

University Centre Colchester

Teaching Observation and Teaching Review Policy

Policy Details			
Policy Owner	Dean of Higher Education		
CE Sponsor	Principal & Chief Executive Officer		
Date created this year	06 September 2023		
Version:	Approved by:	Date approved:	To be reviewed:
1	College Executive	11 October 2023	August 2024

Version Control	
Version Number	Changes from previous 12 months policy
1	Policy updated to replace annual Peer Reviews with Teaching Observations from Director of Teaching and Learning. Process updated to allow follow up actions (if required) and ability to escalate concerns to formal Teaching Review.
1	Appendix 1 Updated to reflect updated Processional Standards Framework
1	
	Changes to policy in year
2	
2	
2	

Equality Impact Assessment Tool: UCC Teaching Observation and Teaching Review Policy

		Yes/No	Comments
1	Does the policy/guidance affect one group less or more favourably than another on the basis of:		
	Race or ethnicity	No	
	Disability	No	
	Gender	No	
	Religion or belief	No	
	Sexual orientation	No	
	Age	No	
	Marriage and Civil Partnership	No	
	Maternity and Pregnancy	No	
	Gender Reassignment	No	
2	Is there any evidence that some groups are affected differently?	No	
3	If you have identified potential discrimination, are any exceptions valid, legal and/or justifiable?	N/A	
4	Is the impact of the policy/guidance likely to be negative?	No	
5	If so, can the impact be avoided?	N/A	
6	What alternatives are there to achieving the policy/guidance without the impact?	N/A	
7	Can we reduce the impact by taking different action?	N/A	

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 A lesson/session observation is the process of colleagues observing each other in their teaching, with the overall aim of improving pedagogical practice, and thus the student experience. It has become common practice to engage with lesson/session observations through both formal and informal structures such as learning walks, peer observations and teaching reviews. These form part of a strategic institutional approach to enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.
- 1.2 When the main focus of peer observation is on helping colleagues develop their teaching, the process is generally undertaken as a reciprocal exercise, with staff observing each other, sharing their insights and providing mutual support¹.
- 1.3 The traditional view of the process also includes an assumption that colleagues can learn effectively from each other's considered and constructive feedback about observed teaching. Furthermore, evidence is increasingly emerging that learning from watching a colleague teach can be just as beneficial as, if not more than, receiving observer feedback, even when that feedback is well constructed. The benefit to the reviewer from watching a colleague teach can explicitly enhance a tutor's self-confidence through observational learning or 'vicarious experience'².

¹ Bell, M. (2005). Peer observation partnerships in higher education. Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Inc., Milperra, NSW.

² Hendry, Graham D. and Oliver, Gary R., Seeing is Believing: The Benefits of Peer Observation, Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 9(1), 2012.
Available at: <http://ro.uow.edu.au/jutlp/vol9/iss1/7>

2. Categories of Teaching Observations

- 2.1 University Centre Colchester promotes the notion of observed, and observing, teaching on four levels: an informal Learning Walk, Peer Reviews, a documented Teaching Observation, and a formal Teaching Review. The organisation views the difference between these as follows:

Learning Walk

A Learning Walk is an informal quality tool, aimed at enabling the observer (usually a Head of School) to sample the student experience.

Learning Walks can occur at any point during the academic year. They are neither scheduled nor announced.

Peer Observation

A Peer Observation is a reciprocal, collegiate observation in which both parties identify best practice in each other's work, and (where appropriate) make recommendations aimed at improving the student experience.

Teaching Observation

A Teaching Observation is a collegiate observation that identifies best practice, and (where appropriate) makes recommendations aimed at improving the student experience.

Teaching Observations are normally carried out by the Director of Teaching and Learning. On occasions a follow up Observation may be scheduled to confirm whether recommendations have been incorporated into future sessions.

Teaching Review

A Teaching Review is a line management tool for documenting the quality and effectiveness of a staff member's practice. It informs the Check In Conversation process. Teaching Reviews are formally scheduled activities. For further information, please see item 4 of this policy.

- 2.2 The observations of a Learning Walk do not normally inform the Check In Conversation but may result in the scheduling of a Teaching Observation or Teaching Review, if required.
- 2.3 The resulting documentation from a Teaching Observation may be referred to by a line manager as part of a Teaching Review or Check In Conversation. Staff can also refer to peer feedback as part of any professional development activities, such as studying for a PGCE or supporting an Advance HE Fellowship application.

3. Purpose of the Policy

- 3.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out the main characteristics of the University Centre Colchester lesson/session observation system. All core UCC teaching staff are required to participate in a Teaching Observation one year, and a Teaching Review the next. Ideally, this establishes a two-year cycle of documented reflective practice.
- 3.2 The spirit of lesson/session observations is to monitor and improve the standard of teaching, learning and assessment in UCC, and to enable staff to engage in constructive and collegiate dialogue about pedagogical practice. It also enables the institution to document an ongoing engagement with reflective practice across all programmes.
- 3.4 It is a strategic aim of Colchester Institute to have all members of the University Centre Colchester teaching staff formally recognised by Advance HE in the context of the Professional Standards Framework (see: appendix 1) as having either descriptor 1 or descriptor 2 status, with all core staff and course leaders holding at least descriptor 2 status.
- 3.5 The present policy supports the Colchester Institute's and UCC's strategic planning documents 2021-2024 by aiming to deliver excellence in teaching, learning and assessment in all aspects of the student experience.
- 3.6 All new members of teaching staff receive a Teaching Review from their Head of School within their first semester of working at University Centre Colchester.

4. The Process

The process is intended to provide a developmental approach whereby UCC teaching staff are supported to improve their teaching, learning and assessment practice with the help of observers.

4.1 Organisation and timetabling

At the start of the academic year the Head of School confirms the expected teaching teams for their areas. UCC Academic Services is responsible for setting up a central register of all expected Teaching Observations and Teaching Reviews for the academic year.

A list of staff requiring a Teaching Observation will be passed to the Director of Teaching and Learning who has responsibility to ensure such an event takes place during the academic year. Heads of School will simultaneously be informed of which of their staff require a Teaching Review. It is expected that all Observations and Teaching Reviews should be completed within the first semester.

An observed session can be either a traditional face to face session or can be a live session delivered on-line.

All staff are invited to voluntarily take part in Peer Reviews throughout the academic year, however since 2023/24 this is no longer a compulsory activity. Organisation of Peer Reviews should be made locally between the two partaking members of staff and is not required to be logged with UCC Academic Services.

4.2 Undertaking the Teaching Observation/Teaching Review

Teaching Observations

Staff are to be observed by the Director of Teaching and Learning. Observation to be undertaken from developmental perspective, with both good practice and feed forward advice given. Where significant areas of development are identified a follow up Observation should be scheduled to showcase how the feedforward advice has been utilised and embedded into future sessions. If following the follow up Observation there are continuing concerns the observer can recommend that a Teaching Review is also undertaken during the academic year.

Completed Teaching Observation forms are then forwarded to the Head of School for confirmation and referencing in the individuals' Check In Conversations. A copy should also be forwarded to UCC Academic Services for monitoring purposes.

Teaching Reviews

Teaching Reviews also use the form found in Appendix 2. The observer must clearly identify the Professional Standards Framework evidenced in the observed lesson. Teaching Reviews are formal quality monitoring processes, and can be referenced to inform Check In Conversations, PDR Objective Settings, Capability Measures and Disciplinary action.

4.3 Best practice and monitoring

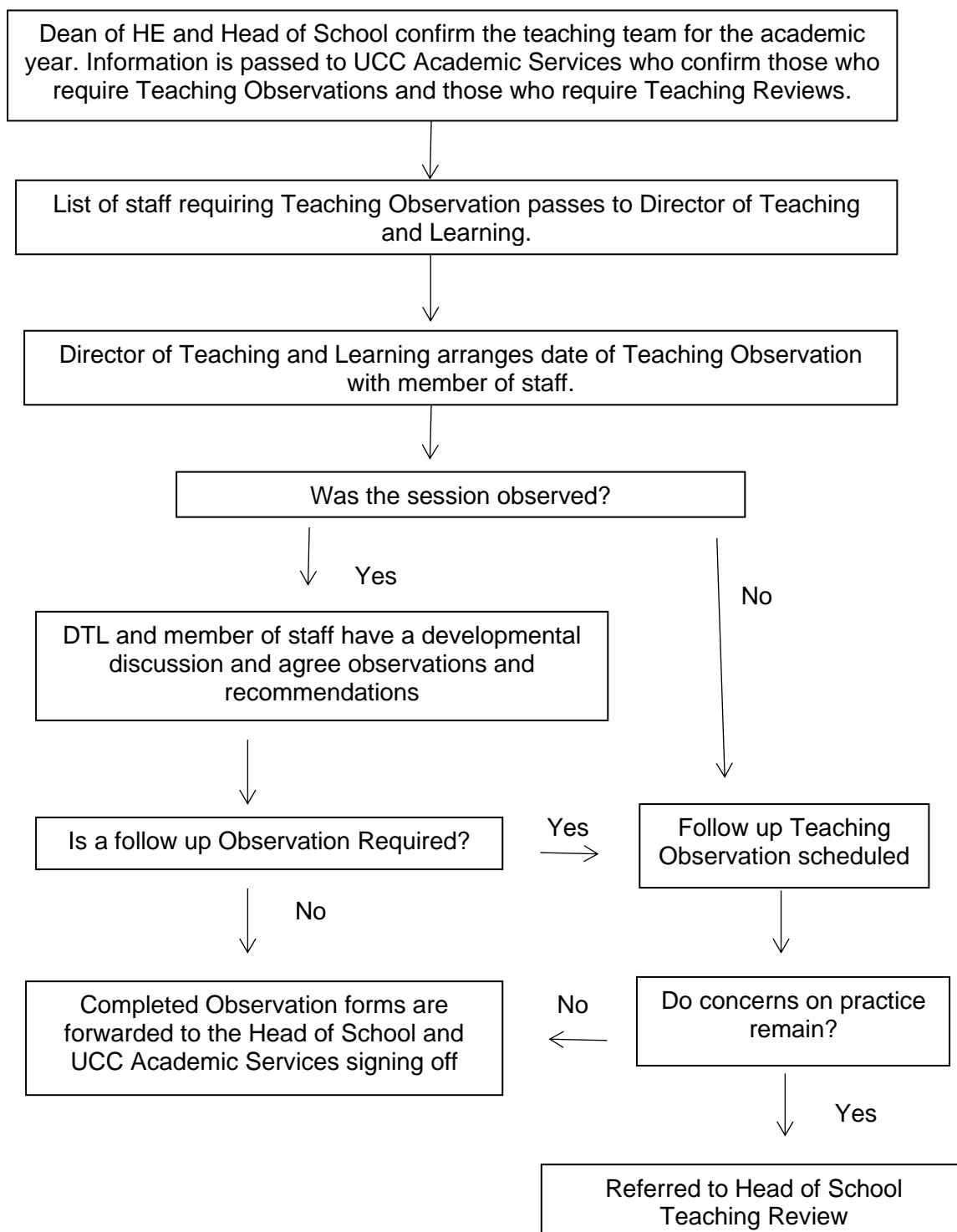
The Director of Teaching Learning and Heads of School are required to identify best practice, which is to be shared across the UCC community, utilising UCC's Learning & Teaching Committee meetings to disseminate such recommendations.

- 4.4 UCC Academic Services will monitor the completion of both Teaching Observations and Teaching Reviews throughout the academic year and provide verbal reports to UCC Learning & Teaching Committee and a verbal headline summary at UCC Academic Board.

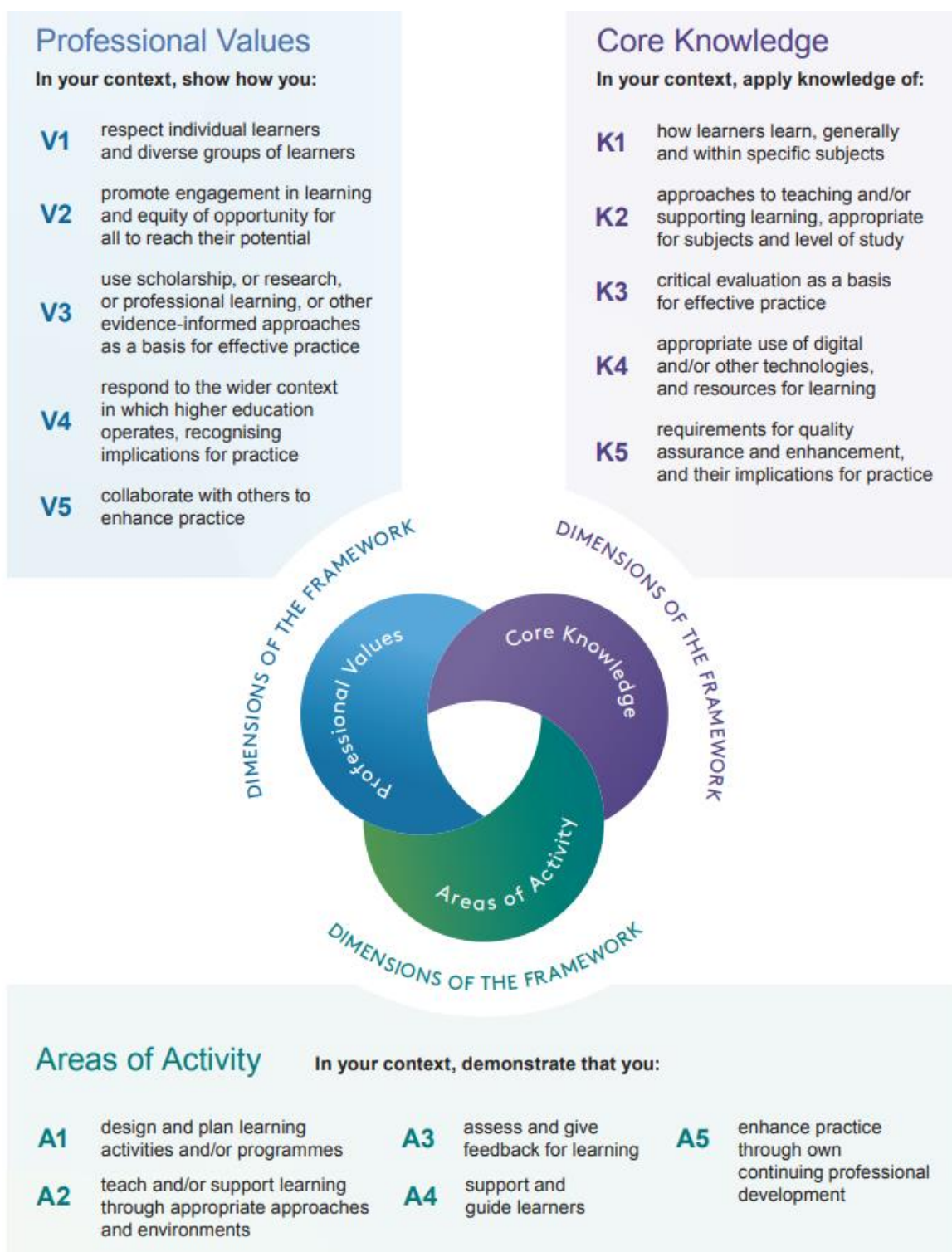
5. The Time Scale

- 5.1 It is recommended that all Teaching Observations and Reviews should take place in Semester One within a time frame agreed by the Head of School in order to cause as minimal disruption as possible to the course teams and the students. Staff who are not observed within Semester One should be brought to the attention of the Dean of Higher Education. Those staff who have not been observed for either a Teaching Observation or a Teaching Review in semester one would then be subject to a Teaching Review by either their Head of School or the Dean of Higher Education before the end of Semester Two. Heads of Schools are responsible for ensuring that all eligible teaching staff are engaged with the process.

Figure 1: Flow chart to demonstrate the Teaching Observation/Review Process



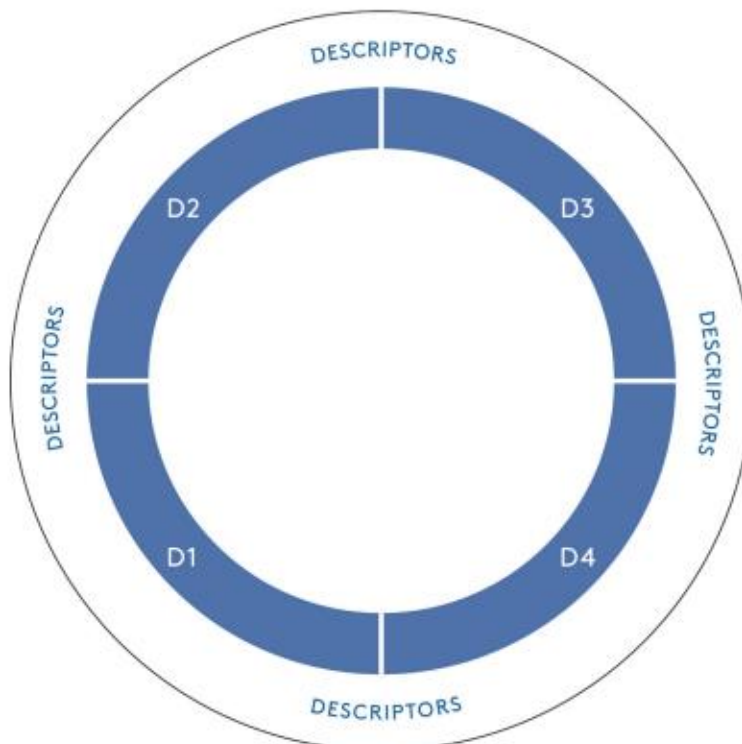
Appendix 1 - Professional Standards Framework



Descriptors

What are Descriptors?

- Four Descriptors, each consist of an introduction and a set of three criteria statements.
- These define the key characteristics of four broad categories of practice. Incorporating the Dimensions, each Descriptor identifies the extent of practice required to meet it and recognises the variety of practice and roles undertaken by professionals who teach and/or support learning.
- **Individuals** use the Descriptors to plan their development and evidence their practice to achieve professional recognition.
- **Institutions** use the Descriptors as a basis for initial and continuing professional development and recognition programmes, to inform career/ progression pathways and support talent development.
- **Professional organisations** use the Descriptors as a basis for activities and recognition frameworks that support the professional development of individuals and institutions.



Descriptor 1

D1 is suitable for individuals whose practice enables them to evidence some Dimensions. Effectiveness of practice in teaching and/or support of learning is demonstrated through evidence of:



**Descriptor 1 aligns with Advance HE
recognition as Associate Fellow.**

Descriptor 2

D2 is suitable for individuals whose practice with learners has breadth and depth, enabling them to evidence all Dimensions. Effectiveness of practice in teaching and/or support of high-quality learning is demonstrated through evidence of:



Descriptor 2 aligns with Advance HE recognition as Fellow.

Appendix 2 - Teaching Observation and Teaching Review Form

TEACHING OBSERVATION AND TEACHING REVIEW FORM				
Observation Type	Teaching Observation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching Review	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academic Year	2023/24			
Lecturer				
Observer				
Date, Time, Room				
Course, Module				
Focus/Content/Aim of session				
How I intend to achieve this				
What I hope to gain from the review				

Points for Discussion					
Observer Points raised in the dialogue					
Observer Insights gained from the dialogue					
Lecturer Insights gained from the dialogue					
What standards have been observed during this session (see: Appendix 1)	Areas of Activity (A1-A5)				
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5
	Core Knowledge (K1-K5)				
	K1	K2	K3	K4	K5
	Professional Values (V1-V5)				
	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5
Session strengths for sharing at L&T forums and committee meetings					
Main action points for Development	1. Specific area to be developed				
	2. Specific area to be developed				
	3. Specific area to be developed				

Signed Observer: _____

Date: _____

Signed Lecturer: _____

Date: _____

When completed please send a copy of this form to both your Head of School and UCC Academic Services