



Observation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy (OTLA)

Policy Statement

This policy applies to all Teaching and Learning and IQA Staff working directly or through other contracting arrangements with Blackburn Gould & Associates Limited (BGA).

BGA are committed to improving the quality of our provision. Our aims are:

- To constantly seek to raise standards and assist learners' academic and personal development, by supporting them in becoming more independent and resilient
- That all staff understand the importance of varied teaching, learning and assessment strategies and how best to implement them in lessons
- To ensure that teaching has a positive impact on our learners, with an ever-increasing percentage of 'Outstanding' learning experiences.

To achieve this BGA will:

- Implement a thorough quality cycle.
- Implement a rigorous self-assessment process.
- Ensure a suitable continuous professional development programme is available to all staff.
- Deliver high quality programmes that comply with the requirements of Awarding Organisations and Ofqual
- Embed effective policies and procedures.
- Performance manages poor quality teaching, learning and assessment.

Purpose of the Policy

The reasons for the structure and implementation of this Policy are to:

- o Provide and ensure consistency, validity and rigour of teaching and impact on learning delivered by BGA, through evidencing effective intent in teaching and learning.
- o Put the learner and learning at the centre of the process
- o Ensure, promote and enhance the quality of learning and IAG experience for all learners

Aims: Observation of teaching, learning and assessment

- o Monitor that effective learning takes place
- o Recognise and share good practice
- o Identify staff development and support needs
- o Underpin BGA self-assessment process and inform the organisation's annual Quality Improvement Plan
- o Encourage and promote constructive professional dialogue and support the development of a culture of continuous improvement.
- o Improve the standards of teaching, learning and assessment.

Why do we need this policy / background information?

The policy commits us to maintain and improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through the processes of continuous improvement and quality assurance. The objective is to embed effective quality processes that are rigorously implemented, in order to develop and maintain a culture of continuous improvement.

The policy supports BGA vision of transformation through skills and knowledge.

BGA is committed to delivering high quality qualifications that meet the requirements of awarding organisations. Internal quality assurance, standardisation and moderation procedures are in place to maintain assessment, consistency and quality across BGA.

Roles and responsibilities

All staff involved in delivering teaching, learning and assessment activities must;

- Plan lessons in order to allow all learners to make sufficient progress
- Track and monitor learner progress and ensure all courses are recorded on BGA agreed system
- Use valid and reliable assessment methods to ensure learners receive regular, relevant and timely feedback on assessed work
- Set and review academic targets that ensure progress

- Communicate and maintain high expectations of all learners, at all times including regular references to predict grades and inform additional support requirements
- Review learner retention, achievement, success and destinations and action accordingly
- Review teaching, learning, resourcing and assessment and action accordingly
- Identify clear strengths, weaknesses and take appropriate actions
- Provide a summary course review at the end of each course
- Provide effective and appropriate teaching, training and support for learners
- Undertake appropriate development and training (CPD)
- Offer flexibility within schemes of learning, to include all learners at all times and to ensure courses fulfil individual needs
- To ensure minimum expectations are met for BGA resource pages
- Follow all learner policies where required
- Ensure learners participate in all elements of the learner feed-back including learner surveys

Working with academic support staff

- Delivery staff should provide academic support staff with the scheme of work in advance of lessons
- Delivery staff should advise the academic support staff of what is required for the learners to progress to the next level
- Regular discussion of learner progress and wellbeing should take place
- Delivery staff should offer academic support staff appropriate guidance on their role within lessons
- Academic support staff should share their in-depth knowledge of the learner being supported, particularly if progress differs significantly across the curriculum
- Be aware of specific support needs
- Ensure effective use of Promonitor where required

Leaders and managers must

- Self-assess their area of provision and contribute to the college self-assessment report.
- Develop and monitor improvement plans for their area and contribute to the whole college improvement plan
- Conduct appraisals with all their staff, ensuring that clear targets are set and progress against targets is measured

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- Establish induction and mentoring arrangements for all new staff or for staff with new responsibilities
- Maintain and review high standards in the curriculum
- Track in-year progress including attendance, retention, achievement and high grades

Quality Department

- Manage the annual quality cycle
- Monitor awarding organisation reports and support curriculum actions where necessary
- Manage the complaints process
- Manage and report on learner/employer survey processes and support action accordingly
- Manage the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Review process
- Take a lead role during external inspections
- Manage the Teaching and Learning Coach Team
- Maintain an up-to-date awareness and understanding of the external landscape in order to contextualise progress and inform improvements
- Identify and adapt external good practice and innovation and share within BGA
- Manage the quality review process and support curriculum interventions where required
- Drive and support improvements in digital learning to aid OTLA
- Ensure a relevant and inspiring continuous professional development programme

Review: 19 August 2023

Date of next review: August 2024

Reviewed by: Joseph Ebe-Arthur

- Lead on the promotion of equality and diversity across BGA Liaison with external agencies (where applicable)
- Awarding Organisations
- Ofsted
- Ofqual
- JCQ
- QAA/OFS
- External / Internal Auditors
- Employers and Employers Advisory Boards
- Local Partnership Boards
- Subcontractors
- Local Authorities

Links to BGA values and other BGA policies

- Business Strategic Plan
- Staff and Learner Codes of Conduct
- Self-Assessment Reports
- BGA policies and associated documentation
- Handbook for OTLA Review
- Improvement Plans

Who needs to understand this policy and how will they know about it?

The following training and awareness will be put in place:

Who? How? - Learners, parents, carers and employers Policy available on BGA website

All management and teaching staff Policy available on BGA website

Business Support staff who interact with learners and employers - Policy available on BGA website

Quality

Each individual observation fits into a larger quality assurance cycle supporting Blackburn Gould's business objectives for excellence in learning. The evidence and judgements from each observation provide feedback and actions for each Assessor/ and/or their support teams as well as building up an evidence profile the learning programme. This profile is recorded in the annual self-assessment report (SAR). Inspectors make judgements about the accuracy and rigour of the SAR when provision is inspected.

Types of observation

Observations can be graded or ungraded. Where observations are graded the grading standards used will be consistent with Education Inspection Framework.

Examples of ungraded observations include:

1. Peer Observation
2. Mentored observation
3. Themed observations/ walkthroughs
4. Assessor requests.

Examples of graded observations include:

- a. Individual observation
- b. Paired observations
- c. At risk intervention observation
- d. Thematic observations
- e. Assessor requests
- f. Follow-up observation (part of observation action plan)

Scope of observation

All learning activities and all staff involved in them are part of the observation process. Learning activities include formal sessions and activities undertaken as part of:

- a. Classroom sessions
- b. Readiness to Learn / O&A activities
- c. On-the-job-training
- d. Review of learners
- e. Assessment of learners

7. Outcomes of observation

Grade	Descriptor	Outcome
Grade 1	Outstanding	Mentor – Good practice exemplar
Grade 2a 2b 2c	Good	As above (with minor actions for improvement)
Grade 3	Requires Improvement	Re-observation within an agreed timescale. Action plan and agreed actions for improvement which may include mentoring, CPD, peer observation, etc, implemented prior to re-observation
Grade 4	Inadequate	As above including specific re-training as appropriate

Where Grade 1 (Outstanding) or Grade 2 (Good) are awarded, the good practice could, with the agreement of the

Where a Requires Improvement Grade 3 is awarded a re-observation within an agreed timescale will take place. **Observers will agree specific actions for improvement with individual teachers through an action plan.** This may include mentoring, CPD, peer observation, which must be implemented prior to re-observation.

When an Inadequate Grade 4 is awarded for an observed session, the same actions will be implemented as Grade 3, including specific training as appropriate. **The observer will complete a detailed action plan with the teacher.** This will include detailed actions for improvement, mentoring and training as required and a further graded observation at an agreed time.

Frequency of observation

All teaching and learning staff will have at least one graded observation per academic year. Some Assessor may be observed more than once a year. New staff will be observed within the probation period following their appointment. The timescale for all re-observations will be included in post observation action plans. Blackburn Gould reserves the right to observe all Assessors and to vary the pattern and timing of observation.

Process

Selection and training of observers

All observers will undertake training in observation skills and feedback skills to enable them to accurately assess and grade the standards of teaching and learning in any session they observe. This training will include:

- Awareness and application of EIF grading standards o SEND, SEMH and EBSD support knowledge

- Skills required to conduct effective observations o Conditions required for effective feedback
- Effectiveness of written feedback o Effectiveness of verbal feedback
- Agreeing and setting clear actions for improvement
- Undertaking effective monitoring of actions within agreed timescales for completion.

All observers will hold appropriate professional qualifications together with substantial teaching and/or management experience.

Before the observation

Teaching and Learning staff may or may not be given notice that they are going to be observed. This might include no-notice observations; external observations by third parties e.g., Ofsted; Class observations within a defined timeframe; observations on a specific date; or observations on an agreed date. Observers will ensure that Assessors have a copy of the OTLA Protocol as well as the most up to date OTLA grading descriptors and are clear about the purpose and management of the observation and the feedback process. Observers will ask teachers to:

- Inform and prepare their learners about the observation where appropriate (learners should be clear what the observation is for and aware that they are not being judged in any way).
- Ensure that the Classroom File is available on the day and that the observer has a copy of the scheme of work and/or session plan (and any other relevant documentation to support the observation). Example Records which should be made available include:
 - register/record of attendance
 - curriculum and programme outline/scheme of work
 - session plan/previous session plans
 - records of learner progress
 - group/individual profile
 - access to learners' portfolios/work
 - evidence of individualised target setting for learners
 - Agreed date and time of the feedback session
 - o Provide a place for the observer to sit in the session which is as unobtrusive as possible but allows them to see what is happening clearly.

During the observation

To undertake a successful observation, the observer will:

Stay for a minimum time of 20 minutes to maximum time of 40 minutes to ensure that they have gathered sufficient and valid evidence to support their judgements. This is usually a consecutive period of time. Some observers, however, might choose to vary this, by observing, for example, both the beginning and end of the session. The time spent in the session is not the most important factor; effective use of time is the most important element.

Get involved in the session whilst remaining detached enough so as not to disrupt the flow of the session and learning.

Review the session documentation to assess the quality and appropriateness of the session content. Does the session fit well into the scheme of work, have activities and resources been developed and/or amended

to meet different learner needs etc.

Assess that teaching support staff briefed and deployed effectively to ensure that all learners are able to

After the observation: Feedback and actions for improvement

To be effective, the feedback meeting should be held as soon as possible but no later than one week following the observed session. The feedback meeting will normally last no more than half an hour. The purposes of the feedback session are:

- To support colleagues in their professional practice
- To provide constructive feedback on the observed session
- To engage in a professional dialogue and share teaching and learning strategies
- To identify what worked well and why and what worked less well and why
- To match the strengths and areas for improvement to agreed teaching and learning standards and grade (if appropriate) these using the common grading descriptors
- To agree actions which will maintain or improve the standards of teaching and learning using an action plan set to clear timescales.
- Agree a date and time to communicate to agreed monitor actions

During the feedback session:

- The observer will go through their evidence and judgements recorded on the observation evidence form o The Assessor needs to be prepared to discuss what happened in the session – try not to be defensive
- The assessor needs to be prepared to discuss strategies for development and improvement
- The assessor will be asked to agree actions to maintain or improve the standards of teaching and learning o The Assessor will need to sign and complete any appropriate documentation relating to the observation Process

Managing effective developmental feedback

Feedback helps us to become more aware of what we are doing and how others view it. To be helpful, it needs to be given in a direct and supportive way. All comments should be constructive and should be supported by clear evidence examples. Feedback following a session observation should enable assessors to acknowledge their strengths and focus on any areas which require development and improvement.

Feedback should be given as soon as possible after the observation, in a situation of privacy and with no interruptions. Both parties should be aware of the time available for the feedback in advance of the meeting.

At the beginning of the feedback, it is helpful to restate the purpose and structure of the meeting and, where necessary, to check or clarify any points from the session. (This is often a good way to immediately involve the Teacher in the conversation. Remember, monologues have not got a good success rate in changing practice!)

It is important to highlight when the feedback is beginning. There is more than one way to structure the feedback. The observer should focus on how effective the session was in enabling learning to take place. At the end of the feedback, the observer should re-cap the main points and check that the Teacher has heard and understood the key messages.

For feedback to be successful, the assessor needs to own and agree the key findings. For this to happen there should be a professional dialogue. Remember, you are not inspectors, your role is to work with your colleagues to support them to improve the quality of the learning experience for every learner in the organisation. To do this you need to take them with you. This does not mean fudging the evidence in any way, but it does mean that you need to think about how you are going to present your findings.

Key points in giving feedback

Focus on the key messages – strengths and areas for improvement – and give the amount of information or comment that the individual can take in at one time. If you say everything in minute detail, you may overload the Teacher so that he or she remembers nothing.

Use examples/models of good practice which are available in the curriculum area or in the service. Use questions and prompts to encourage reflection and discussion.

Ensure that the language you use reflects the grade and the judgements made in the session. I.e. don't start the feedback with, "That was a really good session," when you know that you have graded it as requires improvement.

Focus on the behaviour, not the person: e.g. 'The late start of the session sets a bad example to the learners' not 'You're always late, don't you possess an alarm clock?'

Focus on **what you've seen or heard**, not on what you guess are the reasons for it: e.g. 'The session plan did not record any learning objectives or outcomes so there was no way of gauging learner progress or attainment', **not** 'I know you don't like paperwork or see the point of it, but you can't just keep ignoring it.'

Be specific rather than generalising. If you find yourself wanting to say, 'You always ...' or 'You never check:

a) Do I have examples to discuss?

b) Have I really never seen her or him do this – or anything! – right?

Share ideas and information rather than giving prescriptive advice: e.g. 'I wondered if ...'; 'I thought ...' 'I felt ...' (not 'You ought ...') The exception to this is when you observe anything which is unsafe or unprofessional or which in any way undermines the personal or academic good of the learner/s. The response in these circumstances is always, 'You must/must not...'

Listen closely to the responses from the Teacher: this is a professional dialogue; you need to hear and acknowledge the Teacher's viewpoint and perspective. This can often lead to really effective professional sharing. However, you also need to use your professional judgement to gauge and respond to what the Teacher has to say i.e., there is usually some defensiveness displayed when you are pointing out areas for improvement and you will need to respond to and manage this appropriately. Review/recap key points. Ensure that feedback leads to agreed **actions for improvement**

Giving difficult feedback

It can be tempting to avoid giving difficult messages but ultimately, if you do not provide this feedback who will? It is your responsibility as an observer to judge the session fairly and objectively, supporting your judgements with clear examples of practice. If difficult messages have to be shared you should:

- Be direct and avoid any ambiguities
- Do not be apologetic about what you have to say
- Focus on the impact on the learning
- Use examples to support your findings
- Listen to what the Teacher has to say and acknowledge their viewpoint even if you do not agree with it
- Keep calm; if challenged, re-iterate the key issues and the evidence underpinning them
- Try to find solutions – identify achievable targets

Checking Feedback

Feedback should be checked to ensure that it has been received and understood. You can do this by:

- Summarising the feedback at intervals and as you finish

- Actively encouraging comment and questions
- Checking whether the Teacher has heard the positive feedback as well as the negative, and whether or not they accept and can own it
- Ensuring that the written pro-forma is an accurate record of the strengths and areas for improvement shared and discussed in the feedback session

Agreeing Actions

When you have shared the evidence and grade, you need to agree subsequent action to improve performance. If the feedback stops at this point, there is no guarantee that any change of behaviour, performance, knowledge or skill will result:

- Be realistic: don't set a target which you know will not be achieved.
- Set smart targets – don't procrastinate remember this is about raising standards. Be direct but supportive.
- Be aware of current staff development training opportunities available.
- Link targets to regular keeping in touch meetings to offer support and monitor performance; review target within performance management meetings.
- Use examples and models of good practice to support agreed actions where appropriate
- Ensure that the Teacher receives the OTL evaluation form and sends this back to the appropriate manager
- Observer completes the observation evidence record and ensures that the Teacher receives a copy of this

Receiving Feedback

- Listen carefully – take time to think so that you can formulate your responses
- Ask for examples: remember that all observation judgements must be evidence based
- Try not to be immediately defensive, if you are, you might not hear what is actually being said: this is not a judgement on your overall professional practice and competence, the discussion is about one observed session
- Check what is actually being said: if need be ask for it to be repeated and don't be afraid to ask for clarification
- Use the observation and the feedback as a development opportunity: remember, constructive, focused feedback is one of the surest and fastest ways of improving professional practice

Feedback Summary

Timing: it is helpful to give feedback as soon as possible after the observation while it is fresh in both your minds. BUT if the Teacher is agitated or upset, hold it until they can hear it clearly. Always give them the opportunity to discuss your feedback.

Being direct: it can be difficult sometimes to share the areas for improvement with a colleague. It is confusing, though, if you drop hints or generalisations, or leave with a general encouragement to 'do better' without describing precisely what they might have to do to be better.

Congruence: Ensure that language/grade descriptors used match the observation judgements and grades (Your written and verbal evidence should match).

Give feedback about things the person can do something about e.g. 'I wondered if it would help to give yourself time to arrive before the session and get ready calmly, so you help set a controlled atmosphere ... (not 'Don't be such a worrier!').

You might need help, support or encouragement yourself. If you are uncomfortable in advance with giving the feedback, ask to be shadowed in the session by a colleague. Don't be afraid to seek support yourself.

And finally, remember that none of this is personal; it is about providing the best quality teaching and learning experience for every learner in your organization.

Appeals Procedure

It is hoped that the clear evidence guidelines and the transparency of the observation of teaching and learning process will eliminate situations which necessitate an appeals procedure. Following a teaching and learning observation, the Assessor will receive both verbal and written feedback. If the Assessor disagrees with any points made by the observer or with any aspect of the observation process, the Assessor and observer should try to resolve the differences through discussion. If this does not resolve the situation, then the Assessor should contact the Quality Manager. This may result in a re-observation with a different observer but with the same group of learners, or with a different group of learners.

Moderation of Observation Evidence and Judgements

The Quality Team will undertake standardisation and moderation activities to ensure the rigour, consistency and validity of observation evidence, judgements and grades. This might include:

- paired observations
- observer training sessions o observer team meetings
- formal sampling of evidence forms

The Quality team will scrutinise the evidence recorded on observation forms against the following criteria:

- Are all the data sections complete?
- Is there a good practice section?
- Is the evidence sufficient to support the judgements and grade? Is there sufficient evidence about learning progress?
- Are examples used to support judgements?
- Is the evidence consistent with the grade? Are there any contradictions? o Does the 'narrative' match the key strengths and areas for improvement? o Is there a summary?
- Does this start with a clear judgment on the session?
- Are clear actions to maintain or improve the quality of teaching and learning recorded?
- The monitoring procedures for following up and monitoring of the completion of action plans
- Moderation of evidence confirms or amends the judgements and grades awarded. This means that grades can stay the same or be changed – higher or lower - following a Quality team moderation panel. This formal examination of observation evidence is a key part of the quality improvement strategy.
