

Tutor Guidance: Drop-ins and follow up meetings 2021

We are aware that the current situation, and the rapid shift to online learning, has put a lot of pressure on our tutors. We do not want to add to this pressure. On the other hand we need to see how online learning is developing and what support tutors need.

As a result, we will be dropping in on as many online classes as we can this year.

The aim is to gather a holistic understanding of the quality of online learning within each department, or subsection, to understand how learners are experiencing learning online, what is going well and where tutors need more support.

Carrying out drop ins

We worked hard last year on changing our approach to observations. We moved to class visits where we only looked at learners and learning, wondering and 'being curious' – and letting go of our own ideas about how a class should be taught.

Drop ins last only 10 - 15 mins. We are looking for themes across provision; rather than at individual classes. Ideally we should talk to some learners too - eg by giving students a link to meet after class, or a follow up email or questionnaire.

Giving individual feedback following drop ins.

Individual feedback is not normally given following a drop in. It is not possible to give a fully informed response after only 10 - 15 mins in a class.

New tutors may be the exception. It may be appropriate to give you individual feedback if it is clear some handy tips would be helpful.

Follow up meetings

Last year, drop ins were followed up by peer collaborative meetings. However, last term many departments had simple one-off open meetings with their tutors which had a lot of success. In these meetings, tutors gave each other a lot of ideas and tips to support each other in the move to online teaching. These meetings are less committing but can be very useful sources of support. So there are three possibilities for follow up and your department will let you know which one they will use.

a) Open 'Tutor Conversation Meetings'

Tutors are invited to open online meetings over the period to share their experience and reflect on and develop their practice together. Participants would be paid £25 a meeting.

The department may also find it useful to set up an online forum for teachers to collaborate between meetings. Google Classroom has this facility.

b) Tutor Collaborative Projects

We still have the option of doing a more structured project following drop ins. This can

include peer meetings at the start and end of the project, experimenting by tutors with feedback from students, and a tutor evaluation at the end. It may or may not include a second drop in by the department, or a peer visit by another member of the project. Tutors will need to include an evaluation at the end. Payment would be £150 a tutor – this can be adjusted upwards if tutors are involved in more activity eg peer visiting.

What is the structure for peer meetings?

The idea of the peer meetings is to promote discussion, respond to tutors' interests and concerns and share ideas on how online learning can develop. The facilitator will contribute any comments on strengths and issues they have noticed as part of the discussion.

Will there be a follow up full class visit?

In this academic year it is unlikely, unless you are on probation and coming to the end of your probation period. It might also be that a visitor is concerned about the learning during a drop in - but a visit of 10 – 15 mins is too short to really understand a class. They may ask to do a longer visit to check if more support is needed.

Details on full class visits are in a separate folder on the Staff Access page (Teacher Resources section).