

Teaching and learning issues

Continuing professional development through tutor collaboration and professional discussion

For many years, City Lit has observed and graded lessons as a means of supporting and developing tutors and maintaining quality.

We are now moving to a new approach to professional support and development. This will include:

- short but more regular 'drop ins' and collaborative tutor discussion.
- longer visits to some classes by an experienced colleague, with a professional discussion before and afterwards.



Drop ins and tutor collaborative meetings.

Departments will select tutors on a rotating basis to be involved in this continuing professional development activity.

An experienced colleague will do a series of

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Reminder about graded observations - the ups and downs

For those of you who have received graded lesson observations in the past, this is a reminder of the ups and downs of the old system, based on our 2018 survey of all our tutors.

There were considerable positives. Many tutors reported that their observers were very supportive and helpful. They liked having someone appreciate what they did, and the contact with their departments. A few of you liked the grade as you felt it was a guide to the quality of your teaching.

Nevertheless most of you felt the grades were less helpful. Some key reasons were:

Having a graded observation was a stressful process for many - particularly if people didn't achieve a good grade

Many tutors felt they only listened to the grade and weren't taking in the feedback.

Tutors often felt they had to do something 'special' for a graded observation. They were also wary of risking anything untested or new, or to use a visit for support with a problem.

It is hard to make a judgement and give an accurate grade based on a 40 minute observation - there is so much the observer doesn't see. (Research has confirmed this.)

Some of you said you would really like to be able to discuss issues with teaching and learning with colleagues outside a formal observation.

drop-ins to classes. They will be reflecting on how students are learning and noting any queries across a series of classes. They will be looking for themes that they feel warrant discussion.



Tutors involved will then be invited to at least two meetings and to participate in an online forum. These will give people an opportunity to use their experience to reflect on and develop their practice. This can be about issues raised by tutors themselves, or on a theme identified in class visits.

For example, if tutors are concerned not all

learners are participating in whole group discussion - and some are missing the chance to benefit from this - the group could share ideas and consider new ways to increase participation.

As part of the process, tutors will commit themselves to experimenting in their classes, selecting from the ideas raised in the group and on the tutor forum. In follow up meetings they will share how this has gone and build new ideas/refinements. They will also ask for feedback from learners when they try out a new approach to gain their perspective.

The department will do another series of drop ins to support the changes. The visits will not be 'observations', but a way of giving a different 'lens' (see page 3) to support the tutor.

We hope you will find these collaborative projects useful and inspiring.

Everyone who actively participates in all parts of the process will receive a small payment of £150.

The principles behind our new approach to tutor development

The focus on visits to classes should be the quality of *learning* rather than what the tutor does or doesn't do

No one teaching method is the right method automatically. It depends the students' needs and the tutor's style. What is key is if learners learn, progress and enjoy learning. And it is very easy for an observer to make judgements based on what *they* would do.

The quality of learning and the progress of learners also needs to be considered over time - which is very difficult in a one off visit.

Fundamental is a belief that tutors develop most through sharing ideas, experiences and their own practice. Teaching is an art - a complex skill that develops with experience, but for which there are few simple 'answers'. Each group, subject and level presents new challenges. We develop best through reflecting and sharing with other teachers.

Finally, in order to continually develop people need to take risks and try out new things. It can take several go's to get things right - this always feels risky and is best done with support of colleagues.



Longer class visits

We will still carry out longer class visits when these seem more appropriate. For example, all new tutors will receive an advisory visit.

You can also *ask* for a visit if you are concerned about any aspect of your class and would like some support.

For a longer class visit, you will have a discussion with your visitor beforehand - by email, telephone or face to face - and a one to one discussion afterwards. This will be a chance to reflect on learning in this class and across your course, and to reflect on any adjustments that might be useful.

We will continue to have a policy of mentoring support and revisiting if learning is not being sufficiently successful in a class. You will find our 'Procedures for tutors in need of support' under Teacher Resources on www.citylit.ac.uk/staff-access

Peer Visits

A very valuable way to reflect on and develop your teaching is to visit another tutor in the same subject area and compare notes.

The City Lit is very keen to encourage this and will make a small payment to each tutor - visitor and visited - for completing a peer visit. This includes a peer discussion afterwards, and a report by the visitor reflecting on what they have learned.

Visits can be useful for extending teaching ideas, learning new techniques, or building confidence to teach at a new level in your subject

Some comments from those involved in peer visiting:

What did you like/learn/want to steal from the visit?

Everything! I have learnt a very useful set of design exercises that help (students) develop innovative ideas..I used the exercises with my advanced students and they really enjoyed it! (Peer visitor)

The tutors who were visited were very happy to

discuss the lessons afterwards and had a sense of satisfaction at being able to encourage upcoming tutors. (Programme Coordinator)

If you would like to be involved in peer visiting, contact your department.

Thinking about your teaching - a bit of theory.

Working with a class of adult learners is hard. Our attention is focussed



on what WE are doing in what order and how, and so it is difficult to observe the students and reflect. Yet reflective practice has been a primary objective of teaching and helping learners learn for many years. Of course we can think about the class later on, but if our perceptions have been focussed on what we were doing and not how our students were learning, then our reflection will also be limited to that perspective.

Stephen Brookfield in the mid-nineties suggested we should try to use a 4 lens approach:

- Our own thoughts and feelings
- The learners' experience
- Ideas and experience sharing from colleagues
- A good grounding in the theory of learning.

3 of the above 4 can be achieved and later discussed when a colleague 'drops in' or visits your class. This visitor is not busy like you, and so can notice things like student attention span, an 'eureka' learning breakthrough, moments of confusion etc. As an experienced colleague, they also have their own perceptions and experience. And you will additionally have *learners'* perspectives on their own learning.

So in meetings afterwards you can together look at 3 of Brookfield's lenses and use them as a basis for developing practice.

And then of course, if you catch the bug, you could also read Brookfield and other good writers on reflective practice.

TUTOR DEVELOPMENT

Ticket code: **summer2019**

For more information or to book a place, visit:

www.tutordevcitylit.eventbrite.com

<p>Manage your stress and workload</p>	<p>Asking effective questions to improve your students' learning</p>
<p>Gain an insight into the neuroscience of stress and learn effective practical techniques to help you manage work-related stress.</p> <p>Fri 28th Jun, 1.30 - 4 or Tue 9th Jul, 5.30 - 8</p>	<p>Develop your skills and confidence in planning and using questions to maximise opportunities for learning in your classes.</p> <p>Wed 3 Jul: 11.45 - 2.15</p>
<p>Tutor conversations</p>	<p>Google Classroom: make it work for you</p>
<p>Join a group of college tutors to share and learn from each other through informal conversations about working with students with learning difficulties or disabilities.</p> <p>Wed 26 Jun: 10.30 - 12.30</p>	<p>Discover how Google Classroom enhances teaching and learning, brings creativity to courses and helps you engage with students.</p> <p>Beginner/refresher: Fri, 28th Jun: 1.30 - 2.30</p>
<p>Dyslexia/SpLD practical teaching strategies</p>	<p>Supporting students who may not disclose a barrier to learning</p>
<p>Develop your ability to teach students with dyslexia/specific learning difficulties. Explore common features of Dyslexia and evaluate practical strategies to help students learn effectively.</p> <p>Tues 2nd July: 1.15 - 3.45</p>	<p>Gain confidence to have a conversation with learners who don't disclose a LD at enrolment about their learning needs and barriers.</p> <p>Monday, 17th June: 12.30 - 14.30</p>
<p>Mental health awareness and dealing with challenging situations</p>	<p>How to use the classroom AV equipment/StarBoard</p>
<p>This two-part course explores mental health diagnoses, looks at how they may contribute to communication barriers and you will practice techniques to manage classroom situations.</p> <p>Two-part course. Wed 19th AND 26th Jun 5.30—8.30</p>	<p>Learn how you can use the standard AV equipment in classrooms at the main City Lit building - PC, projector, interactive whiteboard (StarBoard) to improve your lessons.</p> <p>Thurs 20th Jun: 12.30 - 2.30</p>