



Teaching Observation Policy

Version 5

Approved by the Board of Governors

Last Amendment: September 2024

This policy sets out the London School of Science and Technology (LSST)'s commitment to continually enhancing the standards of teaching and learning, through structured observation of teaching and learning practices in the School.

It has been developed with due regard for *England's Regulatory Framework for Higher Education* and need for institutions offering higher education to ensure that the academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.



Document Information

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*The document owner is responsible for maintaining and updating the content of this document and ensuring that it reflects current practice at the School.

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1. Policy Statement

- 1.1. The London School of Science and Technology (LSST) implements teaching observation as a key method to maintain and enhance the quality of the student learning experience, ensuring excellence in teaching and learning in accordance with the expectations set by the Office for Students (OfS), Ofsted, and Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB).
- 1.2. Structured observation and feedback forms part of an ongoing appraisal process for the School's academic staff, enabling good practice to be identified, acknowledged and shared, and for concerns to be effectively addressed.
- 1.3. The teaching observation process will be inclusive, transparent, and aligned with the LSST's formal institutional frameworks and performance management systems, with a primary focus on improving the learner experience.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy deals with two different types of teaching observations undertaken by the School:
 - a. Graded lesson observation – usually undertaken during the autumn term; and
 - b. Peer observation – usually undertaken during the spring term.
- 2.2. In the case of both 2.1 a. and b., teaching sessions under observation might be large groups, small groups, one-to-one tutorial sessions, seminars or lectures. Observation may also be made of discussions on assessment practices or plans for other innovations. These procedures will apply to both face-to-face and online teaching activities.

3. Graded Lesson Observations

- 3.1. The purpose of graded lesson observations is to provide academic staff and academic support tutors with the means to critically reflect on their approach to teaching and fostering learning, with reference to feedback and guidance from a trained and experienced observer.
- 3.2. Graded lesson observations contribute towards the teaching staff's Annual Appraisal. These observations are conducted by two senior academic staff (for example, Dean) or a senior member of academic staff and an external observer.
- 3.3. Graded lesson observations are one of the ways in which the School seeks to maintain quality and standards in teaching aligned to national benchmark standards.



Graded observations also provide an important development opportunity, enabling teaching staff to engage in critical dialogue and reflection on their practical teaching skills with senior academics.

- 3.4. In the event that the observation identifies an area or areas of particular concern, the Campus Dean (along with the Dean of Learning and Teaching, if appropriate) will work together to identify training needs for the colleague concerned, agree developmental actions and produce an action plan over an agreed period of time.

Procedural Approach:

- 3.5. Graded teaching observation pre-planning will usually involve:
 - A pre-meeting; – including a consideration of the learning environment and level of the learning experience,
 - The teaching session observation itself; and
 - A debrief meeting.
- 3.6. The Lesson Plan must be submitted to the observer at least 24 hours prior to the observation; it is the observer's responsibility to obtain this form from the observee.
- 3.7. The duration of the Graded Observation should be no less than 30 minutes. The session will conclude with a feedback session between the observer and observee, who will discuss and agree on matters relating to strengths and areas of development.

Organisation and timetabling:

- 3.8. At the start of the academic year the Campus Dean confirms the timetable of expected observations for the semester and sets deadlines for completion.
- 3.9. Once observations have taken place, both observers will complete the Learning and Teaching Observation form for each Graded observation. The completed forms are then forwarded to the Quality Office for archiving.
- 3.10. Both observers complete the observation outcomes report per campus, which is to be shared across the School, utilising Learning & Teaching Forums meetings to disseminate any good practices and recommendations.

4. Peer Observation



- 4.1. Peer review encourages colleagues review and offer feedback on aspects of each other's teaching approach. For this reason, while a record that the observation has occurred will need to be signed by staff members involved, it is independent of any process related to appraisal and promotion.
- 4.2. Staff are encouraged to engage with the process as a free and frank exchange of ideas with the aim of developing and exchanging excellent and differentiated learning experiences. Peer review is underpinned by the principles of reflective practice, which is seen as central to the role of being a higher education practitioner.

Procedural Approach:

- 4.3. Each academic year, staff members will engage in peer observation in accordance with LSST's guidelines. Staff will be paired-up according to 'subject clusters'.
- 4.4. Pairs are encouraged to consult each other prior to the peer observation session in order to gain an understanding of each other's work, the nature of the student groups involved, and the specific aims of their course.
- 4.5. The lesson plan must be submitted to the observer at least 24 hours prior to the observation, it is the observer's responsibility to obtain this from the observee.
- 4.6. The duration of the observation should be no less than 30 minutes. The session will conclude with a feedback session between the observer and the observee, who will discuss and agree on matters relating to strengths and areas of development.
- 4.7. Observers may use a standard form for the notation of their observations and to prompt consideration of key pedagogic issues.
- 4.8. Once all observations have been carried out, the pair is again encouraged to meet to share their experiences and discuss collectively observed strengths for sharing best practices. The reviewer and reviewee should collectively identify and agree on the aspects of good practice and developmental needs identified through the review as these are fed back to the individual managing the process.
- 4.9. Observers must send the relevant form with the notes of the observation to the Campus Dean by the deadline specified at the start of the process. A copy of the Lesson Plan must be attached to the form.
- 4.10. A summary of the observations per pair, and per campus will be prepared by the Campus Dean, drawing together the notes made during the observations.
- 4.11. All documentation (individual peer observations, lesson plans and campus reports) must be returned to the Quality Office.

- 4.12. Outcomes will be passed, presented and discussed at Learning and Teaching Forum.

5. Dissemination

- 5.1. The summary of teaching observations (both graded lesson observations and peer observations) will be presented by the Campus Dean in a concise report to be tabled at the next available Learning and Teaching Forum, at which a debriefing will be held to consider areas of concern and instances of good practice, in order to inform teaching and learning at a strategic-level.
- 5.2. Following consideration of the reports the Learning and Teaching Forum will recommend appropriate subsequent actions such as:
- The creation of good practice guides for dissemination internally and/or externally,
 - Scheduling specific events for staff briefing days,
 - Peer reference to other institutions.

6. Continuing Professional Development

- 6.1. Teaching staff should log all teaching observation activities as Continuing Professional Development.

7. Review and Update this Policy

- 7.1. This Policy will be periodically reviewed by the Principal to ensure it remains fit for purpose and consistent with awarding body and regulatory requirements. Changes to this policy will be reviewed by the Executive Committee and ratified by the School's Board of Governors.



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