, introduced to align with the University’s [Learning and Teaching Framework](https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/~/media/sample-sharepoint-libraries/policy-documents/144.pdf?la=en). [Eight Faculty training sessions](http://wowie.ljmu.ac.uk/FacultyLTA/Staff%20development%20events.htm) have been delivered to introduce staff to the new scheme and reporting procedures. The form used to record observation reflections and feedback, shared between observer and observee only, was identified within the Faculty as Form A. The form returned to the Associate Dean (Education) to confirm that the observation had taken place was identified as Form B.

Staff who were unable to attend training, and existing observers from the direct observation and PGCert schemes, have been provided with [electronic training resources](http://wowie.ljmu.ac.uk/FacultyLTA/Teachingobservationscheme/TOhome.htm). Training materials reflect the predominance of lecture theatre accommodation at Byrom St and observers were invited to use the Faculty’s DISCO prompts when observing sessions:

* Delivery
* Inclusivity
* Structure
* Content
* Operational (use of AV, blackout, control of environment, safety)

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?”

At the start of each year, School Directors are invited to allocate a list of eligible observees to each of the eligible and trained observers identified by the Associate Dean (Education). Any observations that did not take place in the preceding year are rolled-over into the next if both observer and observee remain eligible.

# Summary for 2016/17\*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Faculty-scheduled observation  | PGCert\*\* scheduled observation | Total scheduled observations | Actual observations in 2016/17 | % of Observations completed | % (and No.) of trained Observers |
| NSP | 35 | 6 | 41 | 34 | 83% | 89% (80) |
| PBS | 36 | 4 | 40 | 36 | 90% | 93% (68) |
| SPS | 22 | 1 | 23 | 23 | 100% | 93% (54) |
| SCS  | 93 | 11 | 104 | 93 | 89% | 91% (202) |

\*Revised April 2018 following a change in methodology \*\*Exempt from Faculty Observation and training

The overall annual observation rate is pleasing and almost attains the Faculty LTA plan target of 90%. Now that the first two-year cycle of the scheme is complete, all previous participants have been offered formal training. Remaining untrained staff, including new starters and PGCert graduates, will be offered observer training through online resources in future.

# Comments

Comments from the 11 Faculty PGCert observations remain confidential and are not considered here. Over 5000 words of comments have been collated from 82 Faculty observation forms and these have been redacted for staff names and are shown in the [Appendices](http://wowie.ljmu.ac.uk/FacultyLTA/Actionplansandreports/201617%20Teaching%20Observation%20Scheme%20Report%20Appendices.docx).

## Issues beyond control of observee

Issues are assigned to five identified themes and the proportion of sessions reporting an issue is shown (with last year’s figure in brackets). Overall, issues were reported in 35% (33%) of sessions.

* Noise, 5% (6%): Reported to Estates

e.g. BS/310 *“1) Water sound rushing through the pipes was quite audible. 2) Student noise outside in corridor was distracting.”*

* Classroom design, 6% (8%): Reported to Estates

e.g. HC/123 *“The lecture theatre has cement posts between students and lecturer which makes interaction with the whole room impossible.”*

* Temperature, 10% (9%): Reported to Estates

e.g. HC/167 “*The room was a bit airless and some of the students clearly found it difficult to concentrate through the whole lecture. A couple of open windows might have helped – but these are poor rooms in which to teach.”*

* Anthropogenic, 1% (3%): Reported to SCS Technical Manager

*“Technicians walked in front of X during her introduction several times to collect things for the other class which I found to be disruptive and inappropriate.”*

* Timetabling, 6% (3%) Reported to SCS Timetabling officer

e.g. BS/327 “*Room wasn’t conducive to aspects of the session which required small group work.”*

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

e.g. BS/307 *“Slow rebooting of the computer system caused by upgrade to Windows 10 across the school.”*

## Features of good practice observed

These were reported in 86% (70%) of sessions and fall into themes around structure, student involvement, use of technology, staff-related attributes and sessions being research and/or practice-informed.

* NSP: *“The information-presentation-followed-by-a-question style of X is very good and could be a model for other lectures. She repeatedly presented a single slide with instructional content directly followed by a question that forced students to apply the presented information to answer the question.”*
* NSP: *“Relating a topic to real-life examples and getting students to think about it before presenting academic research is definitely good practice. “*
* PBS: *“Inclusive and interactive nature of the lecture was impressive. It was achieved by the use of interspersed problems for reinforcement of the students’ understanding. This was particularly important because of the complex content of the lecture material.”*
* PBS: *“The link between science and practice was excellent and aligned well with the integrative stance of the remodelled MPharm degree here at LJMU.”*
* SPS: *“The delivery style was of high quality (clear, up-to-date, limited text on the slides, engaging presentation involving the active participation of the students trough different tasks in small groups). More specifically the students had a clear explanation of the learning outcomes at the beginning of the lecture and received clear definitions of Key terms throughout the lecture.”*
* SPS: “*The delivery was clear and engaging, despite the complexity of the subject-matter. The students were clearly at ease and the lecturer was approachable. Students felt free to ask questions to clarify the subject-matter. The lecture showed clearly how the active engagement of the students by an enthusiastic and eloquent lecturer can help communicate complex material and ideas.”*

## Dissemination of good practice

A common theme emerges from returned comments around the educational effectiveness of providing variety during ‘lecture’ type sessions. This principle was exemplified by a staff comment,

*“Using different engagement strategies during a session ensures the inclusion of students with different personalities and learning strategies.”*

Variety in lecture teaching was evident in a number of ways, listed below (with allied topics mentioned in Form Bs and for dissemination in brackets).

* Creative use of PowerPoint (Slide design, in-lecture annotation, presenter view)
* Compelling use of images and video (sourcing, copyright issues, integration, live video facilities, animations)
* In situ content development (whiteboards, MS Paint, visualisers, archiving of in situ content)
* Software demonstrations (game breaker, SPSS, VLE)
* Non-didactic methods (problem solving, worksheets, Q&As, group work, student as facilitator)
* Personal response systems (Textwall, MeeToo)

The next Faculty LTA development day will explore these topics and will feature a practice exchange event to explore the topics above. In addition, this observation report will be shared with Faculty staff through the LTA website.

## Conclusion

The high participation rates and volume of comments (5000 words) returned in Form B indicate that staff engaged with the scheme in 2016/17. 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, 22/6/16**