

**Developing Academics for the Future:  
New thinking on teaching observations**

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And finally... to Mayfield Girls, Class of 1976.

## **Dedication**

For my parents, Kathleen and Kenneth Davis.



## **Glossary and terms of reference as used in this project**

Academic	Full-time members of staff who make a strong contribution to teaching and enhancing student achievement and experience in a specific subject, academic discipline or speciality
Appraisal	A performance appraisal by which the job performance of an employee is evaluated. Performance appraisals are a part of career development and consist of yearly reviews of employee performance within organizations.
CIPD	continuing interdisciplinary professional development
CPD	continuing professional development
Critical companion/ critical friend	Helping relationship in which an experienced facilitator (often but not necessarily a colleague) accompanies another on an experiential learning journey using methods of 'high challenge' and 'high support' within a trusting relationship. Used interchangeably throughout
Educational developer	Facilitates the professional development of lecturers, tutors and other staff supporting involved in teaching and learning activities
EIS	School of Engineering and Information Sciences
GTA	Graduate Teaching Assistant
HE	higher education
HEA	Higher Education Academy
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
IPA	Interpretative phenomenological analysis
KIS	Key Information Sets (KIS) are comparable sets of information about full or part-time undergraduate courses and are designed to meet the information needs of prospective students. All KIS information is published on the Unistats website. By 31 October 2013, all higher education institutions will make this information available via a small advert or widget on their course pages. Prospective students can compare all the KIS data for each course with data for other courses on the Unistats website
Learning conversation	A dialogue that takes place between the observer and the observed after the teaching observation
MCQ	multiple choice questions
Module	Degree programmes are divided into courses of study or modules
MUSU	Middlesex University Student Union
New	Refers to any of the former polytechnics, central institutions or colleges of higher

University	education that were awarded university status through the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, as well as colleges that have been granted university status since then
NSS	National Student Survey (NSS) gathers opinions of third year students on the quality of their courses. The purpose of this is to contribute to public accountability, help inform the choices of prospective students and provide data that assists institutions in enhancing the student experience. The first NSS took place in 2005 and is conducted annually
Oasis Plus	Online learning platform which enables students at Middlesex University to access information about their programmes
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills
PG	postgraduate
PG Cert HE	Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education
Probation	All newly appointed members of academic staff should be subject to a probationary period, during which time they should demonstrate their suitability for the post to which they have been recruited as described in the relevant job description. The probationary period is normally one year
Promotion	Lecturers shall progress, through annual increments, to Senior Lecturer In accordance with national agreements. Similarly, Senior Lecturers and Principal Lecturers shall progress, through annual increments, to the top of their grade pay scale in accordance with national agreement
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SEDA	Staff and Educational Developers Association
Semester	Each academic year is divided into two semesters or terms
SLA	Student Learning Assistant
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
SRHE	Society for Research in Higher Education
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
Teaching observation	A member of academic staff observes another member of academic staff teaching an entire/whole session. The teaching session observed could include a large group, small group, one-to-one, tutorial, seminar, lecture, laboratory, workshop or studio-based work
UCLU	University and College Lecturers Union
UK PSF	United Kingdom Professional Standards Framework

## **Abstract**

This project explored how the teaching observation experience informs the professional practice of an educational developer. By researching teaching activity and dialogic interaction within the context of teaching observation feedback, a theoretical framework was developed. I was both subject and researcher and perceived myself as an agent of change who sought to improve her own professional practice. The intention was not to generalize the findings to a larger population, but to explore through contextual description and analysis what was happening in my own organization and how I might improve this.

Ten academics in Engineering and Computing Sciences were observed by me, teaching on three separate occasions over the course of one semester. The post-teaching observation feedback and learning conversations were recorded and analysed with additional data provided by field notes and journal entries that I made as the practitioner researcher.

Teaching observation events provided the context of a safe space where essential conversations could take place, along with a critical exploration of the subjective experience of the participants.

Findings showed a complex and expansive range of teaching activities, revealed by teaching observation and later discussed in learning conversations between each participant and me. The research is strongly grounded in the participants' experiences and highlights the tensions and shortcomings of current teaching observation practices. The findings especially challenge the notion that teaching observations can be used as both an appraisal tool and for developmental purposes.

The paper concludes by suggesting a theoretical framework for effective teaching observation practice.

## **Project summary**

### *Chapter 1: Positioning myself and my work*

This opening chapter describes my current role as an educational developer in a 'new university'. Time spent in the role has been dedicated to providing academic leadership in teaching, learning and assessment, supporting new academics and staff, supporting learning, organizing professional development events and conferences for staff, and making cross-institutional contributions to academic practice. I provide a critical narrative of significant events in my personal and professional life that explains the context and impetus for the undertaking of this practitioner research. By positioning myself in this way I am presenting my credentials as a convincing and credible expert practitioner whose past and present professional practice has had a direct influence on what I wanted to research and why.

### *Chapter 2: Aims, objectives and the literature base*

My aim was to explore how learning conversations following observations of teaching might improve practice. I sought to identify the appropriate skills, knowledge and integrated understanding that would enable me to advise my organization and community of educational developers in higher education on best practice in this area. The specific best practice on which I focused was the discourse with academic staff after observations and how particular ways of giving feedback could make a difference to staff development in a positive way. This research project involved 10 academics from the School of Engineering and Information Sciences receiving personalized, work-based support to focus on their role as 'teachers', reflecting on how they approach teaching and how they experience the feedback discourse with me, post-observation.

I positioned my study in existing knowledge and explored themes that have arisen in my practice. Essentially, the literature review with my professional practice provides the background to and justification for the research undertaken. I identified a gap in the literature: how the teaching discourse plays out from the perspective of observer and observed, together with an analysis of the tensions between appraisal and professional development.

### *Chapter 3: Planning and carrying out my research project*

This chapter deals with methodology. There is a critical discussion of the methodology intrinsic and extrinsic to my project, underpinned by my justification and rationale for these choices. Outlining my considerations and influences will show how this particular research design allowed me effectively to gather, analyse and evaluate relevant data.

#### *Chapter 4: Analysis of data*

This chapter presents how the data from the various sources were gathered and analysed, and how the detailed observational notes, learning conversations and journal entries made the transition into a framework. My research generated a large amount of data and my priority was to ensure that these were used to address my line of enquiry. This was done using a grounded theory approach. Categories and sub-categories emerged through coding.

#### *Chapter 5: Findings*

I identified six different types of activity while observing the participants teaching. These were: delivering content; assessment and evaluation; promoting student engagement; managing learning spaces; interpersonal and communication skills; and painting a bigger picture. Further categories specific to dialogic interaction and teaching observation feedback emerged that led to a theoretical framework for teaching observation practice and policy.

#### *Chapter 6: Discussion*

In this section I address the following questions: how the data are significant and relevant and to whom; how they compare with existing practice and with research and policy; what they confirm, challenge, supports or disprove; what theories might be developed; what dialogue can now be had now with my community of practice, and what are the implications for my practice and my organization.

#### *Chapter 7: A reflexive account of my personal learning and professional journey*

I have enjoyed and been greatly stimulated by this project because it has made me a more reflexive, effective practitioner who has learnt to appreciate deeply the value of questions, which in turn led me to question custom and practice that I had taken for granted for so long.

#### *Chapter 8: Conclusion and recommendations*

Current teaching observation practice does not optimize the potential of this observation tool. I argue that the research has contributed to an understanding of what teaching observation might be and how it has broadened the parameters for what might be included in teaching activity, providing a framework for future teaching observation and practice in one organization.

# Chapter 1: Positioning myself and my work

## **Positioning self**

My current job, which provides the context and impetus for my research, is as an educational developer in a 'new university' within the higher education sector. I am the senior educational developer leading a team of three individuals.

My own 'student body' consists of staff at Middlesex University and those at collaborative partner institutions, so there is a strong leadership and role-modelling element to my work. My main responsibility is the leadership and delivery of the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PG Cert HE) in both face-to-face and distance education modes. Other key responsibilities include the MA in Higher Education and the teaching and learning modules undertaken by our Middlesex University Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs). The total number of students undertaking these programmes is between 100 and 140 a year. Consequently, I am able to influence the professional development of staff who, as a consequence of participating in my programmes, are able to improve the learning experience, progression and achievements of their own students. Teaching observations are a significant part of the assessment strategy for the PG Cert HE and I carry out on average a hundred teaching observations a year.

In 2008 I was recognized for my excellence in teaching and learning when I was awarded a Teaching Fellowship at Middlesex University. Since then I have been active within the teaching fellows community, making a sustained contribution through networking, teaching observation, workshops, mentoring, organizing conferences and collaborative projects. In addition I lead on activities and projects that focus on evidence-informed approaches to teaching, continued professional learning and best academic practice.

All academic programmes in which I am involved have a reputation for high levels of support and challenge, enabling participants to reflect, grow, innovate and learn. They make accessible and integrate the scholarship of teaching and learning, while respecting the nuances of different subjects and disciplines. I model best practice through my approach to teaching and learning, assessment, feedback, online platforms and my engagement in a number of research projects.

I have ensured that staff at Middlesex University benefit from opportunities to evaluate their professional practice according to subject-specific pedagogies and obtain professional recognition for their teaching through engagement with the United

Kingdom Professional Standards Framework (UK PSF). Part of my current responsibilities involves maintaining such records for my own institution, which is seeking accreditation and awarding status so it can confer such HEA fellowships on our staff in future. I took the lead in mapping continuing professional development programmes in teaching and learning at Middlesex to the UK PSF to secure accreditation. This ensures that staff who successfully complete modules on the PG Cert HE pathway are eligible to become either Associate Members or Fellows of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

This position carries a considerable amount of responsibility as my role is to ensure that new lecturers/university teachers are appropriately prepared to create effective learning environments for their own students. I am accountable to the Senior Executive, Heads of School and Heads of Department in that the content, assessment strategies and support for their staff of the professional development programmes I deliver are appropriate to their staff needs.

I cannot say that I had planned this kind of career but, looking back, I can see the formative influences on my decision to engage in teaching and facilitating others in a variety of contexts. The most formative of these was my own school experience. Failing my 11 Plus exam left me feeling intellectually inadequate and academically unsuccessful from a young age. I was consigned to a single-sex secondary modern school where general levels of academic achievement were low and expectations even lower.

For this reason, I did not consider university as an option until some time after I left school. I recently attended a one-day conference where a keynote speaker implied that the 'failing the 11 Plus exam' story is in danger of becoming a cliché amongst candidates undertaking professional doctorates. Reducing formative experiences to such a stereotype is both disrespectful and misses the point. Such experiences in early life can account for strong motivations to succeed and to attend to injustices, or well-intentioned but poorly informed decisions about assessment in education. Undertaking professional training did start off as a need to prove something, but I came to realize over the years that proving something is not really what it is all about. I love learning. Not everyone enjoys learning the same things and not everyone learns at the same age or at the same speed. People have their own styles of learning and teaching, and I witness this daily in my work. Facilitating learning in others in a non-judgemental way is what I have set out to explore in this doctoral project. It is a particular way of doing and using an assessment tool to facilitate the development of a range of skills in the interactional space between teaching and learning. It is at the core of my own practice.

However, this is also a research project that explores the relationship between theory and practice. In this respect I found what Crotty (1998) has to say on epistemology helpful as a starting point. He claims that epistemology is a matter of being able to answer confidently the following questions in relation to a research position; they are questions also highly relevant to teaching and learning:

- How do we know what we know?
- What do we know?
- What kind of knowledge is possible and how can we ensure that it is adequate and legitimate?

I believe I was searching for the answers to such questions when I decided to study Sociology at university in the early 1980s. During this period I became interested in work that involved helping and caring for people at difficult times in their lives. I undertook voluntary work with various charities including Women's Aid, which offered a refuge for women who had suffered violent abuse at the hands of their partners, and Rape Crisis Centres, which provided a counselling service for women and girls who had been raped and sexually assaulted.

After graduating I trained as a nurse so I might pursue a career that paid me to do what I loved best, communicating with and caring for others. I started on a path that was to characterize many of my career choices and interests, one of opting for newly specialist areas and championing ideas that had not been fully accepted. As a cancer specialist and palliative care nurse I was an early advocate of improving the physical and psychological care of those who were dying, as well as championing support for their families and carers. I felt strongly that the patient narrative should inform nursing practice and that improved communication skills amongst all healthcare personnel was the key to a more positive experience for patients with cancer.

My second career was in teaching nurses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. I learnt that any successful educational experience was dependent on listening to the experiences of others and to acknowledge the needs of all stakeholders when planning academic programmes for practitioners. Stakeholders in this context encompass practitioners, patient and their relatives, the local community, the academy and the healthcare Trusts themselves.

I became the lead facilitator on a clinical leadership programme for senior nurses, midwives and health visitors in local healthcare Trusts who were looking to work in ways that would make them feel more confident and capable. This desire to help



individuals working in difficult circumstances to develop resilience, preserve their own integrity and be more effective is a thread running through my entire professional life. The professional knowledge and capabilities gained while facilitating the clinical leadership programmes were invaluable. By continually stopping and asking myself, 'What is going on here?', 'Are things necessarily what they seem?', 'What are the possible explanations?' and 'Are there any other factors I need to take into consideration?', my reflective responses became finely tuned and used in a purposeful and considered way.

The issue of credibility and authenticity is another key issue that has characterized my working life. Alongside this second career in nurse education ran training in person-centred counselling, which reinforced and strengthened the values I held. This comprised a Diploma in Person-Centred Counselling involving two placements, one as a trainee counsellor for the mental health charity MIND and the other at a university counselling service. Working with clients who were experiencing distress, loss of equilibrium and meaning in their lives allowed me to develop into the kind of teacher I am today. This is a teacher who is non-judgemental and who recognizes and appreciates that others have different styles of teaching and learning, and that any potential solution resides within the individual.

For practical and financial reasons I decided not to practice as a counsellor, but the skills and experience I gained made me more committed to creating therapeutic spaces for others based on the person-centred counselling principles of congruence, authenticity and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1969). It also provided me with the milieu to take a good, long look at myself and how past events and experiences had shaped my current values and way of looking at the world.

While spending time in clinical areas within acute hospital and primary care settings I became engaged with questioning the purpose of educational development and hence the role of the educational developer. This led me to give serious consideration to the theory/practice nexus and the function and impact of constructive feedback and support in often challenging and pressurized environments, where many of the problems are systemic rather than down to individual performance.

I found that engaging in the observing of others' teaching enables a close look at what happens in classrooms and other learning environments to consider the purpose and benefits of 'education', while giving insights into how a subject is taught, the features of curriculum design and possibilities for evaluation. It also provides a context to begin to engage with teachers and academics about their practice. My earliest observations of

teaching, both informal and informal, were in clinical environments such as hospital wards, operating theatres and outpatient clinics.

It can be seen that, because my first career was in nursing, frameworks for categorizing nursing knowledge have influenced my current role as an educational developer. Carper's (1978) framework offers four patterns of knowing: empirical, aesthetic, personal and ethical. At the time, the work by Carper was seen as groundbreaking and challenged the limits of a traditional scientific approach to nursing. In my experience, relying purely on empirical knowledge dehumanizes people and fails to get at the heart of what practice is. It is important to frame the experience in an authentic manner, which is why it is insufficient to rely solely on indicators of impact and performance to measure the outcomes of this project.

Carper was interested in making a claim for the existence of integrative patterns. In any work I have undertaken I have always sought to develop arguments that identify integrative patterns. This approach has impacted on my approach to creating relationships with others and specific educational development practices at Middlesex University that I have led, for instance, to teaching observation and educational partnership modelling.

My epistemological stance also draws on the body of work on the reflective practitioner that Schön (1983) has produced. Argyris and Schön (1974) talk about the contradictions between desirable intent and actual practice: target versus reality.

I have never viewed 'knowledge' as finite and believe that practice should evolve from authentic lived experience, which in turn should inform policy in a transparent manner. In engaging with others, observing and asking questions, I find meaning through the exploration of my own mind and that of others. New knowledge has emerged from examining my own practices, the personal testimony of others and observation, thus creating a different set of meanings.

My knowledge comes from synthesizing the literature, reflecting on my own experiences and those of others, then comparing to find common ground or difference. I believe that new knowledge comes about not only by critical introspection but by initiating actions and an evaluation of those actions, thinking about where the knowledge necessary to fulfil my role and carry out its responsibilities comes from. I have concluded that it comes from many places. It comes from my previous occupations and areas of study including nursing, counselling, medical education and social sciences.

Now, as I find myself in a relatively new academic discipline of teaching and learning in higher education, it is inevitable that I use knowledge from other disciplines to enhance my practice. Thus, what appeals greatly to me is the potential for 'heuristic tools' to offer a structure based on sound principles and evidence-based practice for a particular activity, namely teaching observation, while allowing practitioners to transcend the model in order to respond flexibly.

In the quest for 'new knowledge' I asked myself what I might discover through reflecting on how my current values and beliefs had evolved. I wondered if I might use this understanding to examine the relationship between theory and practice in educational development. I concluded that I could, because it contextualizes my experience and can be imposed on a reflective practice model that is an integral part of an action research design.

I have come to view myself in relation to my social situation, which has led to a questioning approach and exploration of my values and assumptions. I started with a somewhat naïve perspective whereby my practice was non-threatening and low risk. I quickly realized that this was not the case and that the mere intention of taking action is inherently political. I also thought that I knew best, and knew all there was to know about good teaching. Following exposure to an incredible diversity of individuals, subjects and teaching approaches I feel there are fewer absolutes than I had previously envisaged. What is most important is whether the individual is given an opportunity to discuss, reflect on and evaluate their own experience.

Intrinsic to the epistemology of this project is how collegiality, communication and the creation of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) inform the research design. Moreover, there is an invaluable role for internal and external colleagues, peers and those I have observed in providing both support and challenge to my professional practice.

Often what we consider to be 'knowledge' is embedded so deeply that it is necessary to go back to a time when we did not know it. If I go back five years to when I first undertook my current role as an educational developer, I see that my goal was to help individuals acquire observable teaching skills and techniques, usually focusing on the acquisition of a particular teaching method. The majority of the interactions centred on the delivery of workshops and observing one-off incidents of traditional teaching. My approach was largely generic, behavioural and certainly not discipline- or subject-based.

## **Positioning myself within my working environment**

I arrived in educational development in higher education by a path that might initially appear circuitous, but in retrospect allowed for the emergence of significant themes. As stated earlier, my first career was in nursing and specifically in cancer and palliative care, both fields recognizing good communication skills and psychological support as of equal importance with physical care. I developed a reputation for being approachable and enabling, someone who always saw patients as individuals with their own back stories, hopes and dreams. I worked closely and collaboratively with a wide-ranging group of other clinicians and this collegial attitude and desire to learn from others has been an enduring feature of my professional life. Intrinsic to my work is the value of connecting, collaborating and networking with others and recognizing how my own professional learning and performance is continually enhanced by these experiences.

I am employed in a large post-1992 or 'new university' that started life as a polytechnic, and expanded substantially in recent years in terms of student numbers and ambition, with overseas campuses and many collaborative partner organizations at home and at two campuses overseas, in Dubai and Mauritius. The main campus is in Hendon, north London, and offers a broad range of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees through six academic Schools. Its student population is highly diverse, particularly in terms of age, ethnicity and routes into study within higher education.

In 2006 I was appointed Programme Leader for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education. Prior to this I had been employed as a Senior Lecturer in Nursing at the same university. The previous programme leader had left under difficult circumstances, the programme had not enjoyed a good reputation. There had been no formal development for new academic staff at the University for the best part of a year. However, I have always enjoyed a challenge.

Unlike many of my peers in educational development at other universities, I am on an academic rather than a support staff contract, which suggests an aligning of educational development activity with a scholarly approach. However, like many of my peers, I have found the educational development role, expectations and its position within the infrastructure of the organization challenging as they have undergone many iterations and changes in the period I have been in post. These include academic restructuring and redundancies.

A significant and often hidden aspect of my work is about encounters with others and the creation of conditions that allow edifying conversations about teaching and learning

to take place. To be truly edifying, such conversations must simultaneously nurture, support, challenge and encourage (Maguire and Gibbs, 2011).

I have never viewed 'knowledge' as finite and believe that practice should evolve from authentic lived experience, which should in turn inform policy in a transparent manner. I know, based on my recent experience, that institutional change focusing on teaching and learning does not occur simply because a top-down approach is imposed under the assumption that the initiative is appropriate and beneficial to all.

These are challenging and, for many academics, turbulent times to work in higher education as staff must face competing pressures, increasing workloads, greater accountability and responsibility daily, together with an erosion of academic autonomy. I fully acknowledge that my position is someone concerned at the direction of many of these changes and, in particular, some of those which have taken place at my own organization. As a researcher it is important to be transparent about how my professional values and choices have informed this doctorate, and as an educational developer I see at first hand the effect these have had on the wellbeing of others. There is a tension between organizational goals and individual needs and I should like to suggest how this might be managed within the changing landscape of higher education.

Undertaking a professional doctorate has given me the opportunity to design a research enquiry based on my professional work and to document the transformative learning and understanding to come out of it. This research-led learning journey begins by focusing on significant events in my personal and professional life, exploring my own values and how I arrived in this role with the views and motivations I have. It has also given me an insight into how my professional identity and core values have developed over time.

My motivation was that I wanted to explore alternative approaches to existing practice that appeared, not just to me but to many others who were similarly affected, to be limited in both scope and purpose. My practice highlighted areas of what I was delivering in accordance with University directives that could be improved upon. I came to understand quite clearly that it was within the remit of the responsibilities of my role to challenge a status quo that I believed was not designed and operationalized for the maximum benefit of staff development. It was a journey that has led me to advocate the significant benefits of partnership models in educational development.

One of the golden threads essential to the forward direction of travel has been the continual exploration and broadening of my own practice, which is an integral part of

my action research approach. An example of this change of direction was the transition from my role as 'expert' to 'co-collaborator', an indication that the participants in the study set the agenda and also the direction of travel.

In my early years as an educational developer it is true to say that there was a fair amount of trial and error but, importantly, the participants on the programmes helped me to identify the best way forward. This period of analysis, synthesis and evaluation informed my professional knowledge about the conditions under which these essential conversations might take place.

There was no doubt in my mind when I evaluated the impact of this experience that success lies in developing listening skills and the ability to give honest and constructive feedback to colleagues, as well as to receive it.

I became the 'critical friend' that I had never had, yet would have so benefitted from in my early development as a ward sister, clinical nurse specialist, nurse teacher and academic. I learnt that professionals have the potential and desire for profound change, provided there is a synergy between what is offered and what is needed.

What I recognized about myself at that point was that I became a practitioner who refused to take the easy way out. When things did not work, I wanted to know why and what I could do differently to make it work. I learnt resilience and came to welcome those times when things did not go according to plan, as this would often provide the richest learning. Tight (2007) writes of the paucity of higher education research on the everyday details of academic experience and, in particular, accounts that reflect on reflection. I wholeheartedly support his claim for a more honest and lived higher education literature.

Without a shadow of a doubt, the main theme of my professional learning to date has been the power of effective feedback as a vehicle to engage others and improve performance, laying the way for powerful and satisfying dialogic interaction. What became apparent was the recognition that it was only by changing the way I interpreted and viewed experiences that I was able to achieve a more highly developed and effective self. An enormous growing area for me was learning to define and focus on my 'area of influence', which was raising the profile of teaching and learning within the University through forming scholarly yet therapeutic relationships with others.

I learnt that my preferences were for effecting change in individuals who had reasonable levels of experience, influence and professional maturity. I developed close relationships based on mutual respect and openness with many academics that enhanced both our professional learning and practice.

It is important to state at the onset that the success of the project does not rest solely on implementing strategic change on a wide scale, but rather outcomes focusing on understanding, thinking about and implementing new approaches to educational development in one organization.

Observation of teaching is an integral and significant part of my professional role and responsibility. It is included within the formative and summative assessment strategy for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education. On the basis of my experience and growing credibility in the eyes of those I observed, I found myself being asked to carry out teaching observations of academic staff for the purpose of probation, promotion and performance management. I was also an external assessor of teaching practice for two external organizations. Never have I tired of it; in fact, its appeal and my interest in its nuances and potential have increased over time. The knowledge gained has shaped my views of teaching in higher education and the potential for developing the educational development role.

This is not to say that the process has been without a number of challenges, not least the historical antecedents surrounding teaching observations, regularly making it viewed as a flawed paper exercise that cannot be uncoupled from benchmarking and standard setting. Those I observed could at times be defensive, resisting taking ownership for the process and viewing the process as symbolizing jumping through hoops. At times I witnessed poor practice that left me in a dilemma in terms of how I should respond, whether as whistle-blower or critical friend. I found it disappointing when academic staff, having received feedback from me on their teaching, appeared either unwilling or unable to adapt their practices accordingly to create a more effective learning environment for their students. However, that is a point on which I have reflected deeply and asked myself why it matters so much and not to take it so personally. Surely, I can only be responsible for my own practices and decision making—not for that of others, which takes us back to Covey (1989) and his advice to focus our energies on our ‘circle of influence’.

I learnt much about myself and my professional practices as an educational developer using reflective enquiry as critical interrogation. Much of this learning has been affirming and stimulating, but it has also been challenging, surprising, painful and humbling.

Teaching observation involves staff inviting me to observe their choice of teaching session for approximately an hour, with arrangements to meet afterwards to discuss the experience. I undertook observations of academic staff teaching a range of

disciplines and subjects at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The setting and context varied ranging from seminar, lecture, lab, studio, workshop, clinical environment, tutorial and online teaching. The insights gained began to shape my views of teaching in higher education and the potential for enhancing the educational development role.

Upon first observing teaching, I saw that many new lecturers in my organization were frequently overwhelmed and uncertain in a classroom situation and therefore welcomed the opportunity for feedback and guidance. More experienced, established lecturers were glad of the opportunity to reflect on teaching practices that they were using in an unquestioning way and to develop some new ways of doing things, so both students and themselves might enjoy a more stimulating and effective learning environment.

The act of observing teaching was itself an oxymoron; while presented as a developmental opportunity, it was explicitly linked to appraisal, quality enhancement management and assessment. Guidelines for carrying out teaching observations were limited to practical issues, while the accompanying and obligatory paperwork focused on mechanical aspects such as how often, who might be the observer and where to send the forms afterwards, with little attention given to the detail. Consequently, they tended to be carried out in a hurried manner and with little attention to the deconstruction of the broad headings under which observers were required to give feedback. These were areas such as content of session, communication and student participation, without additional information on the meaning and implications.

The paperwork was geared towards observing 'one-off' sessions in traditional settings and failed to take any account of online teaching or the distinctive features of teaching in performing and creative arts subjects, or in clinical and work-based settings.

Prior to embarking on my doctoral research I sought to expand my experience by working with two other organizations—another university and a provider of postgraduate medical education—as an external assessor and educational facilitator. This enabled me to analyse and synthesize new information along with alternative ideas from other settings, which informed my future practice and understanding of teaching observation dynamics.

### **The purpose of this research and why it matters**

I would argue that this research matters because of the assumption made by organizations that teaching observation is done intuitively and well, with no real



consideration of what makes for effective feedback and how we might learn this. In descriptions of peer observation policy the focus is on the logistics of organizing it and the areas to be covered rather than actual words used. My previous research indicates that it does matter (Davis and Ryder, 2012), and that the affective domain is as important as the cognitive and behavioural domains when seeking to change teaching practice. This approach, and this is where the new knowledge resides, allows for the understanding and resolving of resistances and defences, for whatever reason, amongst academics. It facilitates the individual practice of the academics and the educational developers to develop and evolve. What I want as my 'product' is a set of guidelines on how this might take place.

The purpose of my research, then, is to improve teaching observation feedback practice for the reason that it currently it does not take into account the nuances and complexity of dialogical interaction within this context. This limits the professional development of academic staff and educational developers.

Teaching observation as both a quality enhancement measure and a vehicle for staff development is a well-established feature of the primary and secondary school experience in the UK. The *Ofsted School Inspection Handbook* (Ofsted School Inspection Handbook, 2013) provides instructions and guidance for inspectors carrying out inspections under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. Recent years have seen the introduction and increasing use of observation of teaching in higher education with evidence of regular, purposeful teaching observation events becoming a requirement for institutional audit. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has a similar role to Ofsted within a higher education context, namely to safeguard standards and improve quality. In the course of institutional visits by the QAA, teaching observations are used as a means of monitoring the quality of teaching within universities.

Teaching observations are regularly used in the academic probationary period (Middlesex Probation Policy, 2012) and for promotion purposes (Middlesex University Promotion Policy, 2012) (see Appendices 14). In addition, following the recommendations made by the Browne Report (2010), an accredited teaching qualification is to become mandatory for all new university lecturers. These are turbulent times for higher education in the UK, with the sector facing cutbacks and reduced funding alongside the introduction of tuition fees and the emergent debate on the value of a degree (Grove, 2012). Universities, and in particular the nature and quality of university teaching, have become the focus of intense scrutiny through Key Information Set (KIS) data and National Student Satisfaction (NSS) survey results (Unistats, 2013) and debate. This makes the findings of this research timely and

relevant. Teaching is just one part of a matrix of activities undertaken by academic staff, but within Middlesex University it is a substantive one. As a 'new university' our reputation and ability to attract students is greatly influenced by how current students score their teaching and learning experience, which in turn informs university league tables.

Given the above context I was curious to address an area to which my organization and its policies did not offer any guidance. From those I was observing it seemed important to discover what they considered significant in the encounter and to find a way to reveal whether certain feedback experiences provide academics with new knowledge and insights about their teaching and improvement of the student experience.

In my training as a counselling therapist I developed the skills of recognizing a 'good moment' or 'opening', and my hunch was this might be applied to teaching observation dialogue. In all the accounts I have ever read of teaching observation, the details of dialogic feedback and challenges inherent within this are regularly absent. We have a number of accounts (Gosling and O'Connor, 2009; Kell and Annetts, 2009; Bell and Cooper, 2013) that describe well the process of implementation and review but remain almost silent on the language and features of dialogic interaction. There appears to be an assumption that it is enough to embrace policy and process, as the majority of academics are confident givers of feedback (Leeds Metropolitan University, 2011), able to select the language to bring about a positive encounter.

When I look back over the last 10 years of my career as an academic, the highlight is my involvement in teaching observation. I have sought to champion those aspects of university life that have traditionally been viewed as perfunctory and lacking in credibility.

Deconstructing the teaching observation experience has been stimulating, inspiring and highly revealing. It has enabled me to 'flesh out' and give voice to the perspective of both the observer and observed, and to articulate that which is often implicit for the teacher and vague and unknown for the observer. I wanted this research project to do something about this through seeking out 'conversations inviting change', so 'stuckness' in the process might be overcome, giving the space for something more creative to emerge.

## Challenges of changing

My first PG Cert HE cohort consisted of 30 members of staff within the workshop set-up that characterized the programme at the time, and it was impossible to get to know individual staff other than at a superficial level. They were generous in offering their own examples and critical incidents from their own teaching, but I sensed that they were self-censoring and also I could not contextualize them within subject specific pedagogies and explore the possible meaning satisfactorily in this setting. Teaching observations were part of their summative assessment criteria and these provided an entry into a sensitive and private world. To explore the teaching observation experience first within the PG Cert HE and next within the wider organization became my goal.

Terminology and its application became of interest to me. I became curious how the notion of 'teaching excellence' (Middlesex University Teaching Fellowship Scheme 2013) was used without a clear definition of what this might mean. Influenced by my counselling therapist background I began to focus on the importance of identifying what was 'good enough teaching', which was derived from the notion of the 'good enough mother' (Winnicott, 1953, 1971). According to Winnicott, a mother need not feel under pressure to be 'perfect' as there is no such thing as the 'perfect' mother. If a mother tries to be perfect then she will not achieve this and will feel disappointed in herself, evoking feelings of guilt and anxiety that, if acted out, will result in the baby suffering. Winnicott talked about the concept as a non-judgemental attitude. Such an approach may be adopted in a teaching context; being a 'good enough teacher' is to know the key factors in creating a successful learning environment and to adapt them appropriately to a given context. In the following quote, if the term 'mother' is replaced by 'teacher' we have a philosophy of teaching that is holistic and effective while remaining realistic:

What is most important is that each mother does the best she can to meet her children's emotional and physical needs; after that, she can release any guilt for not having been perfect. While there are of course women who do not provide this kind of nurturing environment and therefore do not fall into this category of mothers, most mothers are, in fact, 'good enough mothers'. (Winnicott, 1971: 42)

Some of the teaching I observed was thrilling and appeared really to engage the students, but most was decidedly average and a small percentage was chaotic and gave cause for concern. I became interested in whether there might be sound pedagogical principles on which effective teaching might be based that could be adapted to the context, the environment, the level of attainment and the subject. I was

beginning to construct a hypothesis, still in its embryonic stages, that feedback from an observer is also a form of teaching.

To enable me to develop a methodology to ensure that the teaching observation experience was optimized, I observed dozens of teaching sessions. I learnt to change my style when giving feedback, allowing the interaction to shift from monologue to dialogue depending on who was listening and who was talking. I encouraged those being observed to take greater ownership of the experience by asking them to justify their choice of what they had asked to be observed, its fit with the module, programme and assessment strategy, as well as the implications for subject mastery and employability. I saw the 'student experience' as being integral to all this and encouraged academics to include regular review and evaluation from their students.

This was a critical moment in which teaching observations moved from being a 'snapshot' in time to being part of a bigger picture. What it allowed academics to experience was the power of teaching observations and how it supported them in reviewing and evaluating their own practice. What impressed me most was the enthusiasm and love they had for their subject, with a tendency for this to go unrecognized in the day-to-day grind of teaching.

Characterizing my practice is the importance of collegiality, communication, challenge and caring for academics. I have sought to adopt the role of the 'critical friend'. I sought to address the issue of what necessary skills and knowledge are needed to engage in meaningful and useful teaching observations. In particular, I have wanted to discover what precisely is being observed in the observation of academics, and how is it spoken about afterwards.

In turn, colleagues, peers and those who have invited me to observe them have facilitated the development of my own professional practice, which can never be overestimated. I have learnt so much from others and have remained open to constructive and respectful feedback, an attitude that is a model for the staff I work with.

### **Essential conversations inviting change**

My interest and advanced practice in this area coincided with increased use of teaching observations as evidence for promotion, tenure and teaching fellowships. I still felt that neither the quality of that evidence was adequately addressed, nor consistency and equity necessarily demonstrated by those who carried them out. At that point I decided

to embark on a research project that sought to offer alternative approaches based on a tried and tested action research methodology.

A familiar sight on teaching observation forms is the areas of teaching and learning that should be covered, with little on using questions in a purposeful and non-judgemental way. One of the objectives of the research is to provide a framework to allow others to approach the act of teaching observation more competently and confidently.

To build communities of practice that overlap and complement each, it is necessary to open dialogue up rather than close it down. Professional experience and substantial literature has shown me that individuals learn less from 'positive experiences' and more when 'things go wrong', so it is critical to move away from the notion of the 'good performance' within teaching observation. I wondered what it is that can move teaching institutions away from the notion that the main purpose of teaching observation is benchmarking and performance management, and appreciated the difficulty and the tensions inherent in a tool that purports to do both. I saw a gap in the literature in how the spoken word is applied within the context of teaching observations, but also how the discourse plays out within a teaching observation. This theme will be expanded on in the literature review.

During the years I spent in an educational development role I observed that higher education increasingly resembles primary and secondary education. We are encouraged to focus on benchmarking, targets, league tables and standards alongside our own institutional quality and performance indicators. The findings of this research highlight the very real tension inherent within observations of teaching. Can they be used both as an indicator of having met the required standard and for developmental purposes? To what extent can they meet the needs of the academy and those of the individual and provide essential encouragement and a way forward?

## Chapter 2: Aims, objectives and the literature base

With practitioner experience and motivated to improve my practice for myself and others in higher education teaching roles, I drew up a set of aims and objectives.

Working within a particular university and wishing to carry out work-based research, I started by clarifying who my target audience might be and what it was I wanted to address and change for each of those stakeholders, and why:

- *Staff within my organization undertaking programmes that focus on teaching and learning in higher education.* Such programmes might have a professional development or research focus. I intend the research findings to inform the way the PG Cert HE, PG Diploma HE and MA in Higher Education are delivered and assessed, together with curricular content.
- *All other staff involved in creating a learning environment for students:* these include technicians, learning resources staff, academic assistants, hourly paid lecturers and research students. These groups are increasingly required to participate in teaching observation experiences.
- *The wider community of educational developers:* my peers, nationally and internationally, will benefit from alternative perspectives on teaching observations that are both scholarly and practical.
- *Centre for Learning and Enhancement of Teaching:* This was founded in September 2010, resulting not only in new appointments at senior level in Teaching and Learning but the move of the PG Cert HE/MA in Higher Education from a School to a centralized base. I see my departmental colleagues and line managers as a crucial part of my target audience. A project such as this is key to the credibility and ethos of the Centre, which is striving both to establish itself and justify its existence in the midst of uncertainty.
- *Senior Management/University Executive:* As stated in Chapter 1, my organization views itself as a teaching university and the last few years have seen an increasing commitment from senior management to reviewing and prioritizing educational development and support for teaching and learning initiatives. I intended to bring my findings, recommendations and guidelines to their attention so they might be integrated into both organizational policy and culture.

To achieve this I drew up a plan of intent:

### ***The project's summary***

***Purpose:*** To bring about change in teaching, culture and practices in my own higher education institution.

***Aim:*** To gather evidence that will underpin any recommendations to fulfil the purpose.

#### ***Objectives:***

- To identify a more effective way of carrying out teaching observations in a range of learning environments.
- To analyse whether having a shared experience, for example a teaching event, and then deconstructing the subsequent dialogue between the observer and observed increases intellectual and professional knowledge about best feedback practices, most effective teaching practices and consequently the potential for improving the experience of students who study at Middlesex University.
- To evaluate critically whether teaching observation as part of a sequence rather than a one-off event can act as a powerful trigger in altering individuals' perception of their own teaching practice and wider issues through the processes of reflection and review.
- To report the findings in the form of workshops and paper presentations at national and international conferences on teaching and learning in higher education, along with a series of articles in higher education journals.

#### ***Data gathering summary:***

A review of the literature was undertaken to check my professional practice experience against existing knowledge and to draw out themes of relevance to my purpose, aims and objectives.

Ten members of academic staff from the School of Engineering and Information Sciences were observed teaching on three occasions during the course of one semester. The combined post-teaching observation feedback and learning conversation was recorded and analysed. The intention was to explore the impact of feedback on teaching practice, and an action research approach was chosen as the most effective way of answering my research question.

The review of the literature was guided by intentions and also checked whether what I was aiming to do had already been done, whether there could be something that could

contribute to my thinking and direction, and whether what I was intending to do would have any relevance to my community of practice and to knowledge in my field.

### **Literature review**

In this section I position my study in existing knowledge and explore themes arising from my practice. Essentially, it provides the background and justification for the research undertaken that is beyond my own personal and professional experience. Do current scholarly and institutional accounts of practice, policy and procedures capture a sanitized, simplistic account of the complexities and challenges with which academics struggle, as is revealed in my practice? It was essential that the data I gathered were congruent with the goals of my research.

The literature on learning and teaching in higher education is growing rapidly, especially in the area of pedagogical research. There have been, broadly, two kinds of publication—on the one hand, practical help to support teaching activities, and on the other, those with a theoretical approach often developed from research. There are handbooks and guides designed to meet the needs of new academic staff and staff looking to improve their teaching, which include practical tips and a range of helpful strategies (Fry et al., 1999; Race, 2010). Such resources often feature on the recommended reading lists of accredited programmes in teaching and learning in higher education. Examples of the second type of publication (Kreber, 2001; Brabazon, 2007) demonstrate how teaching and learning in higher education is a subject discipline, albeit a recent one, with a distinct and credible body of knowledge.

As teaching and learning in higher education is a relatively young sub-discipline I looked to other fields and disciplines to inform my knowledge. Relevant literature came from educational psychology, organizational psychology, human resource management, counselling, mentoring and coaching. The majority of the literature in this review comes from the UK, Ireland, Australia, North America and Northern Europe.

The literature review is presented using themes and sub-themes. I start by looking broadly at the current environment in higher education and what I consider to be key issues for educational developers when considering their role. I end by reviewing what is known about teaching observations and what else might match the experience. I provide a degree of comparative analysis of the literature, as well as compare my own practice to the literature.



## **Changing landscapes within UK higher education: Where are we now?**

It is incontestable that in the last twenty years universities have undergone a series of changes (Barnett, 1997, 2000) that have raised issues and debates on the purpose of higher education and the role of academics.

A recent survey by the University and College Lecturers Union (UCLU Survey Report, 2012) reports on the intense pressure and demands that academic staff face. In this report some 14,000 university employees claimed that high levels of stress were caused by heavy workloads, management issues and a long-hours culture. Stephen Court, a senior research officer from UCLU, writes: 'There is pressure to win research funding under the new Research Excellence Framework, while lecturers feel they need to raise their game in teaching with the introduction of higher tuition fees. There is also pressure to do well in the National Student Survey' (Grove, 2012).

Writing for the Guardian Higher Education Network, in May 2012 Universities HR Chair and Head of Human Resources, Matthew Knight, said:

The pace and scale of development in UK universities is fundamental and in some ways unprecedented. We are experiencing a paradigm shift and no-one really knows how things will be when (if?) the dust settles. Universities are people enterprises, the quality of the people working in the sector, the way they work with each other and what they will achieve will, over time, mean the difference between institutional success and failure.

There are two clear messages here. First, that the higher education sector is in transition, raising anxieties and also opportunities; and second, because the people who work in the sector are its most valuable resource it is vital that they have relevant developmental opportunities. However, it is one thing to recognize it and another thing to do something about it. Knight (2012) argues that trying to apply the principles of businesses and the marketplace to universities is at odds with academic autonomy and an environment conducive to excellence in teaching and learning. He is critical of the language used, which includes 'targets', 'benchmarks' and 'value for money'. However, Lewin (1948) argues that any significant organizational change is accompanied by a change in language. Browne (2010) also disagrees with the point of view expressed by Knight: Competition generally raises quality. The interests of students will be protected by minimum levels of quality (Browne, 2010: 2).

However, the tensions may not be the fault of the business principles themselves but the way in which the principles have been integrated and applied. While working as a

clinical manager in the National Health Service I saw at first hand the importance of robust business strategies to ensure that hospitals function efficiently, providing a good service for hospitals and local communities.

Nicolescu (1997: 2) proposes that binaries and splits, for example between academia and economics, are not the way forward for the future and that the time has come for universities to adapt a more transdisciplinary approach:

All the various tensions—economic, cultural, spiritual—are inevitably perpetuated and deepened by a system of education founded on the values of another century, and by a rapidly accelerating unbalance between contemporary structures and the changes which are currently taking place in the contemporary world.

In my organization there have been almost three years of consultation on possible changes involving academic restructuring and a new strategic direction for the University:

It is important that a social standard to be changed does not have the nature of a 'thing' but of a 'process'... (Lewin, 1948: 27)

This theme is developed further in the following:

Although this (Lewin's theory) has proved useful in understanding planned change under relatively stable conditions, with the continuing and dynamic nature of change in today's business world, it no longer makes sense to implement a planned process for 'freezing' changed behaviours.... The processual framework... adopts the view that change is a complex and dynamic process which should not be solidified or treated as a series of linear events... central to the development of a processual approach is the need to incorporate an analysis of the politics of managing change'. (Dawson, 1994: 3–4)

The UCLU survey findings (2012) certainly resonate with my experience and that of the many academics I work with who claim never to have been busier or under so much pressure from so many different quarters. At my own institution the scope of teaching has broadened significantly and is now regarded as encompassing all activities that contribute to student learning (Middlesex University Academic Policy Statement, APS19 2005). These activities include the design of curricula and assessment that may be facilitated and supported at distance, often using technology in addition to traditional forms of classroom teaching. Also, they often include team teaching, albeit at a distance yet still with the additional responsibility, with academic staff at our overseas campuses.

Evers and Hall (2009: 18) state that:

some longstanding assumptions in higher education are that academics are not adequately prepared for their teaching role, have unsophisticated conceptions of teaching and learning and have little knowledge of effective teaching practices, both in general and in their own specific discipline.

Although referring to Canadian higher education, this concern is expressed in the Browne Report (2010) and argues for standards and benchmarking practices to be introduced. Ultimately, the report suggests that all those involved with student learning should undertake a review of teaching and supporting student learning practices. This report, *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, clearly states that students should expect a high quality of teaching. Further, the headline of a recent editorial in the *Times Higher Education* (Grove, 2013) ran, 'State puts weight behind teaching qualification data', with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) confirming that from 2014 it will be compulsory for all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to complete data returns on staff teaching qualifications. This information can then be fed into the KIS data.

Both the editorial in *The Times Higher* and the Browne Report raise important questions as to how good teaching might be achieved, how it might be measured and what types of professional development might be most helpful. Academics in my institution have reported to me that in gaining their appointment their research record has been more successful than their teaching experience.

This suggests a tension between what is being recommended by Browne (2010), for example that it is important for academics to hold teaching qualifications and be measured against agreed standards of what constitutes good teaching, with panels that appoint academics on the basis of their research publications.

My institution is responding to these calls for academics to be qualified teachers in a number of ways and in line with European guidelines, which position good teaching as an important constituent of good research essential for creating research environments with integrity (European Commission, 2013: 13):

There is no contradiction between the imperative of good teaching and the imperative of research which critiques, refines, discards and advances human knowledge and understanding. Good teaching, in many subject areas, is only good if it is informed by the latest research.

Middlesex University has appointed additional teaching fellows, carried out consultations with academics on teaching activities, encouraged applications for HEA National Teaching Fellowships and supported Middlesex University Student Union (MUSU) in seeking nominations for a series of awards, including categories such as for

the most empowering teacher. This would suggest that it is responding in a way that is in line with European guidelines and showing it is moving in the right direction.

The HEA is an independent organization, mainly funded by UK HE funding bodies, subscriptions and grants, which supports HEIs in developing research and evaluation to improve the learning experience for students. It accredits initial and continuing professional development programmes delivered by HEIs and since 2013 has run a professional recognition scheme that confers the status of Associate Fellow, Fellow, Senior Fellow or Principal Fellow of the HEA (see Appendix 5). One of my current responsibilities involves maintaining such records for my own institution, which is seeking accreditation and awarding status so we can confer HEA fellowships on our staff in the future. These are separate from our own Middlesex University Teaching Fellowships.

The UK Professional Standards for Learning and Teaching (2012) was published by the HEA. Law (2011) reports that, following consultation amongst academics working in the UK higher education sector, 70 per cent opposed the introduction of compulsory teaching qualifications for academics. It was thought to be important that experience was also valued and, where it might be evidenced, seen as equivalent to recordable qualifications. This view was expressed by participants in my research.

Meyer and Land (2003) claim that traditional academic identities and values are changing, as illustrated through the discourse of management theories and practice that is now a feature of higher education. This may be illustrated by the increasing use of terms such as 'benchmarking', 'restructuring' and 'key performance indicators'. This change provides a number of opportunities, including showing impact and leadership in a particular disciplinary field (2008). Smith (2010) argues that traditional academic identity is no longer relevant as probationary academics are now being socialised into a more fluid culture that concerns itself with global competition and market forces. Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theory suggests that academic identity is defined less by historic antecedents of autonomy than by experience of engaging in joint enterprise with colleagues, shared values and common interests.

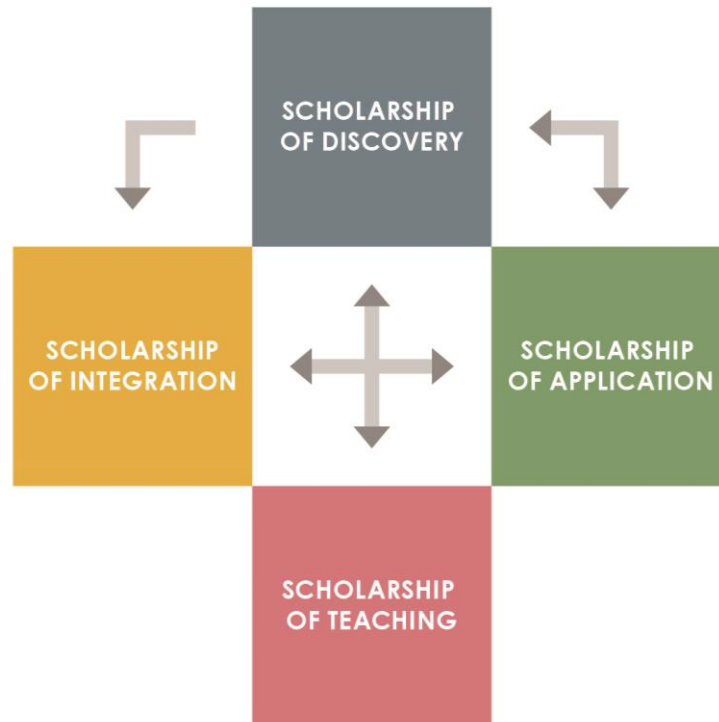
The Government's White Paper, 'Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011), calls for 'radical reform' to put higher education on a 'sustainable footing'. The main focus is on improving the student experience, implying that academics' role will change as they engage with students as partners and consumers. My experience has shown me that academics often need help and support to become familiar with changes in their role,

especially if they have been in post for a long time. The changes in my institution have often been rapid and frequent: no sooner do academics adapt to one initiative when another is introduced to replace it. An example of this is increased emphasis on obtaining feedback from students on their university experience. This takes on a greater significance now that universities are expected to publish summary reports of their students' experiences of their degree courses. Through the NSS such data are widely available and a key factor in national and international university league tables. This data can be used by potential students and their families, that is, the student as a consumer, to choose the university that will most reliably provide a positive outcome and, by association, the best chance of finding good employment or employment opportunities. This is positive if academics are allocated enough time to expand on the quality of feedback to students, which will impact student feedback on learning experiences.

There are other examples in terms of changes to job descriptions in response to the shifting landscape, for instance for HEIs to be more research focused, requiring those who previously concentrated on teaching now to meet research targets. A high quality level of published research attracts government investment and research funding. Some academics may require more support. Meeting these targets has implications also for an academic's promotion prospects and job retention; and a global environment means the increasing use of blended learning. This requires academics to keep up with rapidly changing learning technologies. These changes can be better integrated and adopted if academics are appropriately supported.

### **The scholarship of teaching and learning**

Brew (2010) offers the view that higher education is currently characterized by change, challenge and uncertainty and offers a panacea in the form of the ideas embedded in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), as developed by Boyer (1990). Boyer (1990) expresses concern that teaching is viewed as inferior to research and advocates that research and teaching activity are seen as of equal status and value within the academic role. He sees a way of achieving this through introducing the concept of SoTL, considered to have four dimensions of discovery, integration, engagement or application and teaching. Figure 2.1 below illustrates such a holistic approach, as advocated by Boyer.



**Figure 2.1: Scholarship of teaching and learning (Boyer's model, 1990)**

The traditional view that teaching is less valued and rewarded than research is documented (Rowland, 1996; McNay, 2009) as well as resonating with my own experience. Grant et al. (2009) describe how the introduction of SoTL was seen to be a means of redressing the balance and advocates that excellent teaching is similarly recognized and rewarded:

More than 40 years after its beginnings, academic development stands uncertainly on the threshold of becoming a profession or discipline in its own right. While it remains marginal to the dominant stories of the university, it has become central to the institution's contemporary business. (Grant et al., 2009: 83)

Critics such as Boshier (2009) identify concerns with Boyer's model. Boshier criticizes its vagueness, claiming that SoTL is a holistic concept and the four dimensions can be viewed neither as discrete nor linear, as they overlap. Boshier argues that this lack of transparency undermines essentially sound ideas, although my experience has been that, if you can provide examples to academic staff that are rooted in their own subject disciplines, they are more likely to embrace the concept. Later I will argue how misinterpretation and ambiguity of terms also characterize the concept of 'teaching observation'.

Gosling (2009) develops this theme in the third of his longitudinal reviews of the current state of play with regards to educational development in the UK and provides a sobering and realistic account of the variance and complexities facing practitioners in this field. Without question, educational development units find themselves subject to government agendas, departmental politics and institutional strategies. It is important to note that educational units are not homogenous. Some are located in dedicated units or centres and others in specific schools or faculties. Having experience of carrying out my role in both settings I prefer my role to sit within an academic school rather than a centralized department as it identifies me with a specific subject discipline and school. However, I am in agreement with Gosling, finding that my role is not necessarily determined by my core values and how my ability to do the right thing is sometimes compromised by organizational and government objectives. There have been times when I have felt quite powerless, either surrendering or continuing to do the right thing by stealth.

Boshier (2009) contends that he is not saying that SoTL should not exist but that the concept needs to be made more transparent and credible, otherwise it will remain unconvincing and continue to be unfavourably compared with research. Yet, as with all theories, one might take what is useful and adapt it for our own purpose. Brew (2010) argues that educational developers have a crucial role to play in helping academic staff to navigate their way around complexity and to cope not just with change but continual change. Aply, Brew emphasizes the need for conversation to take place between these two groups, which encourages enquiry and support, arguing that educational development creates the conditions and space to enable faculty to engage purposefully in SoTL.

While I support a scholarly approach to teaching I also believe that is important to distinguish between educational pedagogies and philosophies, and translating knowledge and information in a practical way that is appropriate for the context. The act of teaching needs to be separated from educational pedagogies and philosophies, beyond an audience of educational developers and education subject specialists. Using jargon, in my experience, wins neither hearts nor minds when academics may be already sceptical of the concepts. Plain speaking and examples of good teaching derived from practice have served me better and, from routine internal evaluations by Schools and individual staff, have also served the staff better.

The value of group enquiry initiatives, communities of practice and apprenticeship have already been well documented by Lave and Wenger (1998). Eraut (2007) opens up a

further dimension and explores the potential for learning by doing and then making sense of what comes out of it.

Ferman (2002) finds that academics welcome collaborative opportunities to work together, where they might take joint ownership of the process and draw on their subject knowledge and practice. Such suggestions are helpful to my practice as I have found that many academics, given the right context and opportunities and if not imposed upon them, appreciate working in a collegial way.

In the literature the theme of scholarly conversation is a recurring one (Rowland and Barton, 1994; Brookfield with Preskill, 2005). I have also found that reflective practice in education is the key to improved practice and increased resilience in battling with multiple demands. Rowland (2000) is a longstanding advocate for creating space for lecturers in higher education to come together and develop pedagogical models informed by their daily teaching practices. He passionately argues for a dynamic relationship between public knowledge and personal knowledge that comes from practitioners communicating together and building theories. For me, this has always been a cornerstone of my practice and I am in complete agreement with these authors that such scholarly conversations, when real and relevant, increase practitioners' confidence and have a greater impact.

### **Notion of disciplinary specific pedagogies**

Brew and Boud (1996) note the need for approaches to educational development to 'respond to the professional or disciplinary context of academic work'. They recommend individualized pathways as well as bespoke initiatives that meet group or departmental needs, as advocated by Wenger et al. (2002). Such actions are characterized by a commitment to knowledge management and values of openness and sharing ideas. Central to this approach is the notion that learning is intrinsic to human identity and that people learn best when actively involved.

To date, the strongest conceptual argument against a 'one size fits all' approach advocates that, for it to be meaningful, educational development and consequently SoTL must be framed in a discipline. In their work on similarities and differences between academic disciplines, Becher and Trowler (1989) found numerous and subtle boundaries between subjects, and also how bridges were being built as academic 'tribes' adapted to new knowledge and emerging sub-disciplines. This requires moving beyond 'how to teach' and allowing fundamental points about discipline specific pedagogy to be debated (Barnett, 2010, 2011). My own experience has shown me that



knowledge associated with different subject disciplines, context and preferred learning approaches needs to be taken into account in educational development.

My own experience has also shown me that the properties of good teaching are universal and that a distinction needs to be made between what to teach and how to teach. So, while the subject discipline must be taken into account in determining the content of a syllabus, how to teach is the common denominator. Fry et al. (1999) and Brabazon (2007) similarly argue that it is important not only to focus on what to teach but how to teach. Fry et al. (1999) provide several examples and case studies for those new to teaching in higher education. These real life examples illustrate how it is possible to align and adapt the general principles of effective teaching and good practice with their specific subjects with good results.

In working with computing science lecturers, I have found they convey a clear knowledge of their syllabus but need input on how to help students learn it.

The non-disciplinary specific approach described in the theories of adult learning (Brookfield and Preskill, 2005) plays a vital part in successful outcomes. Creating an effective environment for transdisciplinary groups of academics to learn how to teach is to recognize discussion and the sharing of experience as a way of teaching, to make explicit the relevance of particular teaching strategies and approaches, discuss common problems and share experiences. These sources mirror my own experience by acknowledging the considerable benefit of space for exploration and discussion across subject disciplines. In conclusion, discipline-specific and non-discipline-specific approaches to educational development can co-exist.

### **How do those who teach in HE learn how to do so?**

Recent times have seen a marked growth in the UK of the number of educational development centres or departments established with an educational development role (Gosling, 2009). There has been an increased interest in viewing the study of teaching and learning in higher education as a specialist subject in its own right. Another driver has been the view that academics need preparation for teaching, recognizing a learning need and an assured quality standard. Baume (2006) offers a good entry into the subject and refers to academics as the 'last of the non-professionals'.

Current trends in pedagogical research in higher education would appear to focus on the student experience. In fact, there is already a substantial body of literature that might contribute to the debate about what academics, a large proportion of whose time is taken up in teaching, find helpful.

There has been a shift in focus from how teachers as professionals within a higher education environment learn and their preferences, to how learning experiences might become more situated and relevant. The HE sector has come a long way in terms of defining 'academic identity' (Lieff et al., 2012), so thinking about what might constitute the best 'professional development' would appear to be the next logical step.

The professional developmental strategy of choice for new academics is to undertake an accredited programme such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PG Cert HE) or equivalent (Knight, 2006; Weller, 2009). Gibbs and Coffey (2004) reported on the effectiveness of university teachers' professional development involving 22 universities in eight countries. This was the first published study that sought to move beyond self-reports of change from teachers, and it collected psychometric data from both teachers and students, including a control group, best to measure impact. Findings showed evidence of a range of positive changes in teachers who received professional development. In contrast, the teachers from the control group demonstrated either a marked lack of change or negative change.

These encouraging results have not been replicated, as reported by Knight (2006), who describes the findings of the effects of Postgraduate Certificates on the development of teachers in higher education from eight universities in the UK. The primary research question was: 'How does a sample of past and present UK participants in PG Cert Learning and Teaching in Higher Education believe the programmes to be contributing to their professional work as teachers?' Findings from this study reported that, amongst the majority of participants, professional development is influenced less by such courses and more by one's own experience as a student, simply doing one's job, and non-formal interaction with colleagues. It was also reported that there was a high level of ambivalence to formal ways of developing as a teacher. These findings are broadly in line with two other fairly recent studies of professional formation. Prosser et al. (2006) carried out a similar evaluation of accredited programmes offering formalized and uniform professional development opportunities and also concluded that they are just part of a matrix of experiences that prepare academics to teach.

As an educational developer involved for seven years in the delivery and evaluation of these programmes, I have found that, while the end of programme evaluations from my cohorts were generally positive, they supported the findings of Prosser et al. (2006) and Knight (2006) in important ways. My cohorts agreed that a large part of their professional development came from 'doing the job' and 'being on the job'. If too much emphasis is placed on formal accredited programmes, the importance of mentoring within academic departments, informal learning opportunities and broader continuing

professional development will go unrecognized. There will be disappointment, because it neglects the importance of departmental cultures and an infrastructure that enables staff to continue to develop and improve.

A later report by Parsons et al. (2012) on the impact of teacher development programmes is also inconclusive when looking at empirical evidence. This report looks at a number of ways of viewing impact, including on the student experience. While I value the importance of student voice, in recent times certain arrangements impacting negatively on the student experience at Middlesex University have been outside the control of academic staff, for example, problems with timetabling, teaching accommodation, enrolment, campus facilities and campus moves. It is important to state that this 2012 report commissioned by the HEA reveals the complexity of both defining and measuring impact. This is a most important question and one that is most difficult to answer. It is something that I have wrestled with for several years. The impact of educational development for academics on the student experience may be indirect, at one step removed, hence any improvements in the latter may be difficult to attribute to the impact of educational development alone. I see educational development units and their staff as being akin to a catalyst; they increase the rate of positive change. The best way to see their impact is to compare similar HEIs, one with an effective Educational Development Unit and one without.

Amundsen and Wilson (2012) carried out a review of educational development research in higher education. The review identified six broad areas of research: teaching skills; teaching methods; reflective practice; discipline specific pedagogies; institutional initiatives and action research. Their review concluded also that there was little empirical evidence on the impact and effectiveness of educational development practice.

Amundsen and Wilson (2012) offer an explanation by suggesting that the limited empirical evidence may be because the definition of what constitutes impact and effectiveness is too narrow. It might be concluded that lack of evidence is a result of inappropriate research designs and methods being used to answer questions about the impact of educational development.

Yet there is literature that suggests a positive proven effect for educational development initiatives. This include accounts of teaching observation initiatives (Peel, 2005; Kell and Annetts, 2009) and the mentoring of new academics (Norton et al., 2012).

I would suggest that the impact of educational development initiatives may be difficult to attribute to a single factor, for instance a programme, and the reality is more complex. It was in pursuit of the unravelling of this complexity that the motivation for this research emerged.

This seemingly elusive evidence would appear to be a thread running throughout the literature in this area, suggesting that inappropriate research designs and methods are being used, the wrong questions being asked and the wrong focus being selected. There is a view that there is evidence to show that academics report that educational development initiatives are having a proven positive effect. These include peer teaching observation initiatives (Peel, 2005; Kell and Annetts, 2009) and the impact of mentoring of new academics (Norton et al., 2012)

Based on my experience of being an educational developer my concern is that, although they widen and deepen the debate, the findings from existing studies do not tell the whole story. Akerlind (2003, 2007), based on evidence from her own phenomenological approach, theorizes about the enabling factors and barriers to developing positively as a teacher in Australia. Akerlind interviewed 28 academics in an Australian faculty and was interested in the intentional attitude of academics towards their growth and development as a teacher, so the crucial factor becomes at what they believe their development is aimed. The implication is that to be effective the development of new university lecturers must be adapted to individual need.

Akerlind's work chimes with my own experience in identifying that it is only when new teachers are confident and comfortable with what I refer to as the mechanics of teaching and a mastery of effective strategies (priority to acquisition of practical tips, ways of managing the workload and survival tactics) and convinced that they work that they feel ready to reflect on their own performance and embrace the holistic nature of teaching. Sometimes academics new to teaching arrive with a shopping list of areas they would like to master, which may include facilitating large groups, giving written feedback, encouraging independent study or managing disruptive behaviour. Akerlind writes about 'conceptual change' and 'conceptual expansion' as important areas for further research. Based on my own experience as an educational developer this would be a fertile area to explore in more depth. Norton (2009) offers an alternative view, claiming that by engaging in pedagogic action research of our own teaching and student learning we expand our knowledge of both subject knowledge and gain further insights into what might be considered good teaching:

the fundamental purpose of pedagogical action research is to systematically investigate one's own teaching /learning facilitation

practice with the dual aim of modifying practice and contributing to theoretical knowledge. (Norton, 2009: 17)

Kugel (1993) describes the informal stages that teachers move through in their development. In observations of new teachers he found evidence of their abilities developing through five separate stages, referred to as own role, subject, student activity, student as learner, and student independence. Although these conclusions were based on a limited number of informal observations, they resonated with my personal experiences as an educational developer of many years' experience. It was affirming to see how this framework was replicated in my dealings with academics.

Much of the focus, however, remains on new academics, with an evaluation being undertaken soon after the end of an accredited programme or during the early period of being appointed to their first role. This is different from my practice, which emphasizes the importance of evaluation in respect of long-term outcomes, looking beyond 'early career' academics. By concentrating solely on this group in the literature an impression is gained that everyone else is performing well and in no need of development and support. In this research undertaking, I believed there to be an opening here to explore the experiences of established and mid-career academics.

### **Reflective practice**

A significant theme that runs through the literature is the importance of creating an environment where reflective practice can flourish and then lead to improved practice (Donnelly, 2007; Brookfield with Preskill, 2005).

Kreber (2004) argues that the concept of reflection in educational development is often ambiguously defined and applied, making it hard to review and evaluate how the act might improve teaching practices and the student experience. I have witnessed this indifference and cynicism to reflection amongst academic staff, some of whom express a negative response to the term 'reflective practice'. I found, like Kreber, a tendency for practitioners to engage solely in describing the problem (content reflection) rather than engaging in active problem solving (process reflection), along with questioning assumptions underlying knowledge (premise reflection).

In this and a subsequent study, Kreber (2004) and co-researchers (2005) sought to explore the extent to which academic members of staff reflected on their teaching by using two contrasting models of reflection, that of Merzirow's theory of transformational learning (1991) and Zimmerman and Schunk's (1998) notion of self-regulated learning. Kreber was particularly interested in the notion of identifying different types of knowledge about teaching and learning within the process of reflection. Kreber (2001)

creates a useful and accessible conceptual framework to promote forms of reflection that increase understanding of the potential of educational development. A practical, purposeful grid was created that allows academics continually to examine their existing practices in a more critical way.

The research included the creation of questions to act as prompts to enable academics to identify learning goals for themselves. This proved to be useful to me, especially the notion of allowing questions to drive the narrative, yet I also wondered about replacing the term 'reflective practice' with something else such as 'learning conversations' (Earl and Timperley, 2008). The term 'learning conversation' has been applied in a number of contexts while retaining common features (Schuck et al., 2008; Leinhardt et al., 2012; Earl and Timperley 2008; Chappell and Craft, 2011). Harri-Augstein and Thomas (1991) saw the purpose of the learning conversation as providing a scaffold so that the learner might reflect constructively.

Such a model has been replicated in formal one-to-one situations such as reviews using a structured model for reflection, with questions providing prompts and cues. Earl and Timperley (2008) support this view and provide examples of how 'learning conversations' enable school teachers to generate evidence-based practice that can then influence school policy, school planning and classroom practices. I see some similarities here with my research and use of 'learning conversations', and in particular how such conversations are both process and outcome of professional development.

The differences I see are how the focus in the literature (Harri-Augstein and Thomas, 1991; Chappell and Craft, 2011) tends to be on exploring the impact for the 'learner' rather than the facilitator. This includes the cognitive-emotional and personal-professional aspects of educational developer's lives that I am so interested in exploring. It is also a term used in coaching (Rogers, 2004), an initiative that the Staff Development Unit at the University is currently pursuing and that might be the subject of future research.

So, in what context might such 'learning conversations' take place?

### **Teaching observations**

Teaching observations are well established in primary and secondary education training (Ofsted, 2013) and viewed as a key indicator of success in the inspection reports. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), the higher education equivalent of Ofsted, sees teaching observation data as a means of enhancing and measuring institutional teaching equality. Observations are not restricted to QAA visits or training

courses, but are often a feature of probation and promotion policies (Middlesex University Academic Policy Statement APS19—see Appendix 14 and 15). There is often an expectation that they are carried out at least yearly and may form part of the appraisal process. Typically, they involve a classroom session observed for approximately an hour with feedback given immediately afterwards by an experienced observer or peer.

In the UK, a feature of formal professional development courses for new academics has been the observation of teaching with a view to enabling individuals to explore and develop their practice. Observation may be a two-way process that provides opportunities to be observed and to observe others, and this resonates with my practice. The tendency is for observation of teaching to be part of the formative and summative assessment strategy of these programmes, simultaneously developmental and judgemental, in a tension that will be discussed later.

In this field researchers admit (Prosser et al., 2006; Knight, 2006) that earlier recent research studies struggled to show evidence of the impact of teaching development programmes on individuals during the undertaking or close to completion. However, they were able to report examples of individuals reporting to have derived benefit retrospectively. Interestingly, the findings from both studies suggest that academics develop mostly as teachers in situ and in praxis, which resonates with the pioneering work of Schön who, when commenting (1983) on the value of reflective practice, said that ‘people learn not by doing but by doing and then learning what came from it’.

This assertion that ‘doing’ is important is further supported by the work of Smith (2012), looking at the experiences of new academics in their probationary year. I can wholeheartedly relate to these new academics who bemoan the conflicting demands of publishing high impact research in their first year while completing an accredited programme in teaching and learning. Like the new academics in Smith’s study, those I met in my work as an educational developer regularly admitted to feeling overwhelmed and uncertain on what to focus their limited time and energy. What I felt was missing was encouragement to align their research and their assessments for teaching and learning courses with their daily work. Smith’s (2012) work was very helpful for my own and gave me the idea to explore whether experienced academics were similarly overwhelmed, and finding they were.

In a previous study I carried out a review of teaching observation policies and accompanying paperwork in 43 UK universities (Davis, 2012) that revealed a range of different practices and approaches. The initial request was deliberately open-ended

and came in the form of the following email sent to an established network of educational developers:

Our organization is looking towards reviewing our current teaching observation form and supporting guidelines. I am aware that this brings with it a counter narrative about the purpose of teaching observations and whether one form can be used as both a standard setting and developmental tool. Another narrative is the concept of a tool only being as good as its operator and what purpose a form serves in the first place.... What we wanted to do here at Middlesex was to start by looking at what was currently being used across the sector and hear about your views/experiences. (Davis, 2012)

Much common ground and many shared values were evident from the responses.

There was strong agreement that the purpose of teaching observations is to encourage individuals to reflect on teaching, learning and assessment practices as well as sharing and developing practice. The majority of respondents felt that a bureaucratic approach focused on teaching observation as a performance management tool undermined the credibility of teaching observation. It was felt that the observers benefitted enormously from the experience and therefore this opportunity should be more actively promoted. Teaching observations were seen to be most effective when those observed took ownership of the process and became active, rather than passive, participants.

The greatest differences lay in the variety of terms used to describe an essentially similar encounter.





**Figure 2.2: Terms used to describe teaching observation (Davis, 2012)**

More variation was found in the frequency with which observation was expected to occur, ranging from a minimum of once every two years to four times a year; who should be included; and how it linked to appraisal. The necessary detail in the accompanying paperwork ranged from a recording of a blow-for-blow account in real time of what was occurring in the classroom to a brief action plan to be implemented in the future. Opinion appeared divided over whether feedback from students should be included and also the advantages of the observer being from the same discipline as the observed. A range of different models and frameworks was available to set the scene for either a mechanistic, behaviourist approach or a more flexible, observee-led one.

The term 'peer' featured in the majority, although with limited explanation of how the notion of a 'peer' might be interpreted and understood. There was evidence (Davis, 2012) of several universities moving away from the traditional set-up of a pair, and using alternatives such as triads and action learning sets. The explanation for this, as provided by the educational developers involved, was that staff did not appear to be engaging with current peer observation policies and processes. This was a common

experience in my own institution, unless it was for promotion and probation purposes. Further developments included the emphasis of dialogue rather than feedback, which implies a conversation and specific training for reviewers. Broadening the discussion beyond what was seen and heard was an innovation currently implemented by some, allowing for an exploration of relevant issues. Respondents were honest in sharing their reservations about the process, as implemented by their institutions, in particular about the authenticity and quality of some of the feedback.

I was simultaneously encouraged and perplexed by the scope of practice, but sought more detail about the dialogue that characterized these encounters. Many colleagues admitted that their policies appeared as they did because they had been adapted to meet the requirements of various committees. These committees appeared not to include anyone who had either had a teaching observation recently or carried one out. This correlated with my own experience of developing policy.

### **Literature on teaching observation**

The literature on teaching observation in higher education, although plentiful, tends towards the descriptive with stories of how initiatives were planned and introduced. A typical example can be found in Gosling and O'Connor (2006), who describe initial resistance by academic staff who fear it will be used as a form of 'policing', saying that they have experienced it before with no discernible benefit and claim that 'anyone can put on a performance'. The authors respond to these concerns by a) focusing on development rather than judgement and b) broadening view of what constitutes 'teaching' to include other professional activity. They argue that a way of doing this is to move the focus from 'teaching' to 'student learning' and to recognize that by allowing staff to determine the aspects on which they would most welcome feedback they are more likely to 'buy into' the scheme. In my experience, I feel the need to be careful with this approach and to avoid giving the member of staff a mixed message. I do not want to make the concession of giving the observee control when, in fact, I am still measuring them, regardless of a series of rigid pre-prescribed indicators of good teaching. For this reason I tended to approach teaching observation with an open, flexible view and broad considerations. I was interested in student participation, engagement and communication, delivery of content and intentions, but understood that the details would vary according to the context and subject.

Gosling and O'Connor (2006) believe the emphasis is about encouraging more collaborative and innovative ways of working. Given other articles on peer observation (Hodgkinson, 1994; Hitchins and Pashley, 2000; Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond,

2004; Race, 2010), it seems as good an outcome as any initiative that encourages staff to look anew at their practice and consider aspects not previously given attention. Central to its success are the best principles of written and oral feedback and the integration of reflective practice (Askew and Lodge, 2000). Such aspirations are wholly appropriate, but the literature is lacking in detail about what makes for best feedback practices in this context of teaching observation. As a senior practitioner, I am also seeking to contribute to this aspect, which is almost entirely absent from the literature.

Similar themes have been explored with some nuances of differences. Kell and Annetts (2009) believe that participants' ownership is vital to the success of the endeavour. They offer a fascinating case study where academics were given ownership from the beginning, as does Palmer (2007).

Akerlind (2003, 2007) finds that taking individual needs into consideration rather than imposing a 'one size fits all' approach is essential. Shortland (2010) argues that a series of teaching observations allow those being observed to demonstrate ongoing development and growth in a way that participation in a one-off teaching observation did not. Weller (2009) argues that within peer observation there is potential for collusion over feedback, with a danger of being non-committal and insufficiently honest. Weller is one of few voices within a body of literature that reports mainly enormous benefits for peer observation. As part of my literature review, I sought instances that challenged conventional thinking by searching for contradictions or limitations.

It was important to me to compare the propositional to the experiential to provide some comparative analysis. In the course of my own work I observed many examples of collusion in relation to poor peer observation practices. Such collusion included perfunctory approaches to the task such as providing minimal and superficial feedback, agreeing it was a purely paper exercise and failing to address issues of poor practice in a constructive manner. Observers admitted to feeling ill prepared for the task and being 'parachuted in' at the last moment to meet departmental objectives.

England et al. (1996) show an interesting angle by arguing that the affective domain may be removed as part of a predominately 'quality assurance' approach. It is argued that, because reflective practice is ongoing, effort needs to be invested in how to advance this kind of dialogue collaboratively to see teaching observation as an ongoing process and not a 'one-off' benchmarking exercise.

Gosling and O'Connor (2009) offer a collection of case studies looking at the introduction of peer observation of teaching at six UK universities. What is refreshing about this paper is that teaching is not limited to merely lecture or seminar settings, but

to a range of wider activities including online programmes. It optimistically assures us that peer observation of teaching can 'provide a framework which, at best can enable the dialogue to be safe, constructive and contextualized within scholarly practice' (Gosling and O'Connor, 2009: 5). Yet I wanted to know what, precisely, is this dialogue and, if it is to be safe and constructive, surely it should be modelled along the lines of the best feedback practices for students? (Jawah et al., 2004) There is an assumption that it is tacit knowledge and that all academics know intuitively how to do it, yet this in my work with academics is not my experience. This was not something I found was given attention in the higher education literature.

There is pressure for academics to be excellent, innovative and interesting in their role as educators. A study from the University of Hertfordshire concludes that students see the role of the teacher as 'edutainer' as the most crucial criterion for determining excellence in teaching (Cunnane, 2010). I believe equating excellent teaching with entertaining teaching to be a dangerous underlying presumption and, in my experience, the most charismatic, engaging lecturers do not necessarily make the best teachers. Someone might be entertaining but unable to make complex ideas accessible, show due diligence in setting and marking exams papers, or give effective feedback to students.

Sadler (2013) attempts to be more specific about what occurs in teaching spaces in higher education by identifying the instances of interactions with students and considering their impact for the development of new teachers. By focusing on student/teacher interaction within a classroom setting there was seen to be the creation of an opportunity for deeper learning (Marton and Saljo, 1976) for these academics. It was claimed that teachers received 'richer and fuller feedback', but it was not entirely clear what format this feedback took or whether it was the act of focusing that led teachers to view events differently. However, this certainly offers a new dimension to teaching observation and one that I would be interested in pursuing as a strategy for my own practice.

Shortland (2010) advances the argument further through an account of a case study involving peer review. It is unique within the higher education literature in that it draws upon a series of teaching observations and begins, albeit tentatively, to explore the relationship between observer and observed. However, as with so many before her, Shortland is tantalizingly unforthcoming about the detail. Again, there are instances in the literature of the 'feedback' aspect not being a focus, despite feedback to students being regarded as a priority in the educational context. This is different from my practice, where I have always invested a great deal of time and attention to giving

academics rich, meaningful feedback on their teaching. Of course, it may be that it is happening but that educational developers are not talking or writing about it.

Bell and Mladenovic (2008) describe a study of peer observation of teaching involving 32 academic members of staff from the Faculty of Business and Economics at the University of Sydney. Following their experience, 88 per cent claimed to have found the experience beneficial and 90 per cent said they would change their teaching as a result. They focused on the use of peer observation for development. This study explores barriers and enabling factors that allow the authors to suggest conditions under which peer observation will work best. Participating staff in the study were casual staff (the UK equivalent of hourly paid academics), paired up and given written feedback, based on a list, after the event. I have worked with a number of part-time and hourly paid academics and found them eager for feedback, so this account resonated strongly with my own experience.

Bell and Mladenovic include in their appendices a proforma that suggests a behavioural approach to teaching observation, with a prompt based on 10 statements of what the tutor did or did not do (e.g. helping students understand the material; student participation; presentation skills and visual aids; structure; and timing) that the observers were then required to grade in terms of positive—needs work—or non-applicable. Peer observers were asked to list the three best things about the tutorial and three suggestions for improvements. Although I question the wording of some of the prompts, this proforma provides a promising basis for inviting questions about what might we look at when we observe teaching and how we respond.

Of particular interest in the present context is the study's data, which identifies the areas that staff find challenging and in which they require further development. Permission to publish results was sought retrospectively, with 32 of 52 respondents granting permission.

Receiving feedback and observing were seen as mainly beneficial. Interestingly, most of those being observed sought 'expert feedback' from tutors. A year on, participants were still extolling the virtues and, according to the authors, demonstrating a readiness and willingness to change. Peel (2005) suggests that teaching observation is one of several factors that enhance student performance and within this institution there appears to be an active academic development programme and support. Yet this approach to teaching observation seems to suggest that we are starting from a default position by identifying what is missing.

Kane et al. (2004) focus on the need not always to sanitize our experiences and the opportunities to learn when things do not go according to plan:

we should build up a culture amongst our teachers that we will actually watch each other do the process and learn from each other; that there will be enough kindness and gentleness, that we can honestly talk about the mistakes in our teaching as well, or at least the less effective things, as well as the things that work very well. (Kane et al., 2004: 302)

This rare example of the importance of the democracy of true discourse is refreshing and resonates with the work of Rogers (1969) and the person-centred counselling approach. This quote by Kane et al. encapsulates some of the best advice I have come across and has informed my work as a senior practitioner working alongside academics.

### **The tension between development and performance management**

It would appear from the literature on teaching observation and my own review of custom and practice within the sector (Davis, 2012) that the key determinant of success is the opportunities the experience offers for feedback and discussion. Yet, based on these findings, it would seem that such custom and practices may be difficult to define, sometimes remain hidden and, when visible, may be aligned to quality enhancement initiatives and therefore contradictory. The private becomes public, and this is particularly apparent in the wording of organizational policy documents (Middlesex University Academic Policy Statement, APS19 2008/2009) that require teaching observation outcomes and documentation to inform appraisal meetings with managers, together with probation and promotion decisions.

In the standard template for teaching observations at Middlesex University, those observing are asked to pay attention to the following areas. Selecting these five areas for consideration suggests that these are key performance indicators (see Appendix 1, teaching observation template):

- Engagement and communication
- Strategies to promote active participation/learning
- Organization and presentation
- Content
- Clarity of learning outcomes/objectives.

These performance indicators suggest a professional standard and benchmark that on first examination would seem indisputable, representing as they do examples of good

practice that are universal in the sector (Fry et al., 1999; Donnelly, 2007) They encompass the latest UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (Higher Education Academy, 2012).

Yet how do you successfully capture something that is living and breathing within a series of performance indicators? How do you do justice to a dynamic, organic entity within the constraints of a form? I have not found such a framework particularly helpful when working alongside academic staff, finding it constraining and reductionist, privileging particular subjects and teaching approaches. Much depends on what the form is for: an end summary or a part of a development tool.

Such a standardized and formulaic approach has also been challenged by the work of Deming (1993), who was highly critical of performance appraisals and incentive compensation, believing that improved performance comes through other approaches. Scholtes (1998) shares the view that managers need to appreciate that people are different, and both authors have argued that appraisal is neither useful nor helpful in improving and measuring performance.

The work of McCaffery (2004) is particularly relevant and begins by outlining the enormous credibility gap between organizational use of appraisals and their perceived usefulness by employees, giving convincing evidence from national surveys and unions. The perception of appraisal by academics is often poor, with a shift towards academics taking responsibility for self-appraisal and focusing on goal setting, with little opportunity for edifying conversations.

HEFCE (2001) made additional funding available, contingent on universities developing their own HR strategies. These strategies were expected to make provision for regular reviews, based on open and objective criteria with rewards connected to performance. I see this as a move that takes us even further away from the spirit of learning conversations. McCaffery (2004) celebrates the extent to which this has become a feature of institutional life, including the concept of 'learning organizations', while acknowledging that reality often still remains a long way from the target. McCaffery suggests that coaching, mentoring and supervision may become fraught with complexity and contradictions if carried out by a manager.

The emergent models of staff development (adapted from Brown and Sommerlad, 1992; Harrison, 2005) are useful to me in my work. McCaffery (2004) advocates departments taking responsibility for their own staff development policy framework and also the guarantee of confidentiality for peer observation to ensure it is successful and that staff participate confidently.

### **Where else might learning conversations occur?**

A case can be put that the main principles inherent in teaching observation might be found in the act of developmental mentoring, well established amongst healthcare professionals (Gupta and Lingham, 2000; Department of Health, 2004). I mention this because there are parallels with peer teaching observation, with mentoring generally being seen as guidance and support offered by a more experienced colleague. It is generally understood that mentoring is voluntary and confidential, so would have no association whatsoever with appraisal or performance management. It might be formal or informal. Yet, having considerable experience of both, I would conclude that, while there are some transferable skills and common ground, mentoring is different from teaching observation in process and outcome. Teaching observation is much more situational and less general, and focuses exclusively on the learning environment in a way that mentoring does not. While learning conversations about teaching observation may involve aspects of mentoring such as the development of skills and confidence, it is important to have something that focuses in depth on the lived experience and nuances of teaching in higher education.

Smith and Grey (2000) explore the significance of the relationship between student nurses and their mentors in clinical practice, and the potential of these roles for shaping learning and development. It identifies reflective learning as a form of 'emotional labour' and suggests that good mentors recognize the need for time to be spent in acknowledging this. Student nurses in this study reported that good mentors were not defensive or averse to discussing issues and, importantly, demonstrated flexibility. Parallels might easily be made here with teaching in higher education and its associated emotional labour, as well as the qualities helpful in teaching observation feedback. I certainly found that academics were surprised how much emotional labour was required of them, and not something they felt they had signed up for. I also felt that I underwent a great deal of emotional labour as an educational developer.

Language is highly emotive and the term 'supervision', like 'appraisal', suggests it is a management tool associated with monitoring performance and involves a degree of policing. Launer (2006), who has a general practice and family therapy background, agrees that it is an ambiguous term but within the context of the type of supervision needed in clinical setting it must be both developmental and directive. As with the parallels between the emotional labour inherent in clinical work in healthcare settings and teaching in higher education, there is a persuasive argument for a conceptual framework for teaching observation. Launer (2006) suggests a framework for supervision that he summarizes as 'the seven Cs', which allows for important yet



edifying conversations to take place. Thus, the narrative of any learning conversation should be characterized by conversation; curiosity; contexts; complexity; creativity; caution; and care.

Continuing with the theme of a narrative and the importance of language, I arrive at the phenomenon of coaching and how coaching differs from mentoring. The dynamics of the relationship are different, with the mentor generally more experienced and acting in an advice-giving role. Rogers (2004) has published widely on this subject and explains how an effective coach must accept that clients are resourceful and the coach's role is to develop and optimize this resourcefulness through questions, challenge and support. In coaching, the whole person is addressed including past, present and future, with the client setting the agenda, the coach and client being equals and the outcomes of coaching focusing on change. This resonates with the work of Deming (1993), especially the commitment to creating conditions where individuals feel supported and appreciated, and leads to individuals finding 'joy in work'. As with mentoring, there are transferable skills that can be applied to teaching observation. However, the aspect of Deming's work in which I am most in agreement is the benefit of enabling those we work with to reach their full potential and how 'joy in work' comes from being valued and encouraged.

### **Communities of practice of educational developers**

Much of the higher education literature focuses on descriptive accounts of the implementation of teaching observation schemes, operational 'rules', evaluation of these initiatives and how they are linked to organizational objectives. How then does one begin through focusing on teaching observation to articulate the hidden work of educational developers, which might combine elements of mentoring, supervision and coaching? What would happen if 'the seven Cs' were used as a framework for training observers? How might the 'emotional labour' associated with teaching in higher education be an integral part of this process? How are people supported to go beyond their 'comfort zone'? How do educational developers support and challenge simultaneously?

Gosling (2009) suggested that, broadly speaking, there are three main categories for teaching observation: 'evaluative', 'developmental' and 'collaborative'. The choice is dependent on the purpose, so 'evaluative' is linked to performance and appraisal. In the 'developmental' model more experienced colleagues give feedback for improvement, while the 'collaborative' intends to involve working with peers to improve student learning through dialogue. While helpful to consider how the functions and

other characteristics may vary according to need, I found the models not necessarily discrete but overlapping. The account presumed clear boundaries, along with the ability to observe and deliver feedback well.

The questions I should like to see addressed are how are these expert practitioners chosen and prepared for their role as observers? What attributes should the observer possess? Who is a peer, since this is not made obvious? Should the observer be a non-academic or someone outside the discipline, and which is more important from an observer's point of view: subject knowledge or knowledge about good teaching and learning practices? Or is it necessary to have both?

Educational developers can experience a tension between promoting best educational practice and the politics of the institution and national drivers. It would appear that there is a tension between what they feel they want to do and what they are required to do (Davis, 2012). How does the professional development of educational developers within an HE context occur? The majority of the literature draws on the experience of educational developers within a primary and secondary school setting (Russell and Loughran, 2007).

As a Middlesex University Teaching Fellow, I am considered to be a 'Teacher of Excellence' (Middlesex University Teaching Fellows Scheme, 2013: see Appendix 16), yet what is it that makes a good teacher? I received the award for my contribution as an educational developer yet, while the literature is clear (Gosling and O'Connor, 2006; Macdonald, 2012) on what educational developers do, it is less so on what informs them and makes them effective—information, knowledge, experience, or personal attributes.

Kahneman (2011) rejects the possibility of knowing something before you know you know it, referring to this 'almost magical view of expert intuition' (p. 236). He suggests that, instead, the expert draws on a repertoire of patterns compiled over years of practice, arguing that the acquisition of expertise is intricate and slow because expertise is not a single skill but a series of mini-skills. I cannot entirely embrace the idea of 'expert intuition' because then I might need to accept that I cannot teach others to give effective feedback unless I do so over a long period of time.

Yet, why not? This is actually of fundamental importance. I came to develop 'expert intuition' over time and following long periods of reflection, based on that 'doing' could impart best practice techniques, particularly with the framing of questions and creating conditions that would help others acquire these skills. We already have our pioneering educational developers, with Yiend et al. (2012) recently carrying out a case study,

albeit only involving a single case, but significant in that it sought to deconstruct expert teaching observation dialogue so it might be taught to others.

### **Individual characteristics within the context of edifying conversations and encounters**

Previously, consideration was given to the similarities between the types of conversation that may occur in a peer teaching observation and encounters such as mentoring, coaching and supervision. The blurring of boundaries and demarcation lines are explored further in the literature examining the notion of critical companionship. Tichen (2001) introduced the idea of how an expert nursing practitioner might accompany a less experienced practitioner on a voyage of self-discovery. Essentially, it describes a helping relationship that seeks to create the optimal conditions under which practitioners might interrogate and develop their own practice while in the process of improving patient care. These optimal conditions are high support, high challenge and trust, which have been closely associated with action learning (Revans, 1982) and peer teaching observation (Donnelly, 2007).

Gibbs and Angelides (2008) develop Tichen's ideas further through an exploration of how the principles of 'critical friendship' might transfer over to an education setting. They argue that is important for individuals to have an opportunity to engage in dialogue, share thinking and reasoning in a way that is hard to do meaningfully alone.

Yet threats may undermine the potential value of 'critical' friendship. Storey (2013) writes that when 'critical friends' are perceived to be rivals or competitors this may cause tension, while the connotations of the term 'critical' may be negative. I have experienced the benefits of critical friends and their selection may depend on the function and purpose of the role. In some cases a critical friend is there to engage with in dialogue, when their brief is to act as devil's advocate. On other occasions I use a critical friend to check my interpretation of data, for example, or to check the written feedback I wish to give. In this research project I have used 'critical friends' in the way that Tichen (2001) suggests, to help me explore and critique my own practice as an educational developer observing others teaching and giving them feedback. My 'critical friends' have supported and challenged my practice as an expert practitioner and have also engaged in discussions about the interface between pedagogic theory and practice as described by Gibbs and Angelides (2008).

Continuing with the terms used in this project and what they connote, I struggled to find an apt name to describe the encounter between myself and the participants following

the teaching observation. If it were neither an interview nor feedback, what was it? The term 'learning conversation' emerged from the research and for this reason I decided to determine whether there was any relevant literature. There proved to be fruitful lines of enquiry that would allow me to ground the notion of 'learning conversations' while developing my own use of the term.

### **The power of questions**

As mentioned previously, carefully chosen language appears to be central to any kind of scholarly conversation and edifying encounter. Tomm's framework (1988) distinguishes four major groups of questions and is helpful as a teaching tool for those who carry out teaching observations. A familiar sight on teaching observation forms is a section on areas of teaching and learning that should be covered, but only limited guidance on using questions in a purposeful way. Sutton and Chatham (2010) also see questions as the key to getting people to think about things differently. They say we should advocate less and ask questions more, because that will encourage individuals to examine their thinking. Questions that further understanding also alter the power dynamics away from the expert–novice paradigm.

Tomm's (1988) four types of questions are linear, strategic, reflexive and circular. Linear and strategic are seen as questions of an orientating intent, and reflexive and circular as of an influencing intent. This approach to questions is highly relevant to my practice, encouraging different types of questions that open conversations up rather than close them down.

### **Discomfort**

Another omission from the literature is 'heart sink' moments (from the concept of 'heart sink' patients) when one watches colleagues teach. I always place the observation of a single teaching session within the context of a module and programme, with clear links to an assessment strategy. These days I would not observe someone without this supporting information, nor would I make assumptions about someone's subject discipline without checking.

In my research the observer and observed are not peers, as the observed are academics of a particular School and the observer is a senior educational developer. Gosling (2005), in his models of peer review of teaching, defines a 'peer' as any colleague who is not a line manager or educational developer. The peer in question might be less or more experienced and either in the individual's own subject area or outside. This view of what constitutes a peer is supported by other writers (Palmer

2007; Shortland 2010) with no alternative definitions offered in the literature on teaching observations.

In psychology literature (Heilbron and Prinstein, 2008; Howe, 2010) a peer is considered as someone in the same age group. Erikson (1995) regards peers as increasingly more influential than parents as the child develops through adolescence and this can be seen in the account by Heilbron and Prinstein (2008) of peer influence on non-suicidal self-injury. Howe (2010) explores the impact of peer group experiences on children from five years old to adolescence and reports the profound implications for social, intellectual and personal development.

Fellow teachers may then also have a positive or negative influence on each other. Weller (2009) expresses concern about the restrictive norms that may be present between peers in a teaching observation scenario:

engagement in a peer-based model of developmental teaching observation potentially reinforces narrow, individualistic and parochial constructions of teacher professionalism that enables resistance to change in practice. (Weller, 2009: 26)

This suggests that training of the peer observer (Gosling, 2005) is important, while the role of the independent teaching observer, for instance an educational developer (Weller, 2009), offers a good counterbalance to 'peer pressure'.

Several times during the last year when giving feedback that identifies some areas for improvement to academic staff, they have indicated that those who had previously observed them had found nothing to complain about. However, for every individual who has expressed disappointment there have been two who have welcomed constructive feedback and admitted that previous feedback had been bland and provided no areas to improve or develop further. This invites the question of whether there are academics who actively welcome being challenged within a supportive environment and those who prefer to maintain the status quo. And how does this link to who the observer is and whether the academics rate their credentials for being in that position? Historically, the culture within academic research encourages a critical approach to the work of others to the point accepted as the norm. It is interesting to note why teaching should not be held up to the same criteria. I accept and address this in my terms of reference when stating my definition of an academic, but wish to make the point that teaching and learning should be informed by research.

Are teaching observations seen as less necessary for mid-career and end-career academics than for new academics? If the evidence (Weller, 2009) suggests that some peer observation may be merely reinforcing poor to average practice, why do we

persist? I am asking this question because I think that the literature has not really provided a satisfactory definition of what it is to be a 'peer' and what preparation might there be. A teaching relationship suggests equity and parity, free of judgement or managerial responsibility. I find that the continual reference to peers often goes uncontested, with no real attempt to define them. It is understood that being observed by peers is preferable to being observed by your manager, but might we assume this is always the case? Not all peer relationships are either positive or healthy.

The observer and observed within this research are not peers, but the observation experiences are based on the notion of equality, exploring practice and a commitment to improving the learning environment. If we were to return to the model suggested by Gosling and O'Connor (2006: 14) we might assume that if it is a peer it changes the power dynamic, and if not a peer is it hierarchical? For this reason, Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond (2004) ask to what extent peer observation can be a meaningful process.

Kell and Annetts (2009) have a more positive account to share. They emphasize the role of auditing bodies such as the QAA, along with the internal and external monitoring of the student experience. Their research comments honestly on how peer observation documents serve a dual purpose, to be both an audit tool as well as encourage dialogue amongst colleagues focusing on mutual benefit and development.

Loughran (1996) researched the development of reflective practice in a group of student teachers during a pre-service education program at Monash University, Australia. In his introduction he states that:

teaching and learning about teaching are demanding tasks because you are exploring a complex, interrelated set of thoughts and actions, all of which may be approached in a number of ways.... Therefore, in teaching, there is not necessarily one way of doing something. (p. 3)

One size does not fit all, and he draws on the work of Dewey (1933) in his book *How We Think* to consider the benefit of building an argument from opposing viewpoints to demonstrate the benefits of weighing up alternatives, rather than dogmatically adhering to a single point of view. Active, open-minded listeners do this and also follow thinking with application. Dewey sees reflection as having five distinct phases: suggestions, problem, hypothesis, reasoning and testing. These might occur in any order and will likely overlap.

Since the early 1990s there has been a small but steady trickle of research that seeks to look at the experience of university teaching from the perspective of the teachers themselves. This research has tended to focus on three main areas: what 'teaching'

means to academics, how academics characterize the relationship between teaching and learning and, more recently, the effect of postgraduate courses on development. Looking at the assessment requirements of PG Certificates at different institutions reveals anomalies in whether and how many teaching observations are needed.

However, can completion of the PG Cert guarantee that someone is competent to teach, and what are the standards used to measure this? Is the PG Cert from one institution necessarily a licence to practice in another?

Knight (2008) shows consistent variation amongst academics in their definition of teaching, namely it will be either 'teacher-centred' or 'student-centred' in its focus. Laurillard (2002) argues convincingly that a sophisticated and therefore broader view of teaching amongst teachers would appear to lead to a more sophisticated view of learning for students and therefore better learning outcomes.

Providing feedback to students that motivates and enables them to improve their performance and confidence is a currently debated topic in higher education, with academics advised to ignore giving constructive and timely feedback at their peril. Yet, what about feedback to lecturers on their teaching performance? All the practice and research would appear to focus on process, despite the availability of anecdotal evidence that academics struggle to frame feedback in meaningful ways and assist colleagues in identifying needs so that real issues may be addressed. What is an appropriate feedback style? What is the best language to use?

Rarely do educational developers write about how they, as individuals, through the full force of their personality, influence other lecturers and bring changes to initially resistant institutions. That is why I was delighted to read an account by Rotherham (2009) that addresses the question, 'What is it about me that has made this project successful?' Factors that stand out were his flexibility, informality, enthusiasm and empathy. Rotherham had led a hugely successful project that provided students with audio feedback on their assessment.

In this professional doctorate I want to explore patterns of success through working alongside others and particularly by looking at feedback following observation of teaching. To enable me to do this well, I intend to review the literature again in detail once the data have been collected and use it to support both my findings and develop my conceptualization. Throughout the project I will commit to keeping my knowledge refreshed and up to date through my role as Programme Director of the PG Cert HE and MA in Higher Education.

In this section I have showed my understanding of the field and how it has shaped my research question. I have shown how the project is located in current practice, thinking and research. Reviewing the literature played an important role in enabling me to focus on questions, inform my research design and provide a framing for interpretation of my findings. I see the role of the literature as supporting my research findings as well as allowing me to consider what areas require further exploration and how I might contribute to the debate.

## **Conclusion**

Educational developers experience a tussle between promoting best educational practice and the politics of the institution and national drivers. Should they be neutral? How should they be?

The main findings identified from the surveyed literature are as follows:

- Teaching observation is seen as an important part of continuing professional development
- Teaching and learning in higher education is a subject discipline
- There is recognition of different purpose of teaching observation e.g. appraisal or developmental purposes
- A rich array of case studies describe the introduction and implementation of teaching observation
- The focus tends to be on early career academics and those on accredited teaching programmes
- Educational developers play a major role in teaching observation policy and practice
- Academics often experience positively teaching observation for developmental purposes
- There is some recognition of the tensions and nuances between teaching observation for appraisal, development and collaboration
- Heuristic checklists frame the observation
- There is potential for collaborative engagement.

The main gaps identified in surveyed literature are:



- Any recognition of the role of teaching observation for mid-career to established academics
- Seeing teaching observation as an opportunity to discuss broader issues about teaching and learning in higher education
- Moving beyond a 'snapshot in time' to a series of teaching observations
- A critical analysis of who should observe, what attributes they should have and how they should be prepared
- Details of the feedback dialogue and language used
- Any adequate definition of who a peer is, and other terms used
- Moving beyond a behavioural approach to one that recognizes complexities and a changing higher education landscape
- Only limited accounts of the resistance and cynicism surrounding teaching observation.

Drawing together the main themes from the literature I see that not all writers agree. The main areas for disagreement lie around response to: the changing nature of higher education in the UK, in particular the application of business principals; the extent to which there should be a transdisciplinary or uni-disciplinary approach to teaching; and how high quality teaching should be achieved.

Returning to the aims and objectives of my project at this point was reassuring, as they resonated with what I had identified as missing from the literature. They had been formulated to seek an alternative approach to teaching observation practice involving exploring the relationship between the observer and the observed, the feedback dialogue itself, and what might be learnt about teaching and learning in higher education.

## Chapter 3: Planning and carrying out my research project

Having identified the main themes amongst a range of unifying ideas enabled me to identify the interstitial spaces in the literature and state my own practices against this thematic orientation. Importantly, it allowed me to decide what my research would be able to contribute to current debate.

Van Manen (1984) referred to the importance of 'pedagogic tactfulness' in approaches to educational research and lamented the increasing emphasis on 'technique' at the expense of more creative techniques such as 'tact' and 'thoughtfulness'. Several decades later it would appear that little has changed, with Gibbs (2013) considering the state of play with regard to educational development work in the UK and voicing regret at the neglect of the affective or emotional domain in favour of cognitive and behavioural intervention.

This project fits convincingly into a phenomenological approach as it seeks to generate theory from the data and focuses on depth rather than breadth. My ontological view is aligned to phenomenology, which holds the top rank for subjective experience and action research (Stringer, 2004), characterized by a commitment to change, improvement and reflective practice. This had a direct influence upon how I approached my data gathering, mainly through the use of grounded theory analysis and techniques (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). I believe strongly that the principles of phenomenological philosophy can inform action research.

What follows is a critical account of how I planned and carried out my research, underpinned by a justification and rationale for these choices. Outlining my considerations and influences will show how this particular research design allowed me to gather, analyse and evaluate relevant data effectively. A phenomenologically informed action research approach was chosen to enable me as a practitioner researcher to explore my own experiences and those of the participants. Billett (2008) writes about 'agentic activity' and 'individual agency', concepts that capture the duality of my research and features of work-based learning, an approach in which individuals actively construct the knowledge required for working lives. Billett argues that the relationship between the individual or personal world and the social world is one of interdependence because, alone, they are not enough to capture the full experience. The focus on my practice and that of the participants allowed me to concentrate on social interactions while giving a voice to the experience and perspective of the individual. A practical application is central to the purpose of the research.

### **Influences on the development of a relevant approach?**

Central to my argument is the need to show how my role as a practitioner influenced my approach, as did the specific particularity of being simultaneously an outsider and insider researcher within my own organization. Within practitioner research it is deemed acceptable, indeed desirable, for there to be a more than one perspective. Costley et al. (2010) state that a work-based learning approach embraces a combination of paradigms and methodological approaches, and renowned thinkers such as Kuhn (1996) acknowledge and give credence to a layering of paradigms.

However, multiple perspectives may suggest a tendency towards 'sitting on a fence' and a reluctance to commit to a theoretical outlook. I wished to demonstrate how my approach was characterized by thoughtfulness and a desire to select the most relevant and appropriate combination. Thus, I decided upon a phenomenological action research approach using grounded theory methods, and shall explain and justify the epistemological basis of this theoretical underpinning.

At the outset I had wondered about ethnography as this privileges a non-judgemental, participant-observer approach. While both ethnography and phenomenology emphasize the importance of description and interpretation, ethnography focuses on discovering the relationship of culture and behaviour through studying 'sites', while phenomenological research explores how individuals construct their world.

Crotty (1998) argues that constructivism and phenomenology are closely intertwined, one an epistemology and the other a theory, both working on the premise that any attempt to understand and interpret social reality has to be grounded in people's subjective experience. A phenomenological paradigm focuses on trying to understand what is happening and to focus on possible meanings that lead to theory construction and models, although it does not expect its findings to be generalizable. While not intending to produce findings that could be generalized to other settings, I did aim to produce a framework and model that provided alternate ways of looking at things and expanding thinking.

Accepting that the world is socially constructed and subjective requires a particular research approach of particular significance. Van Manen argued that 'phenomenology can fill a certain gap in educational research' (1984: 1) and emphasized the need for 'pedagogic sensibility' in interactions with others. Although van Manen was referring to educating children, I would argue that adults also benefit from an approach that acknowledges that, while technical competence may emanate from theoretic

knowledge, the crucial skills relating to teaching competence can only come from live practice.

He movingly describes how researching, questioning and theorizing from a phenomenological viewpoint comprise an act of attaching oneself to the world and becoming the world. Van Manen (1984) claims that phenomenological research is a caring act that acknowledges all that is unique or prodigious about individuals. I alluded earlier to the notion of praxis and why the application of theory to practice is so important within the context of my research.

A phenomenological approach brings with it a need to lay aside existing understandings of phenomena and to suspend existing assumptions and preconceptions so that new and revised meanings emerge. Phenomenology requires experienced practitioners who have spent a long time in their chosen field to 'bracket off' existing points of view and to start looking at the world through a different lens. This was never going to be easy but, as I later demonstrate, checks and balances were incorporated into my research design to reduce bias. I was confident that the means would justify the ends, with the emergence of fresh, enhanced and authentic insights into a familiar phenomenon.

I found these words on the potential of phenomenology below an inspiration:

set aside all previous habits of thought, see through and break down the mental barriers which these habits have set along the horizons of our thinking... to learn what stands before our eyes. (Husserl, 1931: 43)

Because I have worked in the field of educational development for some time and have also carried out a number of teaching observations, I needed this particular theoretical approach to enable me to see the commonplace with a new lens.

Phenomenology is not restricted to theorizing and, because it promotes deep thinking, can be a catalyst for practical action able to improve lives and bring about change. As a practitioner researcher I found a natural fit between phenomenology and action research because both are personal and situated in a specific context, requiring reflection, thoughtfulness and tactfulness. They will always both be characterized by the personal engagement of the researcher, which is why when undertaking this research I sought to strengthen the relationship between the knowledge I held and the actions I undertook, enabling me to understand myself as an individual and an educational developer.

It is clear to me that theorizing about my practice and researching my practice were not two separate entities, making it possible for a critical pedagogy to emerge from

understanding it and then to reconstruct its meaning, and giving my practice significance.

Elliott (1992) considers carrying out action research to be a form of professional development for teachers. This aligned itself closely to the view that I hold, which is the importance of modelling the way for others by making action research a powerful avenue for professional learning. He expresses concern that a disconnection between theory and practice is harming the relevance and impact of educational research, caused by research being done 'on' teaching rather than teachers owning the research. Elliott argues that a way of practitioners taking back control and improving their self-esteem is to start viewing their practice as a form of 'enquiry', with the search for understanding beginning with changing the practice.

Although action theorists will disagree amongst themselves, in the context of this project my action research aimed to improve practice rather than to produce new knowledge (Elliott, 1992), with improved practice taking precedence over the creation of new knowledge. The intrinsic qualities of my action research are openness to the questions of the participants, ideas and ways of thinking as well as a commitment to free and open discussion.

I would also argue that this project is closely aligned to the principles of feminist research, because it encapsulates a desire to remove the power balance between researcher and participant, is politically motivated, and begins with the standpoint and experience of a woman, namely myself (Harding, 1987). While I do not feel able to claim that this is feminist research in a pure sense, the values often associated with feminist research informed the research design.

My beliefs and values certainly shaped the research, coming out of a background in palliative care nursing and person-centred counselling. I brought these to my role as an educational developer. Many years of experience as an educational developer prior to embarking on the research allowed me to consider whether there was congruence between my values, experiences and developing practices while working under the auspices of a large organization, as well as being an external assessor for two other organizations. I had carried out over three hundred teaching observations before embarking on this research. I promote a participatory, experiential, reflective and transformative approach to learning and research developed over a number of years. I would define myself as a practitioner researcher who brings to their work the creation of a growth-producing climate in the humanistic (Rogers, 1951) and social learning

traditions (Bandura, 1977). The importance of mentioning this is to convey how individuals bring their own prejudices, which might impact on the rigour of the research.

Within the research design the power relationship between the researcher and the subject was reconfigured to validate the perspective of the participant. The intention was to remove the hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant, which is paralleled by challenging the observer–observed hierarchy. Changing research terminology from one of hierarchy to one of equality seemed an important first step, hence the use of ‘participant’ as a preferred term to ‘subject’.

However, addressing the imbalance in power relations between researcher and researched is more than simply changing the language of research. Recognizing the participants as the experts and authorities on their own experiences was taken as another starting point for the research: ‘our own frameworks of understanding need to be critically examined as we look for the tensions and contradictions they might entail’ (Lather, 1988: 576). It was imperative that I identified my own position in order to address existing and potential biases. As an established educational developer within a large organization, I needed to acknowledge individual agency and that the choices being made by the researcher are shaped and motivated by social location, from the choice of a research topic to decisions on how to present the material.

I was acutely aware that I brought my own experiences and history into the role of researcher and the research process and I discuss this in more detail in a later section. I was both insider and outsider to the environment and to the topic I sought to explore. As an insider, I had prior knowledge and insight about the dynamics and interplay of social relationships and historical antecedents that informed the situation under investigation. The issue of inequality had the potential to be overcome through my affiliation with the context, where participants may feel more comfortable in sharing information with someone who is within the situation (Matsumoto, 1996). By contrast, being also outside the situation being examined gave potential to change the imbalance of the power relations with the participants. Having to explain personal experiences and feelings with an outsider allows participants the space to assess their own lived realities critically. It reinforces their location as author and expert in the situation. It also potentially gives participants the opportunity safely to criticize their colleagues, organization or situation without fear of discovery. Striving for balance and equality between researcher and participant entails negotiating the often blurry insider–outsider relationship between the two parties.

Addressing inequality in the research relationship is more than simply acknowledging different social locations such as power, gender, class, age and ethnicity. It also involves taking an active role in negotiating across these differences with the participants. Difference in social location is not an insurmountable barrier to the research process, but difference must be recognized and addressed as part of the process. I have striven to do this so I might bring an added depth and richness to the project findings.

To conclude this section, personal experience has been pivotal to my methodological considerations and the purpose of this undertaking. Prior to embarking upon this research I had identified specific areas that are particularly meaningful to me and reflected on my personal values. After 328 teaching observations in the past three and a half years, when observing teaching I can move into the situation quickly and make sense of what I see before entering into an interview or discussion with those involved. This does not mean that I am complacent or desensitized but rather come to this project as an already experienced practitioner researcher, ready to build on and improve upon that which has gone before.

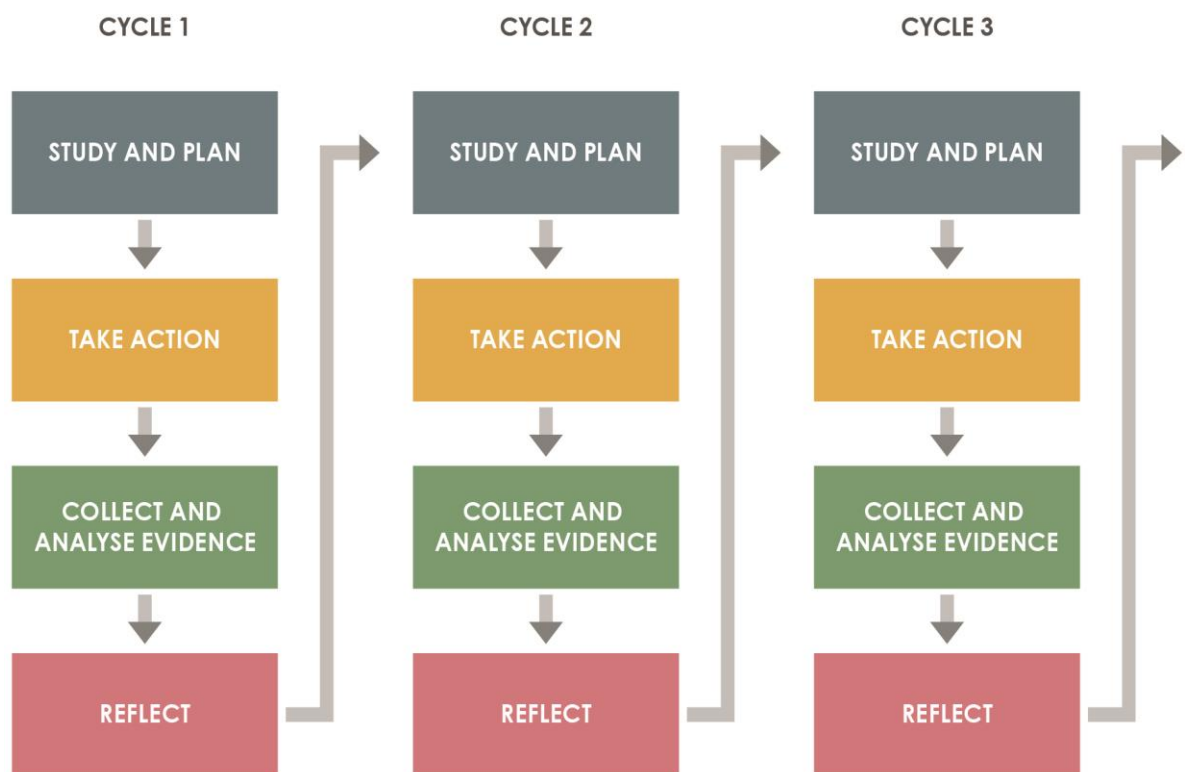
### **Rationale for chosen research approach: The research question and the purpose of the research**

My choice of methodological approach also had to provide the best framework and methods to answer my research question and contribute to achieving the purpose of my research. My project was not simply about uncovering new knowledge; it was to consider how as an individual I might make a difference within a large organization. From the onset I appreciated that I was not, nor could I ever be, a detached presence, yet I aspired to be a change agent and bring about improvement. This would come about through the study of academics and the organization within which they worked along with a self-study of me as researcher/practitioner.

A 'best fit' was achieved between my project aims and the main characteristics of action research. I began by asking myself the question at the starting point for all action researchers, 'What can I do about the situation that I face?' An action research approach is focused on bringing about improvement through change; it views the insider practitioner researcher as an essential and credible subject for research and advocates that any exploration of others' experience must be carried out through democratic and collaborative processes. There is a synthesis and fit between my espoused theoretical values and the choice of action research as an approach.

My intention was to focus on the potential impact and features of the feedback cycle within the context of teaching observation. This complements an action research approach. As discourse analysts demonstrate, people have the propensity to contradict themselves within the space of a single short interview (Marshall and Wetherall, 1989) so this sequence of observations followed by interview sought to overcome this. Figure 3.1 illustrates the action research cycle and how the data flow, data volumes and reduction by analysis was designed for me to meet project objectives.

I have been greatly influenced by the work of McNiff (2002), who refers to action research as the ‘new scholarship’ because of the opportunity it offers to engage with the question of what counts as knowledge and what that knowledge might be used for. I am drawn to its iterative cycle of Plan—Act—Observe—Reflect/Evaluate and was confident that applying a grounded theory approach to the ‘observe’ phase of cycle would achieve a good fit. Especially appealing was the iterative aspect of action research, with its continual process of reflection and review.



**Figure 3.1: Progressive problem solving with action research (Greenwood and Levin, 2007)**

I considered a soft systems approach (Checkland, 1999) similar to action research, but was concerned that the additional emphasis involved in this approach on the assessment of the situation when an intervention is deemed necessary would result in



an imbalance. In this project, an 'intervention' is not necessarily the goal and the soft systems approach appears more prescriptive and therefore less democratic, consequently more suited to structured organizational change.

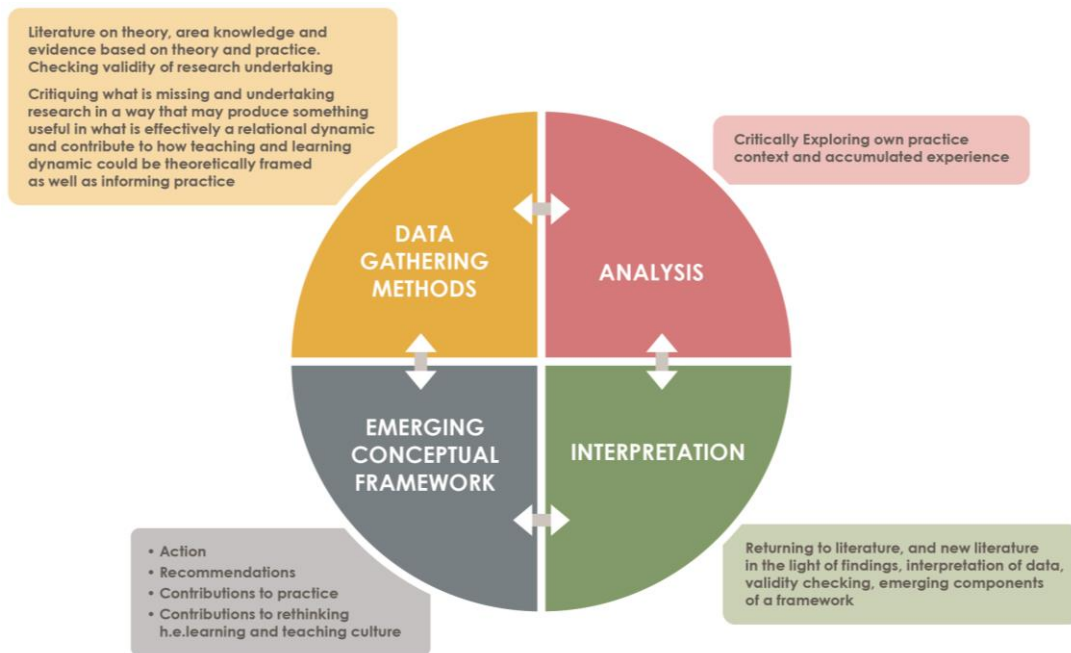
At one point I also considered a case-study approach (Yin, 2003), thinking it might improve the reliability and potential for generalizing study findings. I wondered if multiple cases offered a potential for attracting wider interest and making findings transferable and relevant outside my organization. In the end I decided that melding research methods together was weakening rather than strengthening the research design and that the aim of my research was not to provide generalized findings but to articulate and represent the experiences of individuals within my own organization.

I was motivated by a desire to have something useful and relevant come out of this research, in a form such as a model or theory that would capture practice knowledge and gather together some of the disparate views of commentators and participants which could then be used and developed further as knowledge in the field increases. Kolb's learning model is an example of this (Kolb, 1984).

Traditional grounded theorists would advocate starting with data collection then carrying out the major literature review at the end of the research activity. For example, Strauss and Corbin (1990:49) would describe it as follows,

in grounded theory studies, you want to explain phenomena in light of the theoretical framework that evolves during the research itself; thus, you do not want to be constrained by having to adhere to a previously developed theory that may or may not apply to the area under investigation.

However, I found it of value to examine the literature before embarking on this research and to use it as one of the interpretative frames in the analysis of the data and to support the validity of the research. Later comparing the findings to the original literature I had reviewed, then pursuing further specialized literature where relevant to the findings, allowed me to lay the foundations for my discussion and recommendations. This allowed me to modify and position any conceptual framework or theory that emerged, showing how my work supported or extended relevant literature. This went some way towards addressing the concern expressed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) that familiarity with the literature would result in imposing pre-conceived ideas and assumptions on the data. Figure 3.2 demonstrates how I used grounded theory for this project.



**Figure 3.2: Use of grounded theory (Davis, 2014)**

In the process of carrying out teaching observations and learning conversations with the participants in the research, I realized that what was emerging was a 'framework'. Using a grounded theory approach helped me in the development of a framework because its analysis has strong checks for inconsistencies and variance that ensure that any emerging theory is also 'grounded' in solid, reliable methods. The method of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) kept a focus on the context in which I was practising while developing the framework to help me understand it. It is an approach that is rigorous yet appropriately organic, facilitating continual exploration as I moved through the various stages of research. The use of grounded theory in this way is an attempt to capture something of Dowling and Brown's (2010) conceptualization of the research process, that is, the complexity involved in successfully capturing the dynamic relationship between theory (written knowledge) and practice in a research undertaking. I believe this dialogue between these areas is one that cannot take place without a critical dialogue with the literature throughout the research process. A critical engagement with the practices of the researcher and the practitioner data emerges, essential if any new theory, conceptual framework or model is to have validity.

Locke (2001) suggests that grounded theory shares common features with action research with both approaches seeking to develop theoretical concepts that can be applied and will benefit practitioners. I used a grounded theory approach to enable me

to identify categories and themes that would inform an emerging theoretical framework alongside an action research promoting change within my organization.

Stringer (1999) made a strong case to remove the pressure to generalize, arguing that action research is concerned with researching into local problems situated within a specific context with the aim of finding solutions. This further convinced me that findings need not be generalizable to be valid and reliable, as long as they are presented within the context of a particular situation.

An action research approach puts researchers centre stage and allows them to factor themselves into the research design. In the context of my own research design this let me reflect on my own observation and feedback practices and generate a depth of understanding that would not emerge from a more objective stance outside the experience. It was my practice that I sought to explore.

As with feminist research (Stanley and Wise, 1983), there tends to be a political dimension to action research with the emergent new knowledge offering the researcher the possibility of improving what they are doing for the mutual benefit of their own practice, the practice of others and the goals of the organization. I felt strongly that such a methodological approach lent itself well to my type of enquiry, which is developmental and seeks to make improvements within the workplace in terms of the academic and student experience.

Earlier I referred to the balance of power between the researcher and the participant, but what power does the researcher have to effect change within the larger organization? Action research as an approach has been used extensively in educational research (McNiff, 2002). Norton (2009) suggests that pedagogical research in teaching and learning should aim to modify practice, influence policy and produce publishable outcomes. I have no problem with the latter, but the first two are surely dependent on the power of the researcher practitioner within the organization and whether an infrastructure exists to support such change. I do concede that it enables practitioners to modify their own practice. I will go into more detail about this conundrum in the discussion chapter.

I was confident that action research would allow me to answer my two main questions of 'What is happening here?' and, equally important, 'How can I improve the quality of my professional practice as an educational developer?' Champions of action research (Stringer, 2007; Norton, 2009) state categorically that action research does not seek to provide answers but to provide an authentic account of what is happening in a localized and contextualized setting. Through the description and interpretation of various

events, reporting findings and making recommendations, it provides the opportunity to contribute new theories and insights.

It is important to explain that there are many types of action research. As Grey (2009) argues, one size does not fit all and to assume otherwise fails to capture the nuances of this approach. However, the different approaches are more alike than they are different, with the generic goal being to generate theory through the development of new ideas and to address practical issues (Lewin, 1946).

Lincoln (2001) sees a convincing relationship between action research and constructivist theory, as both argue that knowledge will always be value laden and that there is no getting away from this. Action research recognizes the inevitability of bias and subjectivity, addressing their existence in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages of the research. Bowling (1997, cited in Badger, 2000) has argued that the view made popular by Lewin (1946), of action research as a form of social engineering, has now been expanded to acknowledge other benefits to organizations that include improved awareness, empowerment and collaboration.

I believe passionately that the success of the project rests on my ability to work with others, while having realistic expectations about what could be achieved. I fully anticipated that it might be easier, in some instances, to adapt and change my own practice than that of others or the wider organization. While prior experience, roles and responsibilities of mine and others will inevitably influence responses, McNiff and Whitehead (2005) stress how the action researcher has a responsibility to reveal different perspectives held by others without being seen to pass judgement, which was a challenge that needed to be acknowledged within the research design.

### **Research design**

The data collection methods were observation field notes, journal entries and learning conversations. Following each observation, participants were invited to synthesize their experience in the form of a recorded discussion based on their own reflections after each observed event, which was the learning conversation. It is important to define terms for the project activity as follows:

*Direct Observation:* This is where participants were observed continuously in a teaching situation for a period of 60-90 minutes. Participants were observed on three separate occasions in the course of one semester.

*Learning conversations:* The accepted nomenclature associated with teaching observations is normally feedback, referring to the discussion that followed the

observation of teaching. For the purposes of this research, I refer to the dialogue that follows the teaching observations as 'learning conversations'. It was important that terms were not conflated, for example, 'feedback' used interchangeably with 'learning conversations' or 'learning conversation' with 'interview'. From the start I wanted to call the sessions learning conversations, because it allowed for a shifting of the power dynamic. They took place after the observation and were recorded.

*Journal entries:* These refer to the diary that I kept throughout the research project and in which I regularly recorded my thoughts and feelings.

Because of the emphasis this research places on situational, contextual and biographical experiences, it did not seem appropriate, nor fit for purpose, to select one-off observations and learning conversations with individuals for the sample. That particular approach would be dependent on a single point of reference, a snapshot that would not allow for continuity, progression or deep reflection. As discourse analysts (Marshall and Wetherall, 1989) argue, we have the propensity to contradict ourselves within the space of a single short interview, so having a series of observations and learning conversations was seen as a way of taking this into account. Limitations of single sampling frames have characterized recent phenomenological research into the retrospective accounts of lecturers in higher education following attendance on professional development courses (Prosser et al., 2006; Knight, 2006). Using a grounded theory approach sought to catch any major inconsistencies and include them in the analysis.

I believed that the success of this project rested on my ability to collaborate and learn from others as well as reflecting critically on my own practices. In the pursuit of validity and ethical practice (Foreman-Peck and Winch, 2010), I intended to explore the experiences of others without being seen to pass judgement. I also recognized that it might be easier to change my own perspective than that of others and the importance of realistic goals (McNiff et al., 2000).

As action research is a cyclical process with overlapping stages, while important to commence the project with planned actions it was vital to recognize that as part of its iterative nature the action research would be modified on the basis of what emerged from review and evaluation. A feature of action research, and one which makes it simultaneously challenging and thrilling to be involved in, is that it will not necessarily be neat, orderly or predictable.

## **Recruitment of participants**

In the initial planning stages of this project I had considered whether the participants should come from one or a range of disciplines, one School or from across Schools, and whether they should be 'new academics', 'mid-career academics or 'established academics'. In the end I decided to include participants from a single School, Engineering and Information Sciences, which included all three groups of staff. This 'bounding' of the sample allowed me as the practitioner researcher to work in a more collegial way to develop relationships that were more likely to endure and to learn more about subject specific pedagogies. Importantly, it was feasible and not overly ambitious in its scope. The sample choice resonated with the literature, which extolled the benefits of creating communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), principles of change management referred to by Lewin (1948) and the need to be purposeful yet realistic about what action research might achieve.

This issue of representativeness was an important consideration but I needed to be satisfied that the common ground was greater than the differences, and settled on a serendipitous sample on the basis that, within a single research project, all the potential variables alluded to would not be accounted for. Yet resolving how individuals might identify themselves led to a secondary sampling concern: how to recruit participants. A direct and individual approach, an invitation to participate, a requirement to participate, a barter to participate—all would have an impact on motivation and 'buy in', as well as ethical considerations. Therefore it was necessary to make a decision and be explicit and transparent about the impact of the recruitment approach.

In a large and hierarchical organization this careful negotiation of access and 'buy in' from the start by those who have power was a vital part of the process. This resulted in the lead-in to research taking longer than planned but was worth it in long run, as the project was supported and championed within the organization, and aligns practitioner researcher to an approach that is friendly, open and transparent.

The Dean of the School of Engineering and Information Sciences was supportive and interested in my work, fulfilling the role of gatekeeper and significant in terms of stakeholder involvement and sense of ownership. Formal documents were made available stating aims, objectives and outputs to the Dean of School and the Associate Deans. The Dean of School encouraged the project, made suggestions about how it might further benefit staff and students at a local level as well as the wider organization and met me throughout the project, making suggestions and encouraging further ways to become involved with the School while granting me full access to staff. It had been

his idea to focus on undergraduates, in particular first year undergraduates. The reason for this was the perception of the all-important first year of university.

Consequently, recruitment into the research was by extending an invitation to participate to all full-time academics within the School whose roles included significant input into undergraduate programmes. This depth rather than breadth approach appealed to me as it allowed me to focus on specific programmes and disciplines and a particular student group, namely undergraduates. I had recently been undertaking work with the School of Engineering and Information Sciences and was intrigued by the juxtaposition between the quantitative nature of their subject matter and the qualitative nature of my research approach. I had experienced previous success with academics in these disciplines while delivering the PG Cert HE and departmental workshops in terms of encouraging them to embrace a more reflective, reflexive way of teaching. This was evidenced through portfolio and findings from previous research (Davis and Ryder, 2012) and influenced an open attitude to my research proposal.

Emails were sent to all lecturers within the School of Engineering and Information Sciences who taught on undergraduate computing science and engineering degrees inviting them to participate in the project (see Appendix 3). They were told that this research project had been designed with the purpose of providing academics in the School of Engineering and Information Sciences with personalized, work-based support to focus on their role as teachers, reflecting on how they facilitated the learning of their students and crucially how they experienced the dialogue with me that would follow. I told them that I was especially interested in the relationship between the observed (participants) and the observer (myself), and the effect of a particular style of facilitation and communication on academic staff.

Ten members of staff who taught on undergraduate programmes were recruited to the study, considered sufficient to address the research aims and objectives adequately as well as being appropriate for the chosen methodological approach. Once recruited informed consent was gained and further information provided about their role within the research, their rights, confidentiality and the overall purpose of the research (see Appendix 4). Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Table 3.1 below provides further details about the ten participants.

**Table 3.1: Participant characteristics**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of years teaching in total</b>	<b>Number of years spent teaching within organization</b>
A	Male	23	12
B	Female	3	3
C	Male	4	2
D	Male	3	3
E	Female	16	16
F	Male	15	9
G	Male	12	12
H	Male	5	4
I	Female	7	7
J	Male	18	13

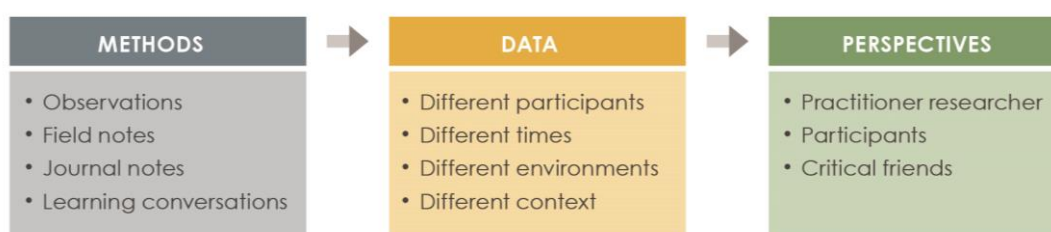
Age, nationality and highest educational qualifications were deliberately not included, as it would make the participants too easily identifiable.

It was inevitable, given my position within the University, that I would already be known to the majority of the participants. Six of the ten participants had had the benefit of my input and observation before through the PG Cert HE programme, while a further three were my peers in the Middlesex University Teaching Fellows Network. Only one of the ten participants was completely unknown to me. In any research, it is important to be open and honest about prior and existing relationships with participants. Given the nature of my role within the organization and the focus of my research, it was inevitable that some of us would be known to each other. I was mindful of this, but also felt it to be an advantage in that I was already seen as credible and trustworthy.



## Data collection

Triangulating the data increases reliability and contributes towards a more coherent picture (Foreman-Peck and Winch, 2010). For this reason, the intention was for discussion data to be compared with journal evidence and teaching observation data in an attempt to capture and respect the perspectives and subjective experience of those involved. Seeking corroboration from a range of data sources enabled me to claim greater validity and reliability.



**Figure 3.3: Triangulation by methods, data and perspectives**

It was intended, as Grey (2009) suggests, that the inherent bias of one method would be offset by the strengths of the others, strengthening the validity of the findings overall. Thus, I was confident that these data collection methods were compatible and complementary, providing me with a research design that allows for triangulation of data. According to Costley and Gibbs (2006), this tendency to gather data using a variety of methods is a typical feature of action research.

A significant challenge was in handling a large volume of data without discarding anything vital. Limiting the number of participants and spreading the fieldwork over a semester helped, as did the services of a professional transcribing service. Having easy access to participants who were mostly located on site made the logistics easy, as little travelling time was required.

## Observation

I observed three teaching sessions led by each of the participants and attended by their students, whose numbers ranged from 15 to 150 depending on the type of session. These sessions were negotiated in advance and took place over the course of one semester. The participants decided which teaching sessions they wanted to be observed and given feedback on. Types of sessions I observed included lectures, seminars, group project reviews, workshops, student presentations and sessions in the computer laboratories, lasting from between one to two hours. I requested that the participants provided me in advance with relevant materials such as programme

handbooks, module handbooks, lecture slides and project briefs to enable me to contextualize the session within a broader context and educational purpose.

Each observation was preceded by a pre-observation meeting where participants shared further relevant information about the session to be observed, their general experience of the students so far and, in response to my asking them, were able to specify on which areas they would particularly welcome feedback.

In all the observed sessions the students were made aware of my presence from the start. The explanation was that I was a colleague interested in teaching and learning and whom the academic had invited along to give them feedback on their teaching. I decided that it was unnecessary to negotiate informed consent with every student in each session since they were not being identified within the research, nor was my presence as a non-participant observer affecting the learning environment in a negative way.

Below is a grid showing details of all teaching observations with each participant and includes the type of teaching observation.

**Table 3.2: Observation details**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Observation 1</b>	<b>Observation 2</b>	<b>Observation 3</b>
A	Lab	Lecture	Seminar
B	Workshop	Workshop	Project show and tell
C	Lecture	Lecture	Lecture
D	Simulation	Lab	Lab
E	Lab	Lecture	Seminar
F	Lab	Lab	Lecture
G	Lab	Lecture	Lab
H	Lab	Seminar	Seminar
J	Lab	Lab	Seminar
K	Workshop	Project show and tell	Workshop

While observing I remained in the corner of the classroom or teaching space, where possible staying out of the sightline of both the lecturer and students. I offered no comments or interventions of any kind during this time.

I had previously explained to the participant that I would be taking written notes with the intention of developing insights into the subject specific pedagogies of engineering and computing science, as well as informing the feedback dialogue. My field notes included a chronological account of what happened, broad headings from the existing University teaching observation form, times of events and activities, questions and critical comments in the margins, significant quotes verbatim, key words and phrases, observation on non-verbal behaviours, observations of environment and environmental factors (see Appendix 7 for examples of field notes). I typed them up the same day because I wanted to record them before details were forgotten.

I noted down as much as possible and then used the notes to inform my discussion with the participant, using questions that invited comment while seeking clarification and their point of view. The participant and I were then able to explore these themes further in the 'learning conversations' that followed.

#### i. Learning conversations

The time between the teaching observation, the feedback and learning conversation varied from immediately afterwards to several days afterwards. There are advantages and disadvantages to both approaches (Leeds Metropolitan University, 2011). It might be argued that holding the meeting immediately after the observation means that everything was fresh in the mind of the observed and observer, but a time lapse allows for processing and time to reflect. In the context of this research it was agreed with the participants that the timeline for the feedback and learning conversations needed to accommodate their schedules and be an uninterrupted period.

I took various measures to offer confidentiality and encouragement of mutual frankness between the participants and me, as a researcher, which included stating that the interviews were confidential, that they were unrelated to appraisal, and reminding them that this was as much a review of my practice as theirs.

With the feedback I used general questions as an *aide memoire* of areas that needed exploring and these are shown below. This need was mine, as I wanted to check that I had understood correctly and to learn more about particular aspects of their teaching. I had wondered whether standardizing my approach further was necessary but concluded that the purpose was to encourage a collegial conversation in which the

opinion of the academic mattered (see Appendix 8 for example of a transcript from a learning conversation).

ii Questions

- Did the session go as you expected?
- Anything you were particularly pleased with?
- Did anything especially surprise you?
- What felt challenging, if anything?
- Is there anything you might do differently in the future?
- What would you like to ask me?

I would argue that such an approach is informed by the concept of appreciative enquiry (Cooperrider et al., 2008). Such questions are intended to demonstrate an academic-centred approach rather than an observer- or systems-centred approach paralleling a student- or client-centred approach. Because of the way I had contracted participants, I could go back if necessary to follow up. It would seem that, while questionnaires are about product, interviews are about process. I asked myself at the beginning of the research what skills are needed to conduct an interview safely, tactfully, skilfully and ethically. It was necessary also to consider the extent to which I would note non-verbal behaviours and body language. In the end, I decided that I would not note the latter when carrying out the interviews, but would note pauses, silences and amount of interviewer versus interviewee 'speak' on the transcripts. All the interviews were recorded with the aid of an audio recorder before being sent to a professional transcribing service.

The semi-structured nature of these interviews allowed opportunities for exploring and for going off into new areas in which I was able to ask questions 'on the fly'. As the researcher I would check for clarity and rephrase answers to check for accuracy of understanding, which is based on the Rogerian technique of reflecting back (Rogers, 1969). As can be seen from the findings chapter, I was able to pursue themes and clarify meaning across the three interviews with each of the participants.

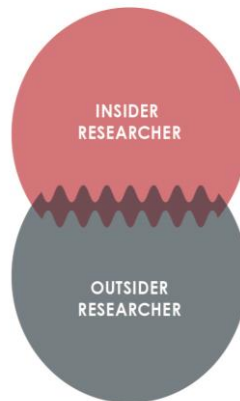
Stringer (2007) identifies four frameworks that can enable action researchers to gather data. Of these frameworks, those which drew on 'interpretative questions' I saw as particularly helpful in getting to what, for me, was the heart of the matter. It was hoped that eliciting the answers would lead to my being able to identify practical outcomes relating to the working lives of the participants.

### iii. My journal

Throughout the research I was committed to writing regular entries in a learning journal. I recorded project developments, reflections and observations and included notes from meetings and email correspondence. This provided an invaluable resource for looking at how the project had developed over time and how being involved in it had influenced my practice and beliefs. My journal enabled me to express my concerns, pleasures, anxieties and personal feelings in relation to the action research and supplemented my field notes.

### **Ethical considerations**

At the time of embarking upon the research there was a great deal of uncertainty about job security in the aftermath of a major restructuring exercise. The School of Engineering and Information Sciences had just recovered from part of a University-wide exercise that looked critically at the contributions made by academic staff in relation to organizational goals before making recommendations for redundancy. It does not take much imagination to realize how extending an invitation to participate in this research might be misconstrued as yet another tool seeking to examine their teaching practices and expose the participants to further scrutiny. Figure 3.3 seeks to illustrate the challenges of simultaneously being an outsider and an insider researcher. It attempts to convey that, while these two identities are conjoined, they are also subject at times to a rough separation that is certainly not smooth. A lack of demarcation lines and boundaries also characterizes the two positions. Before and after the research it was essential that I did everything I could to alleviate concerns that this was not related to any evaluation. I ensured that the participants had a real understanding that this was different, not about examining people but an extra pair of eyes genuinely interested in their practice and them to see what they and I might learn.



**Figure 3.4: Challenges of outsider/insider research**

Ethical values are fundamental to my work and I sought to maintain them by taking measures to address my concerns throughout my work. These go beyond receiving ethical approval for my research from a panel and receiving the accompanying 'rubber stamp'. A primary concern was how in my role as a practitioner researcher I was simultaneously insider and outsider. Costley and Gibbs (2006) make a strong argument for practitioner researchers adopting an 'ethics of care' in order to safeguard these personal and moral relations with others. Other researchers can leave at the end of the research, while practitioner researchers such as I remain in the situation. I considered it a privilege to abide in the world of others (Heidegger, 2000), and with this came responsibility. Many of my journal entries reflect my sense of belonging with colleagues and peers, but also the need to separate myself from the participants and the organization to address the research question best. There was at times conflict between the values and norms of the participants, the organization and myself that I addressed through reflective writing, with critical friends and in supervision.

Nine of the ten participants were already known to me and six had been participants on the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, of which I am Programme Leader. I acknowledge this prior relationship, and that it led to their willingness to take part is supported by participants. This aspect will be explored in more detail in a later section looking at issues relating to the ethics of insider research and reliability of findings. Being a practitioner researcher within my own organization has both advantages and disadvantages.

Reflections for me were on how 'alike' I was to the research participants, the common ground between us, being one of them or being one of something else, perceptions of

each other as people and as roles, problematic communication and fluent communication.

I saw my professional role as a facilitator rather than an expert but, as the findings reveal, this is not as straightforward as it would appear. I hoped that any potential bias might be mitigated by the length of time spent in the organization, experience in carrying out such observations and making explicit my role as practitioner researcher within the project.

Badger (2000) argues that, on a superficial level, due to its claims to being a participatory and collaborative approach, action research might first appear to be affected by fewer ethical dilemmas. However, Lathlean (1994, cited in Badger, 2000) says that action research might find itself in the position of leaving participants to clear up the mess. I wanted to avoid this at all costs.

I was conscious of my responsibilities as an 'insider researcher' and the need for transparency, particularly around the purpose of the research. My main concern was what happens when findings show up individuals, the organization and its practices in a less than favourable light.

My prior relationships with participants and potential issues of power concerned me. Although I might argue that I no longer had any power, as the participants were no longer on the programme, I was aware that participants might see these teaching observations as a form of assessment or performance management due to our earlier roles.

Management often has different priorities and responsibilities that may include a more empirical, statistically based study that takes into account performance, targets and student satisfaction. It was important that neither were research findings used for appraisal purposes nor individuals' contributions used for the research without their consent or outside the context of the project, and participants were assured that this would be the case.

### **Reliability and validity**

Although reliability and validity are treated separately in quantitative studies, these terms are not viewed separately in qualitative research. Instead, terminology that encompasses both, such as credibility, transferability, and trustworthiness is used. (Golafshani, 2003: 600)

In my own research I have sought to reduce bias through triangulation of my methods and data with the purpose of more validity and reliable findings.

I considered myself an expert practitioner who used tacit knowledge to inform my practice as an educational developer. However, I also recognized that, despite careful efforts, discrepancies might occur between participants' meanings and actions and my interpretation. The learning conversations that allowed participants to challenge my interpretation of what I had observed were seen as a way of remedying this.

How important is personal experience? In my case it is crucial and has influenced my methodological considerations. I have identified specific areas that are particularly meaningful to me and methods I believe to be the best way of researching my project area. Extensive professional experience provides me with theoretical sensitivity. After conducting 328 teaching observations in the three and a half years prior to the start of the project I knew that when observing teaching I could move into the situation quickly, and make immediate sense of what I see. Yet it also may present a problem: for example, I may be too quick to form conclusions, be likely to miss things, too comfortable and filtering everything through my own lens. What if I were to be confronted by something that was unfamiliar and did not fit with my prior experience?

For this reason I sought the opinions and views of a small number of critical companions who, I felt, would offer constructive feedback and alternative perspectives and, while sympathetic to my research, were able to offer sufficient levels of challenge and critique. These included experienced educational developers from my own and other universities as well as two individuals with experience of undertaking action research in a higher education context. At the same time I was prepared, particularly when reflecting on my own practice, to stand on my own authority and go with my own instinct and intuition (Benner, 1984) as an expert practitioner whose knowledge and skills had come from multiple experiences. I believe that critique is an essential part of scholarship and was grateful to receive suggestions.

Conference presentations and workshops on alternative approaches to teaching observation were delivered locally, nationally and internationally. Oral presentations and subsequent feedback and questions from audience members helped me develop my ideas.

I took a great deal of implicit and tacit knowledge into the research situation, and this can offer an advantage. It might have been argued that this familiarity may have blinded me to alternative interpretations so it was essential for me to 'maintain an attitude of scepticism' and regard findings as provisional until supported by convincing data. I started with the premise that researchers are not neutral, and I have never claimed to



be so, seeking to mitigate against bias in a variety of ways as best I can. I am aware of potential for bias in grounded theory and was able to counter it.

Other forms of validation came from the individuals themselves while participating in the research, and my access to audio recordings and transcripts of their interviews and questionnaires. In addition, there was academic supervision by my supervisor and adviser on the DProf programme.

It is important to stress at this point that observation and intuition were important parts of my research approach. Cousins (2006) encourages us to accept that intuition is not merely guesswork. I had no intention of missing something important because I was too busy looking for 'validity' within conventional paradigms, and saw self-validation as also offering legitimate validity.

## Chapter 4: Analysis of data

### Approach

In the previous chapter I provided a detailed rationale for my data collection methods, explaining how they complemented each other and would provide the information I sought. I wanted the data to tell me what the process of observation might reveal about teaching and learning in higher education, and what the participants had identified as the most effective approach for carrying out teaching observations. I hoped the data would point to what extent previous experience of teaching observation by the participants matched what was perceived to be the desired experience; how my practice as an educational developer had evolved over time and what were the features that characterized it.

The data analysis began after the final teaching observations and learning conversations had taken place. My analysis of the data is drawn from a grounded theory approach (Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006), because it appeared logical and systematic and to an extent mirrored the process of action research. Both action research and grounded theory place great importance on the stages of review and evaluation, unafraid to return to examine and reflect on the data.

I chose this analysis system over interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). My rationale was that I wanted to do more than thicken the analysis, seeking instead to pursue an emerging model or theory or modification of an existing model or theory. There are many examples of educational development research (e.g. Amundsen and Wilson, 2012; Campbell and Groundwater-Smith, 2007) that have sought to make changes or improvements through a cycle or a set of cycles of planning, investigation, action and reflection. My methods of analysis allowed what was important to rise to the surface while avoiding becoming bogged down in too many iterative circles.

Grounded theory questions tend to be orientated towards action and process (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and so are a good fit with data collection methods that encompass observation, journal entries and learning conversations. I had existing beliefs based on my lived experience and felt such an approach would enable me to look at the familiar with a different lens. It ensured that I suspended any preconceptions and allowed the theory to emerge from the data. Like action research, it required an iterative approach involving continuous review.

To adopt a grounded theory approach is to embark on a journey (Charmaz, 2006) without knowing what the final destination will be. In the course of this journey one

must be prepared for obstacles, the unknown and many waysides that are mistaken for the right route: dead ends, swampy lowlands, high ground and uncharted territory. The language of a journey is powerful and evocative, as reflected in the following:

Throughout the journey we will climb up analytical levels and raise the theoretical importance of your ideas while we keep a taut rope tied to your data on solid ground. (Charmaz, 2006: 1).

All the field notes were written up and all the learning conversations transcribed. Inevitably in a research design that followed observation by discussion, on many occasions there were opportunities to follow up in situ the emergent themes and any assumptions during subsequent encounters with the participants (see Appendices).

The coding and ordering of data, given the vast amount, was crucial to the credibility and usefulness of the findings. For this reason I did not impose a hypothesis on the data as my chosen research methods were reliant on an inductive approach. Grounded theorists (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) advise against undertaking too extensive a literature review prior to carrying out the research. This is an example of where I deviated from a pure grounded theory methodology. The literature provided a context for my research questions and, because this had been my area of expert practice for several years, it was not possible to be unaware of relevant sources.

In the first stage of data analysis I drew initial codes from the data while being conscious of the need to avoid preconceived ideas based on this preliminary analysis. These helped with the development of tentative conceptual categories that were then subjected to constant comparative analysis (see Appendices 9, 11 and 12) and will be expanded on in the findings chapter. Below is a list which shows the sequence of coding and data analysis.

Stage One—Phase One:

- 1) Observations and interviews data
- 2) Reading of transcripts and notes to identify initial emergent categories
- 3) Establishing emergent categories as codes for data classification.

Stage One—Phase Two:

- 2) Re-reading of observations and interviews data for the purpose of coding in relations to the categories established in Phase One.
- 2) Production of coded transcriptions and notes.
- 3) Review of coded transcriptions by 'critical companions'
- 4) Adjustment of coded transcriptions based on critical review.
- 5) Analysis of emergent themes in the revised coded transcriptions.

Stage Two—Phase One:

- 3) Observations and interviews data
- 2) Reading of transcripts and notes to identify focused coding and emergent categories
- 3) Establishing emergent categories as codes for data classification

Stage Two—Phase Two:

- 4) 1) Re-reading of observations and interviews data for the purpose of focused coding in relations to the categories established in Phase One.
- 2) Production of coded transcriptions and notes.
- 3) Review of coded transcriptions by 'critical companions'.
- 4) Adjustment of coded transcriptions based on critical review.
- 5) Analysis of emergent themes in the revised coded transcriptions.

Stage Three—Phase One: 1) Observations and interviews data. 2) Reading of transcripts and notes to identify selected coding and emergent categories. 3) Establishing emergent categories as codes for data classification.

Stage Three—Phase Two: 1) Re-reading of observations and interviews data for the purpose of selective coding in relations to the categories established in Phase One. 2) Production of coded transcriptions and notes. 3) Review of coded transcriptions by 'critical companions'. 4) Adjustment of coded transcriptions based on critical review. 5) Analysis of emergent themes in the revised coded transcriptions.

As mentioned previously, entire interviews and field notes were transcribed. During my reading of the interview transcripts the codes began to emerge. This was my first step in moving beyond reading statements and descriptions to making analytical interpretations. I embarked on 'initial coding' (see Appendix 9) by organizing the data into the following broad units with the intention of finding meaning and emerging themes. Open coding required me to look for common themes, making comparisons between data and asking questions. It gave me a direction although I accepted that coding was an emergent process thus was careful not to jump to conclusions.

The second stage was focused coding, which allowed me to synthesize and interpret larger sections of data. I made decisions about which codes were most implicit as well as going back to the data to study them anew, in case I had missed anything the first time.

Through initial coding, data were examined minutely by notating the text, then by focused coding the data were broken down into parts, literally by cutting up the text and placing what appeared to be connected into the same pile. The connections were

based on actions, events and language that were similar, which in turn allowed me to see processes emerging.

This allowed the creation of diagrammatic representation of categories and sub-categories through selective coding. Such data were rich and plentiful and the coding process involved iterative analysis that led to the creation of themes. Specific examples of how the coding of transcripts and field notes were coded in each cycle, informing the creation of categories and sub-categories (in Appendices 9, 11 and 12).

I asked my critical companions to look at a sample of my coded transcribed interviews and field notes, not with the intention of creating new data but rather to comment on the categories and sub-categories I had created. The purpose of this was to check that I had been consistent in my coding and to provide an objective standpoint. The following description offers a clear description of the process by which the coding categories were identified and the role played by critical friends.

A specific example of how critical companions informed the coding was to support a separate category for 'emancipation and democratization' rather than it be part of the 'best practice for observers' category. Another was the suggestion that I develop a wider remit for the category that was to eventually become 'painting a bigger picture' in order to broaden and strengthen it.

The second stage was focused coding, which allowed me to synthesize and interpret larger sections of data. I made decisions about which codes were most implicit as well as going back to the data to study it anew, in case I had missed anything the first time. Again as with Stage 1, critical companions reviewed my codes and subsequent categories and sub-categories, making comments.

Memo writing was also an important part of my analytical journey. From the beginning of the data analysis process and throughout I recorded emergent ideas and insights about codes and categories. The process of writing helped me refine my ideas and deepen my insights. (See Appendix 10 for examples of memo writing.)

Strauss and Corbin (1990) talk about a third category called 'axial coding', the purpose of which is to relate categories to sub-categories. It is a way of bringing the data back together again. I had decided in advance to follow the leads in the empirical data rather than use the applied framework associated with axial coding. As stated in an earlier section I had made a decision at the onset to use a grounded theory approach rather than a pure grounded theory methodology. This suited my subject matter, the large amounts of data and some of the cross-over between data sources.

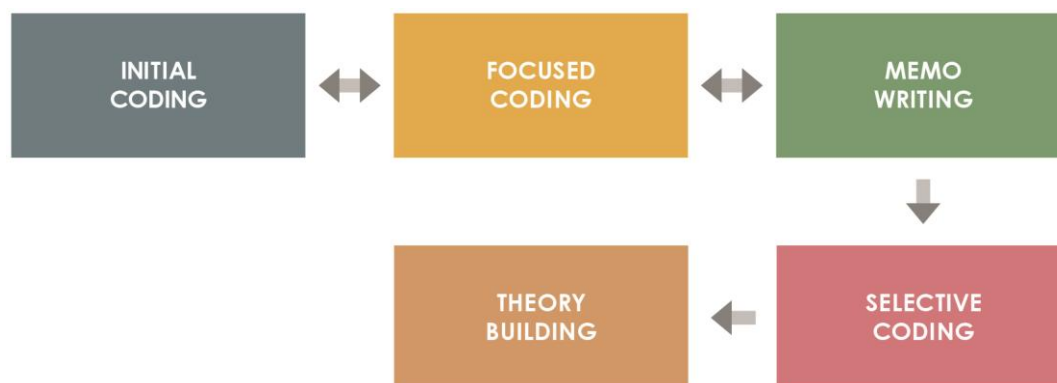
The third stage was using 'selective coding', which involved the selection of core categories by the integration of categories and then the creation of sub-categories to produce a theory from what was learnt and how it might be applied. Bounding the data was crucial to theory construction, deciding that I had reached saturation point because no fresh insights were emerging, prompting me to stop and move onto writing up the findings.

These steps were applied to all three data sources. Teaching observation field notes and transcriptions of learning conversation transcripts provided the most data, with all data sources complementing each other and making significant contributions to theory building.

Although the data were initially analysed separately according to source, they were later scrutinized for commonalities and cross-over. The observations and learning conversations took place over a period of six months. In this time there was a continual synthesis between data collection and analysis. I found myself moving quickly back and forth from initial to focused coding within this relatively short timeframe.

This approach to data analysis offered structure, reliability and validity with each of the different methods of data collection discrete yet complementary, and greater than the sum of its parts when put together.)

This is demonstrated in Figure 4.2, which provides an overview of the coding process.



**Figure 4.1: Data coding process**

### **Coding teaching observation field notes**

I found the first steps the most difficult, but was encouraged by the following analogy from Charmaz (2006: 45): 'Grounded theory coding generates the bones of your analysis. Theoretical integration will assemble these bones into a working skeleton'.

My field notes showed differentiation between the first pre-observation meetings with participants and subsequent (second and third) pre-observation meetings. Field notes from the first pre-observation meetings with participants showed a greater emphasis on the process of teaching observations which included negotiating ways of working together and establishing expectations surrounding the teaching observation experience. The second cycle of pre-observation meetings showed myself and the participants moving quickly into the observation stage, with less time needed to discuss practical aspects of the experience.

The initial and first cycle of pre-observation meeting focused on the following:

- Clarifying details about the session being observed and how from their perspective it related to the broader module outcomes, programme outcomes, curricular content and assessment strategies.
- The participants identifying particular areas on which they would welcome feedback.
- Negotiating when would be a convenient time to receive feedback and be interviewed.
- Creating an opportunity for participants to ask further questions about the research.

The second cycle of pre-observation meetings was different from the first cycle because, in addition to the above, the following took place:

- Reviewing themes and interesting or significant factors emerging from the observation, post-discussion and learning conversations.
- Updates on the module or the students.
- Reflections on teaching experiences and their own learning subsequent to the first observation and learning conversation.

A significant proportion of the data was gathered through observing participants teaching, and this was my starting point because the feedback and learning conversations were informed by what I had observed. I started to formulate and to begin to consider how and what I would give feedback on, what questions I needed to ask, and which areas I needed to clarify and follow up.

What did I train myself to observe when I observed a participant teaching? Field notes have a structure, yet allow for variable processes to be recorded in full and in detail. They included collective and individual actions while emphasizing process. The number

of teaching observations, 30 in total and three per participant, allowed me to move across settings and context to gain a wide range of data. My field notes included a review of the materials that students received such as hand outs and module handbooks. Jotted notes led to more comprehensive notes, which in turn informed the learning conversations with participants.

I had recorded in my field notes who had done what, when it occurred and how it occurred. In keeping with the need for theoretical sensitivity, I did not use the University teaching observation form with its five categories (see Appendix 7). Instead, I identified the conditions, actions and processes that appeared to lead to an effective learning environment and those that appeared to undermine it. Attention to speech and language in the course of teaching observations allowed me to record particular phrases and figures of speech that impressed me as significant, which I could then discuss with the participants.

The data generated by my field notes were not especially amenable to line-by-line coding to help identify properties of an emerging concept. By this, I mean at times I found the lines hard to separate. I decided instead to carry out my initial coding from incident to incident. I recorded nuances of actions and interactions in my own words through field notes; as I am experienced in carrying out teaching observations I was able to make acute observations. Making comparisons intra-observation and inter-observation gave me clues to follow. I started by coding similar and then dissimilar attributes, from which process subtle patterns and significant events and insights emerged.

The first step I took was to assign a short name, succinct and precise, to segments of data that allowed me to select, separate and sort data (see Appendix 9 for examples of initial coding). In this way I was then able to tentatively identify emergent and common themes and become aware of processes. This enabled me to prepare the way for exploring below the surface and begin to interpret through focused coding. These steps were applied to all the three data sources.

My field notes reveal a matrix of cognitive, behavioural and affective actions that contributed to my deciding whether a participant demonstrated 'good enough teaching'. These actions are fairly standard and appear under broad headings in the University's Teaching Observation Policy (see Appendix 2) and have become intuitive after many years of carrying out teaching observations. These field notes, because I had shown theoretical sensitivity and bracketed off my presumptions and assumptions, revealed much that was fresh and interesting. They went beyond describing what was seen and



included my comments on what had gone well, the challenges the academics faced and examples of good practice.

Years of experience have resulted in my relying on tacit knowledge when observing teaching and this research has provided me with the opportunity to begin to articulate the source of this tacit knowledge and how it impacts on my practice. Importantly, it has also enabled me to interrogate some of that knowledge. Focusing on actions in each section of the data and noting recurring themes, I began to code data as action, which is the first step towards the development of key analytical ideas.

It was vital that my familiarity with teaching observations did not lead me to prejudge and impose it on the data. The danger here was that my familiarity with teaching observations would lead to a general rather than a more analytical approach to the field notes and increased the likelihood of missing vital clues. I was aware that some of these categories implied a judgement and the notion of standard setting, but decided it is inevitable when engaged in this situation and that the important aspect is willingness to recognize it. Through my initial coding I was able to detect fundamental nuances of action and interaction (for examples, see Appendix 9).

I have stated previously that my view is only one perspective, but nevertheless it is a view that matters and is based on experience and being an expert practitioner. The input of critical companions enabled me to test validity and reliability as well as providing other perspectives.

Rather than move directly from initial coding of my field notes from my observations to synthesize the data through focused coding, it was essential I went back and compared and contrasted similar and dissimilar incidents. It enabled me to find similarities and differences, comparing events common to the same participant and between participants. Since I carried out three observations and discussion interviews with each participant, there was an opportunity after the first and second to refine initial codes and begin to expand categories (see Appendix 11 for examples). This is in keeping with an action research approach, going back and seeing things anew.

When reviewing my field notes I see similarities in their narrative structure. The chronology is in real time and reveals a familiar trajectory. To the uninitiated, merely picking up a set of field notes from a single observation would appear unremarkable. In comparing a range of field notes, actions and processes start to appear and reappear, sometimes particular to an individual participant and at other times particular to several. It can be argued that this is my interpretation and this would be a valid point, which is why questions in the margins act as prompts for checking observations that might have

been misconstrued, gone unquestioned or formed by my having not been in possession of the facts (see Appendix 9 for examples of field notes). Selective coding generated from field notes tells us about activities that occur in teaching spaces.

**Table 4.1: Coding categories**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
Explaining threshold concepts	Scaffolding; making complex ideas accessible; providing examples
Encouraging participation:	Appropriate activities; active learning; application of theory to practice; providing opportunities to practice
Giving feedback	Encouragement; relating to assessment; specific suggestions for future endeavours
Providing supporting resources	Include handbooks, handouts, tools and online presence
Facilitating discussion	Handling questions and answers; acknowledging complexity; encouraging enquiry
Establishing links	With previous sessions; the programme; assessment strategies and industry
Imparting essential key content	What is conveyed; how is it conveyed; when is it assessed
Taking charge of the space	Managing the teaching environment, picking up on cues, establishing boundaries and expectations
Demonstrating creativity	Demonstrating innovation; adaptable and flexible
Painting a bigger picture	Relating content to global issues, graduate skills
Preparation for assessment	Providing guidance and support relating to assessment; developing and nurturing skills and knowledge, later assessed
Delivering clear messages	Providing unambiguous information to students
Managing and responding to student preparedness	Actions and non-actions taken in relation to student preparedness for class
Seeking to establishing positive relationships with students	What do lecturers do to create rapport and mutual feelings of respect and trust with students
Quality of supporting resources which complement taught hours	Handbooks; online platforms; handouts

## **Coding from journal entries**

The initial analyses of the data from my journal helped me to identify processes and allowed new insights to emerge.

This followed a similar trajectory to coding the data from the field notes. It was challenging to decide how much of the data to use, how deeply and how many. In the analysis I have sought to review my role as both actor and observer. At this stage interpretation is based on myself as expert and theorist, who attributes a particular significance to the results. There were differences between how I had interpreted participants' actions and how the participants saw themselves. The analysis of the data has been shaped by my role as an insider and practitioner researcher whose research is typified by personal involvement and interpretation. Coding and creating categories from journal entries has provided further insights into the actions and meanings of both participants and myself that would have otherwise been missed. I was also able to show changes over time relating to my own practices. The most challenging task for me was to remain objective and to suspend assumptions and presumptions about the data made at first glance. A dilemma arose for me when I disagreed with what I saw and heard when observing teaching and in conversation with the participants, as I was committed to learning about their views, as it was essential to have a careful, interpretative understanding that conveyed respect to the participant. Having a research approach that allowed me to look below the surface was vital to convey both perspectives.

Journal entries generated data that applied to the teaching observation experience, the accompanying discussions and my practice. How were these analysed? The journal entries were subjected to the same analytical approach as the teaching observation field notes. They were distinct from the memo writing in that they were written prior to main data analysis period, that is, in the period when teaching observations and learning conversations took place. There was an enormous amount of cross-over between the journal entries and the categories that focused on the process of the learning conversations itself and the dimensions of my own practice (see Appendices 11 and 12). My journal entries helped construct categories for theory building relating to effective teaching observation dialogue and are listed below.

**Table 4.2: Categories and sub-categories for theory building**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
Determinants for 'good enough' teaching	No general agreement; seen as contextual and situational; benchmarks and professional standards
Quality of supporting written information including assessment guidelines	Scholarliness; accessible language; appropriate level
Educational developer as role model	Feedback as a form of teaching; partnership models; working across teams
Emotional response observing has on me	Processing; reflecting; taking action; returning
The complexity and nuances associated with educational development practice	Being outside the discipline; confidant
Entering worlds of others	Reflexivity; adaptation; showing empathy
Pulling the ideas from them	Creative problem solving; considering options
Pushing them towards a solution	Encouraging action; considering options; sharing expertise
Actualization of capability	Learning resilience; enabling greater effectiveness; encouragement potential
Egalitarianism	Mutual respect; reciprocity
Collaboration through partnership models	Across departments; across teams; with educational developers
Nature of 'first yearness'	transition; encouraging independence; establishing solid foundations

### **Coding learning conversations**

In analysing learning conversations I separated dialogue apparently on features of teaching in higher education from the feedback process, including my practices.

## **Focused coding from learning conversations**

- Need for organizational change
- Recognizing individual change
- Engaging in communities of practice
- Repairing the curriculum
- Expressing opinions on 'spoon feeding'
- Taking on legacy modules
- Surrendering
- Acknowledging disequilibrium
- Seeking permission
- Giving a justification for actions taken
- Identifying the nature of 'first yearness'
- Describing subject specific pedagogies
- Expressing disappointment
- Investing of self
- Acknowledging that teaching is hard
- Claiming that teaching is undervalued
- Expressing certainty in own teaching approach
- Reflecting on learning through experience
- Considering the role of academic leadership
- Deconstructing team teaching experiences.

The transcripts from the learning conversations revealed similar codes amongst participants. There was also overlap with codes and categories identified in the field notes and journal entries. Through focused coding and memo writing (see Appendix 10 for examples), the data moved towards an analytical framework and early theorizing.

**Table 4.3: Selective coding from learning conversation analysis**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Sub-categories</b>
Creating the conditions	<p>Circumstances and situations which make it likely to happen for example, trust, credibility of observer, established relationship, removed from appraisal.</p> <p>Qualities shown by an effective observee: openness; reflective; self-awareness; commitment to teaching.</p>
Symbols of emancipation and democratization	Reciprocity; collaboration; equality; resilience; Actualization of capability.
Pulling and pulling	<p>Creative problem solving; giving permission.</p> <p>Providing expert guidance; identifying choices.</p>
Best practice amongst observers	Personal attributes; professional attributes; challenge and support; language of pedagogy; affirmation; confidence building.

There was a great deal of overlap between data sources, with each deepening the interpretation of categories, sub-categories and consequently developing theory.

A significant proportion of the data was gathered through observing participants teaching, and this was my starting point because the feedback and learning conversations were informed by what I had observed, while my journal entries and the memos sought to make sense of it. I started to formulate theories and to begin to consider how and what I would give feedback on, what questions I needed to ask and which areas I needed to clarify and follow up. Focusing on actions in each section of the data and noting recurring themes, I coded data as action, the first step towards the development of key analytical ideas.

The field notes on teaching observations provided valuable clues and ideas to pursue in the learning conversations. In fact, I felt like a detective following initial hunches and

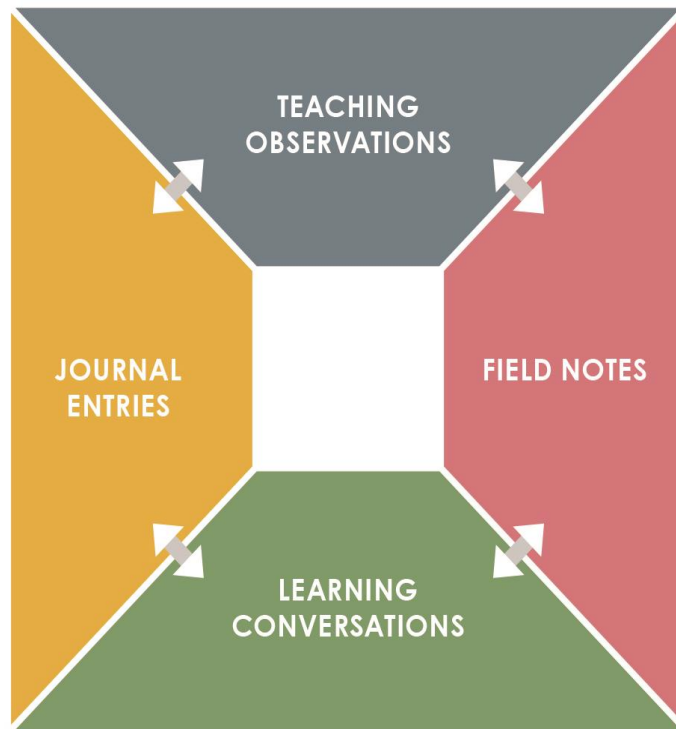
pursuing leads. Comparing similar situations and incidents between data encouraged me to think more analytically about events I might otherwise have taken for granted. I found when I started that I gained new perspectives from the words and actions of my participants and began to question some of my previous assumptions and interpretations (see Appendix 11 for examples).

While remaining open to exploring other interpretations and explanations, I scrutinized the field notes of the observations and recorded possibilities for future theory development. As became apparent later, what initially appeared as ordinary description of familiar and habitual activities on second examination revealed rich data, as did field notes in situations when impressions or observations might have been misguided or gone unquestioned. Comparing data from the field notes with transcripts of the learning conversations allowed me to acquire the facts and others' perspectives.

There were sometimes differences between how participants and I had interpreted their actions within the teaching observation situation. So for example during one lab session I wondered whether its informality might impact negatively on the learning experience. The participant then explained that an informal approach worked well for this group of students and had been negotiated with them at the beginning of the module. In those situations it was important to look for patterns and recurring themes, of which there were sufficient to be convincingly significant.

Focused coding allowed me to 'separate, sort and synthesize large amounts of data' (Charmaz, 2006: 10). It was fascinating how similar experiences could be interpreted, explained and spoken of so differently by participants. Writing memos on what appeared to be revealing codes allowed me to develop my ideas and direct further data gathering.

Cross-checking was carried out across observations, learning conversations and journal entries to form categories and sub-categories. I also made sure that the views of the participants were represented, and differences as well as similarities between them acknowledged.



**Figure 4.2: Cross-over and merging of data**

If the intention was to expand my vista, equally it was imperative to decide when theoretical saturation had been reached and it was time to stop analysing the data. Factors that led to my making this decision were the emergence of no new categories, or none that addressed my explicit research questions. At this point there were few discrepancies between sources, which suggested no underlying flaws in the design. I was satisfied that I had transformed the raw data into something representative and able to provide meaningful information.



## Chapter 5: Findings

There are three main sections to the chapter what my teaching observation revealed about the main activities that characterize teaching and learning in higher education; what else is talked about in the learning conversations that follow teaching observation; and what makes for a positive teaching observation experience from the point of view of the observed. This informed the learning conversations with the participants and allowed for the refining of some categories and the broadening of others. When observing, my senses were attuned to what I considered to be evidence of participants meeting benchmarks and professional standards, and suggestions for improvement, yet also areas for clarification and exploration with participants. Importantly, this allowed me to tell them what was going well.

It was necessary to look at the findings in the light of the aims and objectives. These sought to discover the most effective approach to carrying out teaching observations; to what extent current experience of teaching observation by the participants matched what was perceived to be the desired experience; a critical review of my feedback practice and the features that characterized it; what the process of observation tells us about teaching and learning in higher education; and how might it inform organizational policy and practice.

### **Types of teaching activity: Observable behaviours**

The observable behaviours recorded in my field notes had informed both my journal entries and the learning conversations with the participants. While the data brought to light categories and themes, it was recognized that individuals illustrated them differently, which allowed for different learning conversations.

The overarching question was what is happening regularly in teaching spaces and what form does it take. I identified six different types of activity I found to be present, which became the first part of an emerging framework:

1. Delivering content
2. Making assessment and evaluation
3. Boosting student engagement
4. Managing learning spaces
5. Demonstrating interpersonal and communication skills
6. Painting a bigger picture.

These were discrete categories, although there was some overlap.



**Figure 5.1: Teaching activities (Davis, 2014)**

As shown, below each category was divided into sub-categories:

1. *Delivering content:*
  - i. explaining threshold concepts
  - ii. using appropriate and unambiguous language
  - iii. addressing enquiry and complexity relating to the subject
  - iv. quality of available resources incl. handbooks, hand-outs and online materials.
2. *Boosting student engagement:*
  - i. encouraging active participation
  - ii. application of theory to practice
  - iii. showing empathy and respect
  - iv. facilitation of student preparedness for class.
3. *Managing learning spaces:*
  - i. facilitating discussion and enquiry
  - ii. attending to the physical environment
  - iii. team teaching.
4. *Demonstrating interpersonal and communication skills:*
  - i. establishing boundaries and expectations
  - ii. clear messaging
  - iii. showing adaptability and reflexivity
  - iv. managing diversity

- v. out of the comfort zone.
5. *Approaches to assessment and feedback:*
- i. providing guidance and support
  - ii. using sessions to develop and nurture skills and knowledge
  - iii. fit between the assessment methods and learning outcome
  - iv. fit between session delivery and level descriptors, eg Level 4 (1<sup>st</sup> year degree).
6. *Painting a bigger picture:*
- i. making relevant links with previous sessions, other modules and the wider programme
  - ii. identifying graduate skills
  - iii. raising issues around employability
  - iv. making links with industry and the workplace.

### **Delivering content**

Threshold concepts intrinsic to computing science included a mastery of mathematics and an understanding of programming. In mechanical engineering these were considered to be an understanding of core concepts such as kinematics and electricity, while in product design they would include design, analytical and manufacturing skills. If students grasp a fundamental threshold concept, they are more likely to be successful in a discipline and able to make sense of future concepts. The idea of **threshold concepts** was introduced by Meyer and Land (2003), and a useful way of ascertaining from academics the fundamental knowledge domains is to ask them what the threshold concepts in their subjects are, based on these criteria.

I offer the following example from A in response to what might be a threshold concept for first year students studying computing science:

A to Carole: Programming is quite a shock to the students because even if they have done IT (Information Technology) in school it doesn't really prepare them for anything they are going to do at university because it's completely different... a big chunk of computing science is programming. This doesn't mean everyone who works in IT has to be a brilliant programmer but I don't really think you can do a computing science degree without having some understanding of programming.

D describes how there are no shortcuts with mathematics, an essential threshold concept in his subject.

D to Carole: I feel that students were a little misled by their previous education wherever they studied because they really think they can get away from mathematics when they are in computing science or computer network classes but that's not the case.

My field notes reveal C teaching a maths-based seminar where he has striven to make maths interesting and less mystifying by showing them how to apply mathematical principles to real world problems.

H explains how teaching a fundamental threshold concept in engineering is problematic because it is impossible for him to remember a time when he did not know it, sometimes, and he struggles to break it down into incremental steps.

Finally, A expresses concern and frustration that his third year students do not seem to be able to master what is considered a fundamental threshold concept for undergraduates, that of scholarly debate and criticality:

A to Carole: Since we have the learning framework I am supervisor on the project module and though this I have realized that they are not well equipped as we have not given them the skills to do a final year project. They don't know how to carry out research, and don't know what a literature review is. They also really don't know how to write i.e. how to summarize a set of issues or question or even to identify what a question or problem is.

Another sub-category within this broader category of delivering content addresses the use of **appropriate and unambiguous language**. This involves selecting content with discrimination, using language that is appropriate yet accessible, signalling clearly, using information that is accurate and up to date, and the art of summary, planning sessions that are coherent and logical. For first year students it is particularly important to spend time on this dimension when providing an overview of a complex subject or getting them accurately to adopt the language of a particular profession or discipline. Communicating using unambiguous language is important, so as not to confuse or mislead, especially concerning threshold concepts and assessment criteria.

My feedback to F demonstrates how, when this all comes together in a workshop where first year students are being introduced to a project, it can be what I can only describe as a beautiful synthesis of content, experience, effort, communication skills, care for the students and clarity.

Carole to F: I can't say this enough, I have a huge respect for your capabilities and how you make complex ideas simple and accessible. Your sequencing of information is very strong, you provide an introduction, a clear context and convincing rationale for the project, explain the brief with examples with opportunities for them to embark on the preliminary stages with feedback from you and V (Designer in Residence). It was appropriate for the level and worked well because it was a smooth undertaking and they all had produced work which met the brief by the end of the morning.

Yet, good teaching, **addressing enquiry and complexity**, does not automatically lead to positive outcomes. An encounter with D illustrates how an experienced and skilled teacher might deliver an exemplary lecture, but in the seminar activities that follow there is little evidence of the students having processed and applied the content:

A to Carole: Sometimes I do get impatient.... A basic question that I ask is what was the lecture about? And then there was silence. So they went to the lecture and when I ask them what it was about they don't remember much.

A journal entry from me identifies a concern about the **quality of available resources**:

It seems to me that available resources while they might be functional might do more to enhance and inform the face-to-face learning as much as they can. I am talking here about the module handbooks and online presence on My Learning. When you talk to the participants they will say it is a matter of time and a need to prioritize. However, I am still left with the feeling that we as a community of educational developers should pay more attention to this area. If the ideas are insightful and the execution inspired then great resources can open up the world. (Carole Davis, 5 March 2012)

There were differences of approach amongst lecturers when conveying essential information about the subject. Here D, new to undergraduate teaching, and who teaches the same module as F although in different subjects, takes up the story:

D to Carole: I am using that software as well so H was telling me how he teaches and I was telling how I teach. H's approach is to first demonstrate a practical application and then give them the theory... but my approach is different as I first give the theory because that is the traditional way of doing it and that is the only way I know but I am not saying that I cannot change because if the other way is better than I could consider that as well.

What D reveals is how he has been reflecting on the difference between teaching undergraduates and postgraduates, accepting that there are different ways of delivering content, and his willingness to change.

D to Carole: One thing I have started to do more of since we last spoke is to remind them how to use mathematical theories in everyday life. I have found a really good way to talk about applications in computer networks and in computer science. They really stop complaining when I mention about that and become more interested. When I tell them how prime numbers are very useful for security, for example, they were really interested.

### **Boosting student engagement**

This is a crucial feature of an educational experience that is student-centred rather than teacher-centred; students are to be active rather than passive. It is viewed as desirable in the higher educational landscape of today, with research claiming its benefits (Hansman, 2001). Students participate in a range of activities designed to let them demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outcomes and, through this act of participation, are able to apply theory to practice, take ownership of the process and increase knowledge and skills. The majority of the sessions I observed were labs, workshops and seminars designed to be interactive. This next example refers to a lab session when I observed how the academic appears to have a thorough command of where students are in relation to their coursework, their capabilities and remaining work.

E to Carole: What I try and do is engage with every student, early enough in the session so I know what they should be doing and I can keep coming back to it.

Academics worked hard to encourage **active participation** and I observed some having more success than others. This appeared to be due to the nature of the activities, whether they were assessed or not, and the confidence, experience and approach of the individual lecturer.

Comments from my field notes from C and F show engagement, and in another example from C in a lecture scenario the reverse appear to be happening. My notes suggest that facilitating discussion, which comes into this category, is a skill that might be developed further for the majority of participants. Different subject pedagogies and disciplines have different cultural norms regarding discussions, yet this was an area I encouraged participants to develop as their growing edge.

- C has created an environment where all 20 students are participating fully in these individual presentations, both by listening respectfully to others and taking the presentation brief seriously (field notes from workshop with C).

- F has simulated an internet café to serve as a crime scene. The students' energy is palpable and, because they are divided into teams, there is a healthy competitive dimension (field notes from workshop with F).
- C is lecturing and explaining a protocol that they will need to apply in their next lab. I am struck by how, apart from a dozen or so students at the front, the remainder of the students appear to be paying limited attention or not taking any notes (field notes from lecture—and often what students perceive as a lack of it (National Student Satisfaction Survey, 2013).
- E had found a way of incorporating formative feedback into all the sessions and the students responded positively, as shown by their participation and enthusiastic volunteering.

The example of F illustrated how simulation and role play allow the application of theory to practice to be seen in a highly visible way. **Active learning** was frequently more visible in a lab, workshop or seminar setting than a lecture, as shown by the example from C.

When we look at the dimensions of the student experience, it is **feedback**, and often what students see to be the lack of it, which is perceived to be most disappointing (National Student Satisfaction Survey, 2013).

C shows **empathy and respect** for his first-year students who have had a disruptive start to one of their core modules, with changes of personnel and a series of miscommunications. In a seminar that I observe, the students are carrying out presentations and he engages a group of young first-year students by acknowledging they have had a bumpy start to the year, and I say to him:

Carole: This is about you as a person and the warmth that you have, and that being important in their trusting you...

C: Mmm... what I was trying to do first of all, is for myself to feel at ease and comfortable and at the same time create that same feeling for them.

This left me to validate his actions while encouraging him to develop this further:

Carole: And you're doing it exactly the right way round, because unless you create those conditions first of all, where they feel it's okay sometimes not to do very well, or to struggle a bit, once you've established that, then, as each week goes by, you can start saying 'I'm going to make this a bit more difficult.... I need to give you a strong message, that unless you do X, Y and Z, or put more effort in out of class, you won't reach your potential, your grades will slip'. So it's the messages that go with it, but I absolutely concur that what I saw you do in those early

stages is creating a learning environment which is about mutual respect.... And that's what so important. And the fact they had all done something, they had made some kind of an effort, was testimony to you.

### **Managing learning spaces**

The most effective way of **facilitating discussion and enquiry** takes place when tangible tasks are introduced into the classroom space. An enduring problem with some first-year modules was that the content was not seen to be terribly engaging. C is disappointed in the low aspirations that characterize them along with some of the practical limitations:

C to Carole: It would be nice if we could go into the prototyping stage and do some interesting things, but it's just not realistic....

However, C then goes on to say how he has developed a creative solution that he hopes will generate more energy, and that the key to engaging students is to show students the relevance:

C to Carole: So what we decided to do was start in the lecture to do lab activities, so they see the need, they see why it is important to learn this stuff and they will have examples of how they will start applying those skills, So this week I talked about brainstorming, talking about the concept of aviation aeration. Next week in the lab we'll be doing brainstorming.

In the sub-category of **team teaching** are situations where participants describe delivering sessions with colleagues who have different styles and give feedback to students differently. The following examples from E, H and B illustrate how this can be enabling, undermining or neutralizing:

E to Carole: Having R (the technical assistant) in the class has been fantastic. It has been so helpful to discuss how things have gone after the workshops especially with this particular first year class.

H to Carole: The person I share teaching with on this module has a very different style from mine. They are stricter with the students and often talk over me. I find myself often deferring to them and taking a back seat.

B to Carole: I think it was really good for the students to get used to receiving different perspectives on the design and aesthetic qualities of their products... because in industry that is what happens.



G demonstrated success in this general category of managing learning spaces through showing **adaptability and reflexivity** and I found this to be connected to the acknowledgement of the particular needs of first year students:

G to Carole: Teaching first year students is completely different from second year or third year students because they have just been introduced to this environment of learning at a higher level in comparison to what they have done previously. It would be a failure on my behalf not to take them in hand and guide them to where you want them to be so when if we turn around and say well students are not well behaved in their second or third year I would think well in the first year those lecturers have failed in trying to maybe meet the demands of those other requirements of students not just in terms of you know competences but discipline and all the ingredients of that cocktail is what gives you the end result and it is an achievable end result.

He articulated a strategy for academics managing their environment, that of 'edutainer':

G to Carole: So as the lecturer you're got a job on your hands to be able to go up there every week and give students a reason to come back next week and want to listen and so I'm always trying to think who I am going to be on stage, what role am I going to play?

In response to this comment and based on my observations in the class, I provide feedback that is affirming and constructive, and suggests in part that effective teachers act on their instincts and put themselves in the students' place:

Carole to G: I loved that you looked pleased to be there today... the students sense very quickly the level of commitment that comes from the lecturer and what they want most is someone who is approachable, who is accessible, who will answer their questions and be relatively helpful. All the research on teaching with emotional intelligence confirms this and yet without being aware of this research there is something about you as an individual who understands that so you are in perfect sync with student expectations. You should feel very pleased.

Attending to the **physical environment** was seen to be an important skill within a lecturer's repertoire. It moved beyond establishing control, as shown in the following examples involving labs. Coupled with this was demonstrating adaptability and creative problem solving that often boosted student engagement. As demonstrated in extracts from my field notes (see Appendix 7), there was sometimes a discrepancy between what action I thought should be taken, based on the principles of best practice, and the non-actions of participants. This provided a fruitful discussion in the learning conversations with participants later on.

## **Demonstrating interpersonal and communication skills**

Seeking to establish positive relationships with students is an integral part of teaching and often the most difficult topic on which to achieve consensus, especially regarding **boundaries and expectations**. My field notes of the observations verified that it was seen as the linchpin that enabled other dimensions of an effective teaching observation to occur, such as engagement and motivation, as demonstrated here:

G to Carole: I think reaching out and being able to get through that initial stage of demonstrating that you're approachable, demonstrating that you're on their side, and then you're able to get the best out of a student. Because I believe every student that attends a class or every individual who comes in for a lecture, there is always good in them and it's your role to get it out—that's how I see teaching.

D was able to summarize his success by describing the key to good relationships with students as the ability to convey within the spoken word a contract with his students:

D to Carole: It takes two to make it work: you've got to give me something and I will give you something. So we've got to work together.

The following example by participant E demonstrates how student uncertainty is sometimes masked, emerges, then is managed effectively:

E to Carole: We have a drop-in session on a Tuesday evening and there are people attending who started off struggling while denying they had a problem, were encouraged to go by me and are now way up front now. They have created little communities in the classroom and it really works. They have been motivated to face their fears and admit they find it difficult.

Another extract demonstrates how establishing rapport, providing clear explanation, encouraging participation, giving feedback and making concepts relevant serve as tools that allow C to create an effective learning environment:

Carole: There are a lot of things about how you teach which I think is highly effective and very admirable. I would like to tell you what those are because I think you need to hear them. For me one of the key things is that you have a logical structure while not being over controlling and inflexible. You are friendly, approachable and helpful while remaining professional at all times. The messages you communicate are clear and it is evident to me the students trust you and feel able to ask questions.

C: A lot of work goes in to building that relationship in the first two to three weeks.

Managing and responding to student preparedness, together with students' knowing/not knowing, oscillated between resignation, irritation and strategies that would enable them to re-engage. It raised many questions about the nature of 'first yearness' and I used it with D to encourage him to see why students sometimes behaved the way they did and why the strategies he used to communicate with students needed more rigour:

Carole to D: These students who were in your seminar this morning were very interesting to me.... Because the transition to being a more independent learner is a tough one for them. We need to facilitate it and one way is through encouraging them to take more risks and venture out of their comfort zone. How about getting them to complete the task with a peer and then self-assess, impressing upon them that you will be there to answer questions and provide feedback when they get to the end.

A sub-category of this was '**out of the comfort zone**', but in such a way that is managed incrementally and with a supporting rationale in which students are helped to develop the skills to become more independent, curious learners. Key to success are the nurturing and empathic skills shown by F. This mirrored what was seen to be successful qualities by an observer of teaching:

Carole to F: I was watching you facilitate a lab class and here you demonstrate a number of skills. Some may not contribute to class discussions or initiate conversation with you, this is likely because being only first years they may not feel confident enough, but you have created a learning environment where they stay on task and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. You encourage them to keep keeping on, without being ridiculed or undermined, and push through the pain barrier.

### **Approaches to assessment and feedback**

Discussion on the sub-category of **providing guidance and support** needs to be handled carefully, as illustrated in my feedback to J, who started off by stating that she thought she had achieved what she had set out to do, but conceded as we talked that there needed to be changes:

J to Carole: I think we should change it a bit rather than just give them a report writing based assessment. I feel if we give them a chance to develop writing skills earlier then they can improve as it won't be so last moment.

I reflect back and summarize while reinforcing the idea of her tentative suggestion being a good one, to give her courage, before making concrete suggestions as to how

matters might be improved so there is a good **fit between assessment methods and learning outcomes** as well as between **session delivery and the level descriptors**.

Carole: Your discomfort seems to be that everything is at the last moment and there is no opportunity to implement formative checks and balances. So, you are thinking that from next year right from the beginning you will get them started by introducing them to the skills and knowledge needed to write a good report which will stand them in good stead for their second and third year.

J: I think the peer assessment you suggested previously will help a lot because it will help them understand the assessment better.

Carole: So you already have some ideas to try new things. What is good about this assessment is that it provides a set of criteria indicating how marks are awarded. The problem is that is not written in a language which will be understood by first year students. I went through the assessment guidelines and I have underlined key statements which need further explanation and examples. A clear message coming across from students is that they are mystified and need the module team to shine bright meaning into these dark corners.

The majority of the participants were confident in managing the learning space, especially in establishing a presence. F is totally committed to being an effective teacher but struggles at times to adjust from teaching postgraduates, who tend to be reasonably mature and well-motivated, to first year undergraduates. However, a feature of my observations of F has been the need for to be assertive and own the teaching space, a fact he recognizes himself but at times struggles to implement, often feeling quite unsettled by the behaviour of some students:

D to Carole: for example, the gentleman who was in my session today: he was not supposed to be there originally because he is from another group. The gentleman who was sitting in front of me, two weeks ago said I was bullying him so I said to him I have never spoken to you personally how could I bully you? And he said I am very strict.

Further incidents follow when D talks about a complaint received from another student:

D to Carole: Was complaining that mathematics is not really useful and what has it to do with network. I opened up my personal web page in Middlesex University domain and I showed him all the works that are done by mathematics... then a colleague of ours, he said that I opened my web page to show off

Such comments are clearly troubling but, for an observer, they suggest that boundaries and responding to inappropriate comments are an important part of this participant's

growing edge. I see the development of resilience as an important part of teaching unresponsive undergraduates, renegotiating the relationships. I tell D this:

Carole to D: The thing with teaching the first years is about toughening up and recognizing it is a very different relationship than with your postgraduates. It is clear you are offering a great deal, what they take from it is up to them but you cannot take responsibility for their lack of intrinsic motivation or refusal to engage.

I suggest to him that, rather than focusing disproportionately on the relatively small numbers who are disengaged, he should put his mental energy into supporting those who are willing and keen.

Preparation for assessment was always present and in some sessions it was firmly in the foreground:

Carole: What was very striking for me was the abject terror about the exams and how decisions about second and third year options were based on whether they were assessed by examination or coursework.

J: I suspect it is fear about writing like the short essay exam for module X under pressure that some of them have developed a phobia about.

And in others lurking in the background:

Carole to J: When you went out of the room to collect something they were talking about the work they needed to do and comparing work. They were asking each other what stage they were at and how they were finding it.

My findings revealed that some participants were more sensitive to the stress caused by assessment than others, and assumed that instructions were clear when in fact they were far from being so. Students demonstrated enormous anxiety about assessment, to which the participants responded in different ways. A review of the assessment guidelines revealed this to be another area for development and suggested a strong correlation between student anxieties and how information was conveyed. As recorded in my diary, the majority of the assessment guidelines were ambiguous and lacking in detail. The provision of supporting written materials and guidelines also came into this category, and I felt it was imperative for me to discuss with the participants as an important area of teaching activity supplementing the spoken word. I was interested in a tendency to sometimes hold the students entirely responsible for the outcomes of their assessments.

J is asked by me to comment on the session I have just observed which involved her giving verbal feedback to students on their coursework and responds accordingly:

J to Carole: In this group I think I really achieved what I wanted to do. As I know the time restrictions for students it may be that they are not going to use the feedback that I gave but for future I guess they will keep it in mind. In this session I achieved what I wanted but previously you know when they see the feedback with the grades they don't ask how I can improve or how can I change it, they just take it. Although I continually ask them to tell me what they need, it seems like they are lost.

I was struck by the tensions and contradictions in this extract which, while illustrating attitudes to assessment and feedback, reveal a sense of 'stuckness' around how to proceed. In our discussion other concerns are raised, with J expressing a similar powerlessness to resolve it:

J to Carole: and also, they don't like reading.

It strikes me as fitting that this module on computer architecture needs a redesign of its own pedagogic architecture. I tell J that there are a number of areas that, if addressed and alternative strategies implemented, would have an immediate impact on assessment and feedback. These include changing the assessment language, using self-assessment prior to submission and asking key questions within the feedback discourse.

Into the category of assessment and feedback creeps the possible panacea of team teaching in the lab classes. These often use Student Learning Advisers (SLAs), able students in their second and third year who have previously studied the module, formatively to assess and feedback to students:

C to Carole: I think in that sense SLAs are very useful because they do trust their peers and they are more open to them.

We see how pedagogic spaces are so much more complicated than previously, and how students have many more people providing them with information. While welcoming that this takes some pressure off them as sole providers of information about assessment, participants acknowledged the potential for contradictory advice. This was something that came up in a journal entry:

I have noted that regular communication and review of modules appears variable. There is an assumption sometimes that this happens by the process of osmosis with assumptions made that all is well until it suddenly isn't. Is this about the demarcation lines between roles being blurry or inconsistencies around expectations and working practices? (Carole Davis, 4 April 2012)

A recurring theme from field notes and discussions is the diversity of skill and knowledge amongst incoming first year students. This also captured the particular challenges of the first year and which H describes below:

E to Carole: The main challenge in the first year I think is the tutor's difficulty to fill the gap because the students we have may not come from a relevant background or with relevant qualifications so we need to fill that gap. I think the best way to do it may be to start with an easier assessment scheme and gradually increase the level.

Each time I observed a class this struck me forcefully and I record the strength of my feelings in the diary entry below:

How sustainable is the widening participation agenda? What proportion of class time should be spent explaining or summarizing concepts that should already be known? If we dumb down what does this mean for those who already know it or those who want more stimulation? I worry that the next thing will be to introduce mixed ability teaching and streaming into higher education. (Carole Davis, 19 February 2013)

### **Painting a bigger picture**

I called this 'the bigger picture' because it encapsulates the purpose of higher education, why students are there in the first place and how they might contribute to society. **Making links** between individual sessions, programme themes, theory, assessment strategies and the needs of industry enables students to view a learning experience as coherent, relevant and prepares them for a wider purpose beyond university.

A's commitment to seeing the role of universities in preparing students for the world of work is through **identifying graduate skills**, and makes this clear to students from the onset:

A to Carole: If you are going to be applying for a job in the next six months and you do a presentation based on this performance then it is unlikely you will get the job. If you are not able to talk intelligently about a reasonably straightforward topic with a clear summary of the main points then you cannot be successful.

The following extracts from my field notes provide supporting evidence for G making links with industry and the workplace:

G to Carole: has just showed a lovely anecdote about working in industry and the kind of things that can go wrong. This reminds them of the purpose of a computing science degree and the relevance and potential application of this knowledge. The

term 'we' is used a lot implying that he sees the students as his equals, not him as an expert and them as novices but as equals. Using language like 'how are we going to resolve this issue?' conveys the notion that they will become members of an exclusive club. I find that so powerful. (Field notes from a lecture by G).

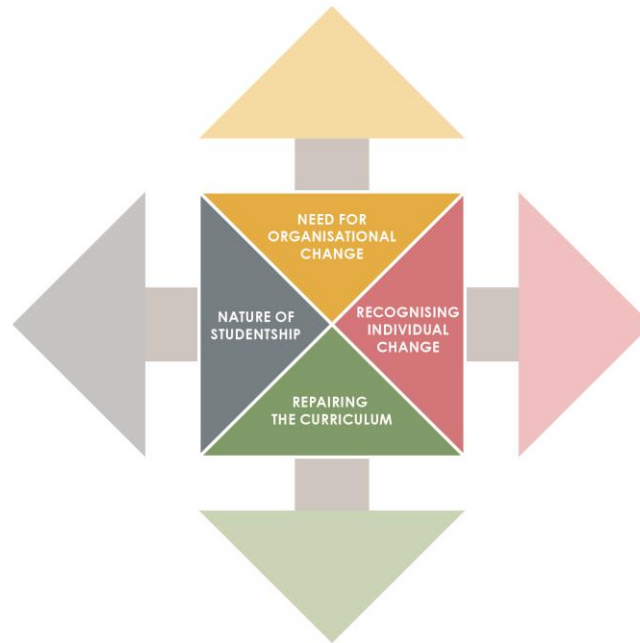
Coupled with this attitude was a demonstration of adaptability and creative problem solving, an integral part of teaching in higher education and especially a necessity within this organization. F wanted to **raise issues around employability** after giving students feedback following simulations of real life situations. Time was limited, so the feedback was recorded on a flip camera after the exercises then given to students in the form of a downloadable file. **Making links between content and industry and the workplace** is of key importance. Consideration of the long-term purpose of a degree is evident in E's regular reminders that the effort first year students put in now will pay off, although not counting to the overall degree classification:

E to Carole: The way I change things, I try to change them by opening doors. I want them to do well in their course work because then they will do well in their second and third years because they have the knowledge and appropriate skills.

### **What else gets talked about in learning conversations**

The following section shows further categories and themes that emerged from the data which, while standing alone, also overlap with the teaching activities categories. They are additional areas that widen the potential of teaching observations to explore pedagogic practices across the board, to consider the purpose of higher education and how students are and should be within it, to recommend changes and, importantly, to consider how the participants have changed themselves while seeking to make further changes. These informed the second part of the emerging framework.





**Figure 5.2: Additional areas emerging from observation**

- A need for organizational change around Teaching Observation Policy and practice; expressing a view that teaching is undervalued; more support and development of module and programme leaders;
- Recognizing individual change: seeking permission; expressing certainty in own teaching approach; reflecting on learning through experience;
- Repairing the curriculum: engaging in communities of practice; taking on legacy modules; identifying subject specific pedagogies; making curriculum fit for purpose;
- Nature of studentship: expressing opinions on ‘spoon feeding’; acknowledging that teaching is hard; surrendering; the role of the teacher.

### **Need for organizational change**

There was evidence of social responsibility located within a socio-cultural context. Conflict and tension appear regularly in the data, with the metaphor of a struggle featuring regularly. These struggles were with students, colleagues and what were perceived to be unreasonable demands thrust on them by the institution.

A common theme was recognition of the need for organizational change in **teaching observation policy and practice**. Current policy and practice, it was felt, epitomized tensions between the aim, a credible and helpful teaching observation experience, and the unsatisfactory reality. The current teaching observation tool was expected to serve

a dual purpose and consequently served neither the appraisal process nor professional development well.

On an individual level it was felt that, until organizational objectives represented realistic targets, their impact within the classroom would continue to be compromised and the achievements and development of **module leaders and programme leaders** would go unrecognized. A common point of view was that the 'new direction' of the University undervalued teaching by bestowing a higher status and value on research, leaving teaching undervalued.

A to Carole: My major concern for that teaching is now going to be less valued than research. The University strategies start to take shape from the top-down where the Vice-Chancellor is saying just to teach is not enough anymore. Where is that going to put us? I am a bit worried really as it might reduce the value of a good teacher.

I found by analysing the data provided by observation, field notes, diary and interview discussions that by far the most commonly recurring theme was the complex and challenging nature of teaching in higher education within one organization. The evidence from this research and my considerable experience suggests that this is often unrecognized and not acted upon when considering teaching observation policy and practice. Many of the participants, including A, describe how their teaching is informed by research, a suggestion that sometimes research is defined too narrowly and the responsibility they feel to keep up to date with new developments in their subject discipline:

A to Carole: Especially with a module like this, it changes each time we deliver it because the content and the issues are constantly changing. Now new topics have been introduced. I have read a whole lot of stuff to bring to these debates. That is research but it is not really seen or valued like that. The last textbook I had was published in 2005 which is now all out of date and the computing field things move so quickly. I am writing a new book myself but if that gets published that won't count as research.

The lack of feedback and opportunities for discussion about the day-to-day experience of teaching without fear of judgement or being seen as not coping became apparent for some participants:

D to Carole: Unless someone is telling you it's good you start to doubt that it's good... if you only get complaints it stops you growing just like students need opportunities for feedback and discussion so do we. Teaching doesn't feel that rewarding at the moment, and I feel that it is not valued. I think most of us feel

that and the nicest part of the job is doing the teaching for me. I love it, it's lovely.

This diminished neither the enthusiasm that participants had for teaching nor their commitment to their students, but it did cause them to feel that teaching was seen as requiring lower level skill than research and they felt under-appreciated. As the findings from the observations show, effective teaching requires a complex and sophisticated repertoire of skills. This includes selecting and delivering content in a discriminating and accessible manner commensurate with level and subject pedagogies, an ability to respond appropriately and quickly to the unexpected, conveying key content accessibly, facilitating and evaluating student learning, demonstrating excellent interpersonal and communication skills, and motivating those who are anxious, disengaged, inexperienced and uneducated.

There was a concern about the widening entry gate for admission onto degree programmes and what was perceived to be a gap between capability and the requirements for study at degree level. This is demonstrated in the following comments by H:

H to Carole: The conversations about the pedagogies of art and design are fascinating as they bring into question the calibre of our students, particularly their ability to move from concrete to abstract thinking. In my opinion, as a preparation for degree level the Design and Technology A level is poor at best, and damaging at worst [in] preparation for degree level. I have experienced the subject as problematic (partly due to the perceived subjectivity of it) and the students disappointing.

Another pressing concern was how the participants could find time to carry out the research that formed part of their job description and reflected the expectations of the University for academics. Teaching commitments were all-consuming, so managing their responsibilities became less about capability and more about there being insufficient hours in the day to undertake everything. During the term, teaching and supporting student learning was all-important, requiring participants to be responsive to any need that arose.

When reporting their previous experiences of teaching observations the participants mentioned how teaching observations were carried out intermittently and with limited benefit to themselves. This was seen to be a direct consequence of what was perceived to be the poor regard held for teaching and a lack of academic leadership:

D to Carole: Unless someone is telling you it's good you start to doubt that it's good.... if you only get complaints it stops you growing just like students need opportunities for feedback and discussion,

so do we. Teaching doesn't feel that rewarding at the moment, and I feel that it is not valued. I think most of us feel that and the nicest part of the job is doing the teaching for me. I love it, it's lovely.

Approaches to academic leadership emerged as an important consideration, as it became apparent that such a change could ensure consistency across programmes and modules. A common approach was needed when dealing with students who did not bring in work or were late:

B: half the class came in with no work at all and others only brought pictures on their phones.

There was often no consequence or reprimand for this behaviour by all the participants, and it was evident that the way that departments operated had impacted on the individual lecturers and condoned non-participation in their culture.

Another important issue was the lack of preparation for academic leadership roles at programme leadership level:

H to Carole: And nobody really ever explained what's the scope of your responsibilities as programme leader. Because as you say you're not a line manager.... And just, you know, who does what? What for instance does a Director of Programmes do in a department? Because I talked to colleagues in other departments. And their Director of Programmes does very different things to our Director of Programmes. And they have very close contact and so on. And when should I go to my Head of Department? When should I go to the Director of Programmes? What should I do myself?

This suggested another pressing need for change and how this lack of preparation impacted on academics themselves.

### **Recognizing the need for individual change**

Accounts of the transformation of the person from perspective of participant were very moving. Some of the 'work' to bring about change was in managing their own expectations and adapting their own mental mind sets to the realization that there were choices, alongside the conditions to allow change to occur. Sometimes these changes were articulated by the participants and other times they were encouraged by me.

D developed the confidence to champion a different approach to teaching mathematics for computing science students, as mathematics is the gateway to success on the programme and in the computing industry:

D to Carole: I have some plans to change things and will probably start with lab work.... Integrating maths into the technology.

This correlates with a recurring theme that labs are the linchpin of computing science programmes, enabling students to apply lecture content in meaningful ways. We see D **expressing certainty** in his own teaching approach. Another feature of this category was the incidences of my encouraging change and risk taking, often with dialogue that involved participants **seeking permission**:

Carole to D: I know we have talked often about your uncertainty and lack of confidence and if I have to give you a gift it would be to tell you that you are very knowledgeable and the students are lucky to have you.... I think you should step back a bit and let them work through on their own. They need to master this; you don't because you already know it. They could sit in that lab for an hour and a half watching you go through example after example but what do you think might happen if they spent time working through these with you and the SLA to be on hand for explanation and to give feedback?.

This overlaps with the pulling and pushing category that comes later, and is about how the learning conversations that accompany teaching observation may be the catalyst for individual change.

Another aspect is the surprise expressed by many of the participants that teaching could be so complex. There is evidence of them **reflecting on learning through experience**:

K to Carole: I am going to be honest I never thought there would be so many challenges in teaching. I used to think that you go to the classroom; you explain the topic, what else is needed? But, now I do understand that it takes time as well.

The majority of participants acknowledge the importance of assuring the quality of the teaching, while being pragmatic. There was variation between participants in relation to the degree of introspection into their practice and the extent to which they entered into the 'dialogic' with regards to their own professional development. Some participants seemed to have a more sophisticated and responsive range of teaching skills than others, usually correlated to experience but with some exceptions.

After the session that provided the second example I wrote the following entry in my journal:

Today an issue arose for me as the observer around where my boundaries were in terms of the content of my feedback and ultimately what the purpose was. This signalled what is regularly a characteristic of the teaching observation, both anecdotally and in the literature, namely power dynamics

and the notion of it carrying a judgement. When should I stay silent and when should I speak? To what extent should I live out my professional values and in particular those of congruence and authenticity? How do we begin to negotiate the rules of engagement in teaching observation? (Carole Davis, 28 January 2012)

The *raison d'être* for teaching observations is that individuals are stimulated and feel valued, exemplified in improved practice carried out by a practitioner who is more confident and reflective. With E, the recognition that he needed to change in order to improve the learning environment for others came from a conversation we had. This covered the issue of the extent to which he took charge of the learning environment within a lab.

I had encouraged one participant (B) who was full of self-doubt. They sought permission to adopt some innovative new strategies relating to managing group projects, and I gave it and this proved to be a turning point. Later they provided an example of how my words had influenced how they now taught.

B to Carole: It felt like you were genuinely watching, so you would pick on very specific details as well as giving an overview of the more general things that you'd seen, which I thought was really helpful. Because sometimes it's the very tiny things, like you said to me about something which has stuck in my head ever since such as I how I always look to the right hand side of the room and was always missing those who sat on the left.

Another outstanding teacher spoke of how my feedback had made him feel and how he now saw himself through a different lens. This was someone who had seen themselves as ordinary. Previously, he had been encouraged to apply for a Teaching Fellowship but was unable to articulate his teaching skills in writing. Discouraged, he returned to seeing himself as ordinary until I observed him and gave him proper feedback for the first time in 12 years, changing the way he saw himself:

G to Carole: When you told me all these things I had done in my classroom, I was taken aback because I never see myself in that light. I think if you see yourself in that light then obviously it will affect your performance.

I found that participants reported that changing practice and adopting a willingness to look at things differently with regards to how they taught and saw the world was directly linked to how feedback was given. I suggest the following extract is characterized by openness supporting an adult–adult relationship based on equality and reciprocity, together with feedback derived from a specific example that is non-judgemental and offers a way forward:

Sometimes recognizing the need to change takes several months, as seen in this extract with a participant who had gently but firmly told me previously

that he would not be pursuing one of my suggestions, then told me later how he had now implemented it and found both that the session ran more smoothly and the learning environment was improved:

F to Carole: You were not able to attend the last session, but actually what I did was exactly that. I completely removed myself from the exercise... and it allowed me more time to reflect on the actual student interactions which was good.

A sub-category within the category of 'recognizing individual change' was initially to appear in the findings relating to 'best feedback practices'. This reflected the ability and motivation amongst participants and attitudes to change. Intentions require not only ability but a worthwhile reason, relating to the actualization of capability (Gibbs, 2014; Heidegger, 2000).

Another journal entry develops this further:

With actualization of capability the findings overwhelmingly showed that often capability is present, albeit latent, but waiting for the right circumstances under which it might be disclosed. These circumstances are the opportunity to participate in the 'edifying' and 'essential' conversations that this research advocates. I am embodying actualization of capability through teaching observation. (Carole Davis, 16 April 2013)

I was satisfied that I had transformed the raw data into a conceptual framework and an account that was representative and provided meaningful information. I had captured the similarities yet remained faithful to individual accounts. Importantly, I had taken my own insider knowledge into consideration while seeking to understand how people acted and their rationale for those actions.

**Team teaching and engaging in communities of practice** also emerged as a sub-category. Working alongside others in direct and indirect ways emerged as a major and significant theme within the feedback dialogue and ensuing discussions. Different configurations of team teaching were discussed with their perceived advantages and disadvantages being equally varied. The extent to which participants viewed this as something they could influence or take responsibility for was significant. The concept of hierarchies featured here and feelings of powerlessness arose again.

Positive aspects of team teaching **linked to communities of practice** were collaboration, learning from others, the students receiving different perspectives and the strengthening of positions. Complementary knowledge and roles was also mentioned. Less positive were accounts of anomalies of power, feeling the lack of a 'voice' when working alongside colleagues who had different styles and approaches and the angst this caused. An account of the challenges faced in team teaching is

captured in the following extract from My Learning journal. Although ostensibly about team teaching, it is typical of the range of issues that academics want to talk about:

Today I met with H to discuss the team teaching I had observed him undertake with a female colleague on the \*\*\* programme. The areas that he said he particularly wanted to talk about were the challenges involved in team teaching and what are the most effective ways to give feedback to students on their work? We also talked about the advantages of structure versus non-structure and was he overly empathic with his students which resulted in him not setting limits, which then potentially compromised learning, and how do you know when to do the right thing?

The conversations about the pedagogies of art and design were fascinating, as they brought into question the calibre of the students, particularly their ability to move from concrete to abstract thinking, and how in H's opinion as a preparation for degree level the Design and Technology A level is poor at best and at worst damaging. X experienced the subject as problematic (partly due to perceived subjectivity) and found the students disappointing.

Feedback again emerged as a significant issue—how to get it 'right' when the sensitivities of the students are heightened and there is a range of approaches by different lecturers, with X being seen as 'too nice'. How did we get to a point when teaching with emotional intelligence is confused with a drop in standards and a lack of rigour? We discussed the culture of the department and how certain individuals who are unwilling to compromise or adapt their teaching practices dominate. Thus, X and his female colleague B (another participant in this research) felt uncertain about their practice, and accordingly found engagement in this research as valuable and affirming.

We found a comparison between students who postponed further work on their modelling exercise until they had been seen by the lecturers, who would tell them whether it was 'all right' or not, and lecturers who were desperate to be told their teaching was 'all right'.

I invited H to comment on my own practice, particularly in relation to how I gave feedback, and he responded that it was 'a great process' and tremendously reassuring for him. The importance of an objective observer was seen as crucial, which, when examined closely, implied that agendas and team dynamics within departments may tarnish the process and render it unsafe or lacking in authenticity. Thus, independent feedback was critical but 'credibility' and 'experience' equally so.

The notions of 'credibility' and 'experience' arise in the description of 'self' by others, and warrant closer attention since they are crucial to this research and in defining my practice.



H and I made further plans to explore the inclusion of MCQ tests, outlines for workshops, carry out a further teaching observation later in the semester and for me to conduct a focus group at the end of Semester 1 to try and unpack engineering pedagogies and ideas about effective teaching from the perspective of his students. We also talked about writing up how he approached his lessons which to him felt very intuitive and unstructured but which to my eye were but in an unconventional manner. (Carole Davis, 30 January, 2012)

Communication within teams, particularly relating to consistency in how labs were delivered for a particular module, meant there were many different labs to accommodate the large number of students. At times this appeared to compromise efficacy, autonomy and to undermine confidence, especially when joining an established team.

Finally, I wish to consider whether team teaching adds to the student experience. Does it complement, exclude, collude, reinforce poor practice and stifle debate or offer alternative approaches and solutions? It seems it might do both. Later that year, in another teaching observation, H team-taught with a technical assistant and a graduate teaching assistant whose presence in the workshop was supportive, validating and empowering, as shown in this extract:

H: To have a dialogue with others as to what has just occurred in the classroom is incredibly reassuring... my relationship with S (the technical tutor) is very strong and with T (the graduate teaching assistant) she reports back on what is hidden from my gaze... the students will tell her things they won't tell me.

### **Repairing the curriculum**

There was an acknowledgement amongst a number of participants that there is equilibrium between content, learning outcomes and assessment that is dependent on subject specific pedagogies. On first examination, central to the discussions with participants was a belief that certain aspects of the existing curricula for particular computing science programmes were preventing learners learning and academics teaching effectively. In other words it was important to **make the curriculum fit for purpose**.

The advantage in being able to observe so many teaching sessions was how patterns became visible in my field notes, my journal entries and the discussions I had with participants. The findings created a real appetite amongst participants for collaborative work through engaging in communities of practice focused on subject-specific pedagogies. A recurring theme was how there was a mismatch between the best

pedagogic practices and the modules themselves. The following brief but direct quote captures this succinctly:

E to Carole: With some modules there is a lot of work but I don't think they [feel] you're really learning while you're doing it.

This was particularly the case on first year undergraduate modules and there were concerns at the delivery of content, the manner in which content was assessed, the inadequate industry and application of many students and the extent to which the modules prepared them for the second and third years of their degree programme:

A to Carole: I think we are partly at fault because we are digging a hole for ourselves as we are not really preparing our students from the first semester to equip them with these skills. We need to be sure that they have an academic knowledge of reading, writing, arguing and debating skills. It is supposed to be embedded in the modules as we talked about last time. It hasn't really been embedded and this is true across the board in all subject disciplines. We find academics complaining about the students as they are not reading enough. And it is more of a problem in computing science; you have to be a bit more persuasive because it is a technical scientific subject.

Arguably, the teaching observation experience provided an opportunity to reflect on and articulate what was missing, along with how it might be put right. What this also demonstrates is how the teaching observation carries with it the potential to transcend the individual and consider external factors pertaining to the curriculum that influence teaching. In some situations it is difficult to separate the individual from a range of broader issues over which they have limited control. The issue of context is also relevant; one needs to know more before forming conclusions. The majority of the observations tended to be from the same module, which meant the fuller picture might emerge in time. It also raised the question of how, when observing, does one separate the individual practice from the curriculum without reducing 'teaching' to a set of behaviours in isolation from other relevant factors?

**Legacy modules** are those inherited from other teachers, either as a recent addition to their work programme or partway through a semester. They caused dissatisfaction either because they were traditionally unpopular modules or had been delivered in a way that had left students disaffected. Often it was thought that they were not fit for purpose and needed a major review.

### **The nature of studentship**

This category included sub-categories such as rationalization, an acknowledgement that teaching is hard, investment of self, allowing self to be disappointed, and surrendering. Much discomfort surrounded the notion of '**spoon feeding**', which appeared regularly as a negative concept.

Running parallel to this was an identified loss of equilibrium and the need for change in the **nature of studentship**. Sometimes this was expressed subtly and at other times more blatantly, depending on whether academics viewed it as something within their circle of influence. In the following extracts are two contrasting approaches:

Carole: What do you think it is that makes it so hard for them?

J: I don't know. I think we get them used to the spoon feeding. Even when I give them an example report to read they don't want to read and learn from it. They only want the formula basically... they don't go out and explore.

Carole: What do you think we should be expecting of them in the first year of their degree? How can you help them to become more independent?

Later I was shown the assessment guidelines and recorded in my learning journal how shocked I was at how poorly written they were.

The tension between the expectations of the participants and the students emerged as a significant theme. It resembled both the features of a military campaign and a classic textbook account of the secret life of groups. To an extent, a textual analysis revealed elements of rationalization and surrender to what might reasonably be done in such situations. It emphasized that it is hard to hold an individual to account for myriad complex factors in university teaching; to judge someone's ability by a single event would not give an accurate picture. So many variables are involved and the findings confirmed that individual academics cannot be held accountable for students making a deliberate decision not to engage. It also raised a question about **the role of the teacher** and **surrendering** to the reality of the situation.

For example, A is highly experienced, confident with good classroom management skills and regarded as a highly competent computing science lecturer on a third year module that has been seen as difficult because it emphasizes writing and critical thinking, rather than technical skills. Although he expressed considerable frustration at the lack of motivation amongst the students, he refused to surrender and kept the pressure up:

A to Carole: You (the students) are not going to get out of it without me trying to at least turn your head around and trying to think critically and to question and I am relentless on that.

Yet A's best efforts were not enough and he alternated between blaming himself and lamenting the lack of preparedness amongst students:

A to Carole: It is like each week you have to start from the same position, you start from almost scratch you know. Even if you end the previous week on a high point with a good seminar when you go back the following week they are all back at level zero.

An emergent theme from the evidence was how the participants valued the opportunity to be open and honest without fear of being judged. Seeking permission to express and receiving validation for views held was a recurring theme in the interviews, such as how attributes were 'missing' on arrival and stayed 'missing' in a large proportion of students, such as the ability to read and write critically and to select supporting materials and artefacts discriminatingly and skill in debate and argument.

**Acknowledging that teaching was hard** appeared as a regular theme.

E, another highly experienced lecturer with a heavy teaching workload, develops this theme further but is more optimistic and understanding of their struggle, and suggests a helpful strategy:

E to Carole: I'm a programming specialist and I've taught the first year programming modules for years. Programming is quite a shock to the students because our curriculum is completely different to anything they have done in school... I don't think you can do a computing science degree without having some understanding of programming, it helps you bring it all together because it's basically how to get a machine to do what you want it to do... and the students see it a bit how a lot of kids see maths at school. It's the one they love to hate because it demands a lot of practice... you have to find little ways to help them through each threshold, and then they are OK for a little while and then they have to do it again and again and again... but I will encourage them.

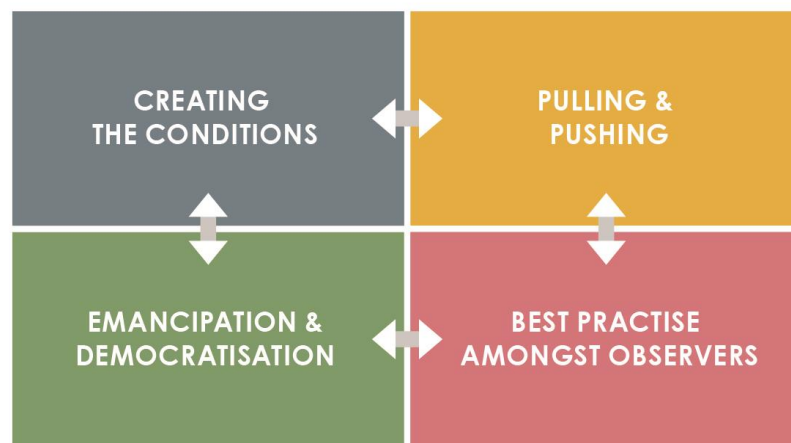
There was an interesting issue about personal style and how participants accounted for students behaving in a particular way in their classes. This seemed to be influenced by gender, age and the extent to which the 'learning space' was held and maintained. Conversely, different groups of students seemed to respond to particular styles.

A good addition is a possible fifth category that I have provisionally called 'The nature of first yearness' and merits further exploration. It was observed in students' anxiety around assessment, struggling with threshold concepts, a lingering uncertainty about what was expected of them and boundaries, acting as sub-categories. Managing the difficult transition from school or college to higher education was of key importance to

this category and my findings showed that to do so well requires a particular approach and set of conditions.

When considering the nature of studentship there are other perspectives running through the data, an acknowledgement that the world has changed and those who teach in higher education are obliged to change their own views. This is eloquently articulated in the following example:

**G to Carole:** Learning has become a burden for students, I think. Often a lot of them go and study because they'd been pushed into it by parents; not because they want to—because they'd rather be footballers and musicians.... I just find academia is not as celebrated as it was years ago. So, as a lecturer you need to bring something else to the table. And in doing so you've got to be able to teach from a position of understanding what goes on in a today's world, so to speak, from a student's point of view.



**Figure 5.3: Dimensions of effective teaching observation practice**

**Table 5.2: Categories and sub-categories of effective teaching observation practice**

Category	Sub-category
Creating the conditions: Circumstances and situations which make it likely to happen	Professional development; support; feedback mechanisms; self-assessment
	Qualities shown by an effective observee which include openness; reflective; actions/interactions; self-awareness
	Support; affirmation; challenge; respect for person, subject and context; equalitarianism; collaboration; modelling;

	balancing act; what values are held
	Decoupling appraisal from professional development establishing documentation; purpose; outcomes; agendas; credibility
	How observee perceives observer
Pushing and pulling	Assisting full potential: actualization of capability; rescuing  Pulling ideas from them  Pushing them towards a solution  Introducing a new language of pedagogy and new models of dialogic interaction
Emancipation and democratization	Facilitating participants in reaching full potential: actualization of capability  Able to express dissatisfaction with the academic quality of students and their levels of motivation and preparedness  Freedom to express own views and receiving validation for views held  Confidence; feedback; affirmation; heard voices; encouragement
Best practice amongst observers	Qualities; values; training

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### **Creating the conditions**

Past experiences influence the perception of teaching observations and ghosts of unsatisfactory experiences linger long and do much damage. This account of a past teaching observation suggests a negative experience, neither useful nor fair:

A to Carole: I was looking back to when I first started full-time.... Potentially it can be scary and there is a personal space that you are holding with your students and when someone comes to see what you are doing then you feel quite exposed especially in a large lecture theatre.... I remember once being observed by my line manager and they picked up on small things and made a big thing about a particular gesture such

as how I rubbed my hands while I was giving the lecture. That was one of the main things they focused on.

So for some it was a question of creating the opposite conditions to what had gone before, as F explains:

F to Carole: The thing that I really like was that you have the positive balance with negative elements, so, and I've observed you giving feedback to other people in the past and you would never say anything negative unless it was introduced with a positive remark or put in a context where the person would put their guard down and be more receptive for feedback. People tend to forget that and when this is not balanced so the person feels defensive, so they create a block, their forehead goes up and all defence mechanisms go up and immediately any information you're likely to provide afterwards will be in vain. So the first thing I liked was that every piece of information you provided was always provided in a way that made me want to listen more rather than immediately thinking about responding and how to give an excuse... secondly, I could tell that you were really paying attention. In other words you gave me the feeling that the observation was also important to you and not only to me.

This is an account of how a negative teaching observation experience causes physical and mental barriers and consequently is a wasted opportunity, whereas a positive experience is enabling and validates the observed.

### **Tensions inherent in the process and how previous experiences influence current perceptions**

There would appear to be a recurring metaphor that something is broken and in need of repair, similar to the category of 'Repairing the curriculum'. However, the findings strongly suggest that it is recoverable, rectifiable, retrievable, remediable, restorable and can be salvaged, given the right conditions and approach.

There were accounts from participants of personal transformation, which were moving. Some of the 'work' to bring about change was in managing their own expectations and adapting their own mental mind sets with the realization that there were choices. Coupled with this were the conditions necessary to allow such change to occur.

There was a strong sense amongst many participants that, if decoupled from appraisal, then teaching observation would be a more attractive proposition:

B to Carole: I think there is work to do in changing everybody's perceptions of teaching observations from the other side of it (being observed), not being a punishment and a 'tick box' exercise.

When pressed to say what, B replies:

B to Carole: So that level of really practical knowledge as well as the general stuff, the more personal stuff, the useful responses to questions and encouraging my questions as well, that's really helpful.

This point of view is shared by many of the participants who are desirous of a less guarded and equal relationship between the observer and the observed:

G to Carole: You took your time to get to know me as a human being and I would like to maintain this contact with you after the research has finished.

G expresses, and this is typical of the other participants, how he really values and appreciates spending time with someone who is interested in them as an individual and suggests that an important aspect of educational development work is also about how it makes people feel when they are given quality one-to-one time.

The neutrality of the observer was seen to be an essential condition in making the teaching observation experience positive, allowing participants to talk differently about issues, and implying that they could be more free and open:

B to Carole: I mean you're not connected to a department is really important because if I wanted to I could say things about incidents and individuals that you can't really bring up within a small department.

We can add another dimension to that by suggesting that a collegial approach based on a mutual, reciprocal process can alter a familiar terrain. A participant commented:

G to Carole: What you've just said is a magical word; 'we', not I or you. And you approaching that in this respect help me understand that we are in this together... I think that magical word goes a long way to make people feel comfortable.

Another important condition was the rebranding of teaching observations as a moving away from a 'Big Brother is watching you' approach to providing an extra pair of eyes to enhance what we might know.

B to Carole: I think in the teaching observation process you've got to get the observee looking forward to the process; not feeling completely that they will be under pressure. You've got to look forward to it because you know you're going to get some positive feedback as well as suggestions for improvement. And you should look forward to that process because that is your time where you build your confidence again.... You need a bit of fuel, a bit of drive.



For optimal conditions the motives of the person observing need to be apolitical, unrelated to power and control. This came up many times in conversation with participants and the following exchange offers a summary of motives leading to conditions that are counterproductive and those which are rather more enabling:

K to Carole: It is a political thing when you are being observed by somebody who wants to pick fault for whatever reason and this is a difficult issue.

Carole to K: This suggests an imbalance of power between the person being observed and the observer. It becomes solely about making a judgement on someone and seems to reduce the possibility of a dialogue. I want to move towards a kinder, more supportive but not necessarily less developmental approach to others' practice. I recognize how important language is along with the importance of making people feel good about themselves.

In the following extract D captures another condition, that of the importance of challenge and support:

D to Carole: Well all these ideas are well received, taken on board and valued. It is really useful as it sort of validates what I do as well and feels really good. You wish that would happen more in schools and so those at management level would actually know what people are doing and how much work goes in to do this. It is really great.

Central to conditions that allow this to happen are trust and respect. Once these are established, the challenging part of a feedback discourse is more likely to be heard:

H to Carole: I think sometimes there is this danger of me being too nice and that I don't push them hard enough.

Carole to H: I agree and can you identify where this might have happened?

H to Carole: There were times when I was writing their responses to my questions on the whiteboard and I could have pushed them for further explanation and rationale.

Carole to H: So that's your growing edge.... Although I accept it's tiring and you ran out of energy about two thirds in and yes, for next semester let's look at the use of questions in discussion but also for the purposes of self-assessment and peer assessment.

A recurring feature in the data, often commented on by the participants themselves, was the interest shown by me towards both them as individuals and their discipline, as shown in my comments to D:

Carole to D: Thank you for your time because I know you are very busy. This is the second time I have joined you and your students. What I am interested in is that this is the first year that you have taught maths to undergraduates and how this is different from teaching postgraduates. It wasn't a big step up but it was a change, a change which has been surprising and challenging for you. Tell me about it?

What these words convey is an acknowledgement that time is precious and therefore must be used well. It also recognizes that the participant is facing a number of pedagogic challenges and that I am genuinely curious about finding out what that has felt like for him this academic year, especially his experience of the differences between the levels of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching.

A recurring and important sub-category was the receptiveness of the individual to receiving feedback. I would stress that these findings were not intended to measure the impact of my feedback but rather a willingness to receive, self-awareness of their growing edge and an appreciation of learning conversations as a positive dialogic interaction:

C to Carole: When I am telling you about something that I am doing, I am actually asking for the feedback and when you tell me this is okay and you might do more of this or less of this, this is really helpful. This is the first time I have taught undergraduates and things are new to me so I am trying to learn from what you are saying. I like this type of open conversation because I explain the background and why I do things.

This reinforces for me the importance of situating the observation in something more substantive and shows me that you cannot just walk into someone else's classroom space as a guest and not know anything about the context and background, because that is the key to making sense of what I see.

Framing feedback as being of benefit to both the individual and the teaching team increases its chances of having a wider reach:

J to Carole: It is helpful especially since we can communicate this idea of focusing on early formative feedback to colleagues who cover that module. I am also very keen to use it for my MSc students.

The majority of participants acknowledge the importance of assuring the quality of the teaching while being pragmatic. There was variation between participants on the degree of introspection into their practice and the extent to which they entered into the 'dialogic' with regards to their own professional development. Some seemed to have a

more sophisticated and responsive range of teaching skills than others, usually correlated to experience but with some exceptions.

This raised an issue for me as the observer on my boundaries in terms of the content of my feedback and ultimately its purpose, signalling a characteristic of teaching observation, both anecdotally and in the literature, that is, power dynamics and the notion of carrying a judgement. When should I stay silent and when should I speak? To what extent should I live out my professional values, in particular those of congruence and authenticity? How do we begin to negotiate the rules of engagement in teaching observation?

Communicating within teams, particularly relating to consistency in how labs were delivered for a particular module, meant many different labs to accommodate the many students. At times it appeared to compromise efficacy and autonomy, and to undermine confidence, especially for those joining an established team.

I wanted to explore the potential of the teaching observation and offer some alternative models for practice that would inform teaching observation practice and policy. From my own experience I am aware of the enlightening and encouraging potential of teaching observations, and I wanted to discover what factors ensured a successful outcome. A key driver was a concern that academics were under increasing pressure and facing a range of competing demands; they were busier than ever and received little feedback on their practice despite more teaching, of a more complex nature, to more students.

Teaching observation needs to be more dialogic and collegial, and it was essential not to form opinions based solely on the teaching observations but to include other perspectives, especially that of the observees themselves.

A recurring theme is issues of power and control, interpreted in various ways. It might refer to a sense of powerlessness in academics as they seek to function in an environment where their level of influence and 'voice' becomes ever smaller. It might be suggested that the classroom remains one area of control, but for some participants this is arguable. Another recurring theme is that teaching is seen as less important, less prestigious and less valuable than research. Sometimes this is expressed blatantly and at other times simply inferred. The cynicism and lack of priority for teaching observations would seem generally to be in inverse proportion to the benefits experienced by participants in this study. The target, in terms of the stipulated frequency in institutional policy documents for academic staff, seems far from the reality.

## Pushing and pulling

There were times when I was **directive**, either in response to a specific question or because I felt academics were expending unnecessary time and energy in a strategy or approach. The reference to **'rescuing'** was not intended to be maternal or patronizing, but a demonstration of collegial support. F is appreciative of this approach:

F to Carole: This is very constructive because it helps me improve. In a way it helps me reduce my workload.

Setting this precedent up in my first observation with B allowed for a shift in the final observation from pushing to pulling, where there was more evidence of creative problem solving and pedagogic thinking:

B to Carole: In the beginning I was thinking that if I keep them sitting individually and not in groups I can maintain control of the class. Now what I am thinking is the students are capable of self-managing the groups and it doesn't mean that I am not capable of controlling or managing the class. Actually it is much better, easier and less tiring.

So our conversations led B to trying something new, conserving energy while facilitating a better learning environment where students are becoming less passive and more independent learners.

Challenge is a necessary part of learning conversations and it was important for me to be direct with the participants. The following is a typical response from me which, while acknowledging that an approach to teaching or an assessment strategy needs reviewing, invites a dialogue and implies an equal relationship:

Carole to K: There is something quite fundamental which needs to be changed. What are your initial thoughts about this?

Participants spoke of the value of having someone joining them in their teaching space who they perceived to have much knowledge about teaching and learning in higher education as a subject speciality. The findings showed that both negotiation and collegiality can and does exist between the disciplines of computing science and engineering, and SoTL, in the creation of useful and meaningful knowledge. It does not dilute them but strengthens their practice, providing both are willing to behave in a conciliatory way and remain open to disciplinary knowledge being more than empirical or methodological sources.

This collegiality uses an approach to learning that can be understood as: 'horizontal discourse' (Bernstein, 1999), which is described as every day or common sense knowledge that is oral, local, context-dependent and specific, tacit and multi-layered. It

is contradictory across, but not between, contexts; social complexity of learning in working has a multiplicity of interconnections (Antonacopoulou, 2005) with learning.

The subject disciplines represented in this research have strong associations with particular fields of employment and industries. A theme ran throughout the study of the necessity to prepare students in terms of knowledge, skills, competencies and behaviours. This was part of the discussion, but also raised a question for me whether time in class intended to prepare students for a real life situation actually did so. I was able to pursue this with the participants by pulling ideas from them, encouraging creative problem solving and active solution seeking.

The following extract illustrates what happened when I raised this with participant G, an exceptionally gifted lecturer, following the second of three lectures I observed:

Carole to G: I have been thinking about the Cisco training that runs in tandem with this module and intended to equip them for working in the industry. I note that the slides are very rigid and content heavy. I wondered if this imposed any constraints on the natural flow of your lectures.

G to Carole: Since you mentioned in our previous discussion I've been thinking you know she has got a point and maybe what I need to do with the slides is make them a bit more engaging and include more industry examples.

Carole to G: That style would suit you very well because you are a natural storyteller and the narratives you spun last time was around making them feel part of this exclusive club who will be working in the industry and industry examples humanize the learning.

I am struck at how my views have changed about what makes for a successful teaching observation experience. Fundamentally, I see the teaching observation experience as a form of teaching. I certainly don't see it as exclusively based on putting on a good show I see as equally important the extent to how the observed feels able to be open and honest with me. My role is to observe and listen carefully, then ask the questions which seek to explore the pedagogic, social and emotional spaces which influence their practice. The key is to begin by asking what their subject discipline means to them, how it has contributed to who they are and what motivates them to impart their knowledge to their students. (Carole Davis, 17 January 2012)

There was evidence of participants being deliberative and learning being propositional, as well as experiential. There were instances of observations and questions from me appearing to trigger this, together with allowing time to reflect:

Some of that change came from having their practice validated, engaging in conversations about skills, knowledge and potential, while also starting to realize their capabilities in effecting change in others or their practice.

There needs to be shared respect for each other's subject discipline, knowledge, experience and, of course, the process of teaching observation. As an observer I found it was the respect and interest for the participants' disciplines and willingness to listen to the perspectives of others that made for such edifying and essential conversations.

### **The landscape of effective dialogic interaction: symbols of democratization and emancipation**

The transformational nature of teaching observation feedback shines brightly:

K to Carole: I was so encouraged after that interview (sic) and I went back into the lecture hall afterwards and I was pumped up, much more than I ever was. You said to me, 'you're doing it right; continue in that vein; improve yourself as much as you can'. I am extremely pleased with the feedback I got. And that is why I looked forward to seeing you again, honestly; just like the student who would look forward to seeing the tutor again after positive feedback.

Seeking permission was a key theme in this category and it follows that, if permission is sought, then a further theme will be the giving of permission. This is illustrated in my response to D, who is feeling exasperated:

Carole to K: I am really encouraged to hear you say that there are limits to my patience. I love that you say that because we have discussed previously your easy-going demeanour in class and your concern that students take advantage at great personal cost to yourself. So you're right and it is perfectly acceptable to say 'this isn't good enough, you are wasting my time and yours'.

At times, permission giving is about allowing participants to make choices and find their own level of comfort, based on the outcomes for themselves and their students as shown below:

Carole to F: you know we all have different styles and what feels right for one person won't be for another. I think it's finding something you are happy with but at the same time feels professional.

As an insider researcher I shared the participants' prospects of further organizational change, a cultural context and a common past. The findings implied that my response, in the midst of turbulent and unsettling times in higher education and faced with organizational change, is to teach **individuals resilience** and **survival strategies**.

This is distinct from passive acceptance and involves strengthening the core, valuing self and increasing one's repertoire of responses. This was directly linked to assisting **the actualization of capability** through teaching observation.

For some, receiving any feedback at all was a novel experience. They were able to identify what made it unique and significant, regarding the level of detail, language used, willingness to enter into a dialogue, comprehensiveness, purpose and benefit, credibility, objectivity and level of interest displayed. This seemed due in part to creating the necessary conditions that were seemingly both emancipatory and democratic.

Participants in direct and indirect ways sought permission for particular interventions and actions, discussions about best practice, normalization, and requests for anonymity when expressing particular views. Sometimes it was about being allowed to express disappointment with the behaviour and performance of students without feeling guilty.

There are times when the issue of disconnection is identified, characterized by a gulf between participants and their students. It feels as if only radical and extreme measures will break the cycle as deep-rooted problems require sophisticated solutions not easily implemented in a short period of time. It is only when looking at **teaching observations as a continuum** against the backdrop of a specific discipline that we see patterns that are endemic. This enables us to understand more accurately their cause and effect. Other possible terms were '**disequilibrium**', or 'them and us'.

**The relationship between individual and collective development** emerged as a strong theme pervading all categories. The tendency is for teaching observation policies to concentrate on the individual. By over-focusing on the individual and holding them accountable for everything, we miss valuable cues indicating a bigger picture with different ways of working and supporting staff and students.

An emergent theme from the evidence was how the participants valued the opportunity to be **open and honest** without fear of being judged. In the interviews a recurring theme was how, for a large proportion of students, necessary attributes were 'missing' on arrival and remained so, such as the ability to read and write critically, select supporting materials and artefacts in a discriminating fashion and demonstrate debating skills.

E, another highly experienced academic with a heavy teaching workload, develops this theme further but is more optimistic, understanding of students' struggles, and suggests a helpful strategy:

E to Carole: I'm a programming specialist and I've taught the first year programming modules for years. Programming is quite a shock to the students because our curriculum is completely different to anything they have done in school... I don't think you can do a computing science degree without having some understanding of programming, it helps you bring it all together because it's basically how to get a machine to do what you want it to do... and the students see it a bit how a lot of kids see maths at school. It's the one they love to hate because it demands a lot of practice... you have to find little ways to help them through each threshold, and then they are OK for a little while and then they have to do it again and again and again... but I will encourage them.

Deconstructing my approach to observing can sometimes appear complex and unknowable. Primary data, on surroundings, occurrence of certain behaviours, the recording of questions, conversation and instruction recorded verbatim, appears straightforward on the surface. However, as the following journal entry shows, on further reflection such primary data becomes subject to ideas and inference with themes and rich insights, resulting in the need for adjustment and modification.

When making field notes I remarked that making a decision not to use the conventional teaching observation form served to move the emphasis from 'Is it good enough' to 'What have I learnt?', and 'What might be some future actions?'. I also questioned whether the notion of 'exceptional teaching' and 'exceptional student experience' is helpful.

I noticed how in my field notes I had shifted the emphasis from judgement to development but at the same time safeguarded standards. (Carole Davis, 2 February 2013)

I was impressed by the openness the participants showed when introducing me to their students as a colleague who was interested in what went on in classrooms and in supporting colleagues, there to give them constructive feedback. My presence and motives were presented in a very favourable light, as something that would ultimately benefit the participants and the student experience. This approach was not based on advice given to participants by me in the pre-observation arrangement but rather occurred spontaneously. In terms of best practice, a recurring theme was role modelling by myself of behaviours that participants felt confident to replicate themselves. K articulated it in this way:

K to Carole: You stand out from others because of your egalitarian approach to your work. You have created a number of very successful interpersonal relationships within our School based on trust, objectivity, credibility and approachability.



Your solutions and recommendations are based equally on the needs and priorities of us as academics and our students.

Applying discrimination and judgement, particularly since the situations under scrutiny are multifarious, is unavoidable. It is a fine line to tread. This final excerpt from my learning journal, entered towards the end of the project, illustrates how the skills and understanding necessary for best observer practice can take a while to learn.

As an observer I have a responsibility to use my capabilities to act wisely and proactively for myself and others. Yet alongside this is the recognition of a co-dependent relationship in which my circle of influence can only match my area of concern if the participant is willing to engage with me. Interpretation of what one observes and the judgements that are made can be perilous. This was a systematic theme throughout my early observations in this research, during which I made assumptions and drew conclusions about practice and subject disciplines which in discussion with the participants revealed themselves to be false or incomplete. (Carole Davis, 2 May, 2013)

Later observations and interviews demonstrated greater deliberation and practical reasoning before making such assumptions and conclusions.

### **Best practice amongst observers**

Thematic analysis of the discussions that took place between me and the participants revealed three areas of good practice, later validated by my critical companions and the participants themselves. The other two were the values held and the issue of training for those who observed.

The first area of good practice concerns the personal qualities demonstrated by myself. These qualities were acknowledged to be openness, sensitivity, affirming, and interestedness. Central to this was the recognition that there is a person behind the teaching observation who needs to be acknowledged.

The following extract illustrates how in a brief exchange with B these personal qualities might be shown:

B: Receiving feedback from you was so interesting because it made me realize that the lesson went better than I thought it did.

Carole: Yes because we have talked previously about how your perception of yourself and how your confidence goes up and down.

B: Yes I think it was a particularly stressful day because I'd been off a week writing the PhD and the projector wasn't working in the classroom.

Carole: So although internally you felt internally much stressed your outward appearance was of someone who is calm and in control...

B: That is nice to know and it is reassuring

Carole: Isn't it? Because if we think about student perceptions of their lecturers, if you are ruffled and anxious it will have a negative effect on them.

A value that was ever present in the review of the discussions was the establishment of acceptable yet realistic standards, of 'good enough teaching'. Conveying this value to participants is both a reassuring and motivating force, as feedback on a seminar shows:

Carole: Don't be too hard on yourself because you don't have to entertain them the whole time. You are a facilitator, not a fountain.

H: That is a huge relief you saying that and actually knowing that I am doing an OK job.

An analysis of the data revealed how one brings oneself and one's personal values to the situation. This applies equally to the participant and me, as a practitioner researcher.

Participants expressed how different and welcome was this experience of being observed compared to previous experiences. For some, receiving any feedback at all was a novel experience. In the following extracts participants state what made the experience so powerful for them and how it compared to their previous experience:

B to Carole: Before it was hard to get acknowledgement and insights at other times because of the formality normally associated with the observation. Lots of pressure and box ticking and with these I got more out of it, when you did it then it was all about me.... I wonder how many other people within the University are in a position to give that level of feedback. When I have received feedback at other times it wasn't as rich, it wasn't as insightful. So you feel when others doing it they are ticking a box so it is less of a meaningful activity. This was practical and not too theoretical. Picking up on specific things I was doing and not doing and you were able to respond to my questions. The level of insight was good.

E further develops the idea of good teaching observation feedback as highly skilled and requiring authenticity:

E to Carole: You are very good at providing detailed feedback.... Your feedback is amazing and you have a real gift for feedback. You can see things clearly and have the language, you see a lot of us don't have that language to give feedback in that way. You've got a very strong use of language, very

powerful... you have a huge vocabulary for giving feedback, you are very precise and you're not just saying you mean what you say. That's unusual because it's not just going through a process. Do you feel that, that you're very precise?

In my response I articulate what it is that I am trying to do:

Carole to E: Well I try and give clear messages and examples. I pay attention to the experience of observing a learning environment while never forgetting that I am a guest in someone's classroom. I try to convey that in words but first come the feelings, then the thoughts and then the words. I would adjust the words depending on who I am talking to so my language would change depending on the level of responsiveness and possibly defensiveness. I would take my cues from them but generally find getting them to talk about their subjects is a good route in as most people love to talk about this and that is my route in. I love to tell people what they are doing well and then it's much easier to raise questions which have them consider alternatives and the exploration of certain issues. All this gets people to a point where they feel less threatened and they are enjoying having time exclusively for them.

Several of the participants acknowledged how difficult the experience could be for me:

A to Carole: I mean sometimes you could see someone who is really struggling.

When I review my journal entries, I see that I have written the following:

For those who struggle, observing their teaching for one hour will not resolve the situation. However observing along with entering into a learning conversation will help identify the source of the struggle which may lie in issues of support or a poor fit between them and what is required. What makes me angry is when the situation has been known for quite some time because that will often mean that the individual and their students will have both missed opportunities to learn. (Carole Davis, February 23, 2012)

The findings showed that my approach to teaching observations was well received and that the participants wanted it to become a blueprint. A's comments are typical:

A to Carole: We'll all these ideas are well received, taken on board and valued. It is really useful as it sort of validates what I do well and that feels really good. You wish that would happen in schools and so people at management level would actually know what people are doing and how much work goes in to do this. It is really great!

The language used by the observer, namely myself, with participants was seen as significant. Although the words chosen played a part, there are other essential features in these conversations:

E to Carole: you're very good at detailed feedback.... I have also seen it in your written feedback for previous assessments undertaken by academic staff. You can see it quite clearly and you have enough language, you see a lot of us don't have the language to give feedback in that way. It is a very powerful, you have a huge vocabulary. You are very precise and you know exactly what needs to be said, you're not just saying it; you mean what you say.

The implication here is that the value lies in examples that are specific, definite, credible and resonate with the person being observed. An analysis of the data relating to the learning conversations showed how the feedback was informed by an understanding of the pedagogies of a particular subject, as well as the context which, as an observer, I had made the effort to understand:

Carole to K: I'm interested in what you are saying about how studying ICT at A Level isn't adequate preparation for a computing sciences degree. Can you describe for me the difference?

Participants wondered how the skills of observing teaching and giving feedback might be taught:

B to Carole: But I think people aren't taught how to do observations... I've had someone ask me and I'm left wondering whether I am capable. But fortunately having experienced these ones I think that's been really helpful in seeing what's a good example of how to give feedback and the kinds of feedback you can give.

J has very firm views on those who observe teaching:

J to Carole: I would say that not everybody has what it takes to be an observer and the way I would see it is there should be a threshold of some sort, maybe like a benchmark which tells me whether I can be an observer or not...

The final words in this findings section are from G, who summarizes how style and approach in teaching observation is as important as it is in teaching:

G: Well Carole, thanks for that. I remember when we had our first session a few weeks back and after that session I was looking forward to seeing you again for another feedback session. The reason for that was when we concluded I walked away feeling really good in the sense that I have never had so much detail in a teaching observation. I think a lot of the credit for that goes to how well you observe because you pay attention to everything... In the past it's been not like that... there was nothing personal about the feedback sessions in the past but what you do well Carole is you've made me feel very comfortable... and you've talked about all the things that make the session interesting... and we gain your personality because that has got to be taken into consideration, you've got this wonderfully

friendly approach while at the same time making sure you're getting your point across but in a subtle way... you constructively criticized some aspects of the materials I used and I've been thinking about that.

The final diagram, Figure 5.4, illustrates how the findings have captured the different perspectives and experiences that have allowed for the generation of new knowledge and potential theory building.



Figure 5.4 Theory building from new knowledge

## Chapter 6: Discussion

This research into teaching observations and the dialogue that came out of such events yielded findings that were rich and plentiful. As the practitioner researcher at the centre of this research I found myself alternately moved, encouraged, intrigued, disappointed and stimulated by the findings. Most importantly, they allowed me to consider the following questions:

- How is the data significant and relevant, and for whom does it have significance and relevance?
- How does it compare with existing practice, research and local policy?
- What does it confirm, challenge, support or disprove?
- What theories might be developed?
- What implications are there for my practice and my organization?

A key theme from my findings was the perception of many participants that teaching was valued less than research and assumed to be an uncomplicated activity and certainly less intellectually demanding. An overwhelming conclusion was how, under the right conditions, academics place enormous value on opportunities to discuss teaching experiences, to receive feedback and enter into dialogue on the subject. I am beginning to recognize the tensions and contradictions in my professional life and find myself moving towards needing to focus on challenge and accountability along with support and affirmation towards academics I observe. In my experience, first comes the support and then the challenge.

My account does not read like a fairy story—all good news—because there have been setbacks along the way with ‘backwards and forwards movement’. I have no interest and see no purpose in giving a sanitized account. I also wanted to capture the complexity without rendering the descriptions impenetrable. Covering all aspects of the emergent findings in the discussion is impossible so I have focused on those areas that struck me most forcefully. In my recommendations for further research I express an excitement and appetite for pursuing some new leads. For the purpose of this discussion chapter, I focus on what I believe to be the more significant and relevant areas of the work which I believe have not been explored in detail in previous studies.

## **Going beyond existing teaching observation policy**

One of my key motivations in embarking on this research was to explore in greater depth what goes on in teaching spaces and why it matters. What might be learnt about higher education through the act of teaching observation, about the work of educational developers and might we discover more what academics need in terms of support? In this section I shall focus on the key findings that further our understanding of teaching observation policy and practice. I discovered that our current University teaching observation policies appeared to be limited in scope and aspiration, not unsurprisingly resulting in limited impact.

However, this discussion hopes to go beyond the development and implementation of policy. This is not to say, of course, that there has not been thoughtful and innovative work in the development and implementation of policies already. In my literature review I refer to several studies (e.g. Bell, 2001; Hammersley-Fletcher and Orsmond, 2004) that offer such accounts with the intention of offering benefits to an organization. Where things begin to unravel, I discovered, was when the policy is out of alignment with reality and whether it reflects need. Policy does not improve working lives: people do.

What seems to be important is that teaching observation protocols and practices should emerge at grassroots level and are reflective of localized needs, customized to a particular subject discipline. The study carried out by Kell and Annetts (2009) with physiotherapy lecturers is a good case in point. The lecturers took ownership of the teaching observation process in creative ways, yet the study is more than about the lecturers taking ownership. It provides an account of how cooperation is gained while introducing an infrastructure and culture that support different ways of academics working and being.

Yet policies do set the tone and, when teaching observation becomes one of a series of quality mechanisms used by the organization as a means of benchmarking, standard setting and encouraging conformity, a precedent is set (Elliott, 1992).

By the end of the first stage of the action research cycle I surmised that the problem was not with the policy per se but with its implementation and how it is perceived and experienced by staff, who both observe and are observed. This view is supported by (Elliott, 1992). Initially I thought it would be sufficiently updated if the accompanying paperwork was rewritten with supporting guidance notes, but soon realized that insisting on a minimum of annual teaching observations for all academics would only

be effective if integrated into the fabric of departments and perceived to be of tangible benefit to individuals, departments and the institution. This view is supported by the literature (Kell and Annetts, 2009).

### **Separating the teaching observation from appraisal**

This research consistently revealed a tension between the espoused purposes of teaching observation in this organizational context, namely the dichotomy between evaluation and professional development. An instrument that purports to be both will do neither well. This is not to suggest that we do not need to monitor teaching; in fact, that would be morally wrong. Social and professional competence is the cornerstone of teaching observations and we cannot abandon that aspect of the experience entirely. However, when analysing the dialogic interactions between the participants and myself there was convincing evidence to suggest that the two are best separated. Teaching observation used in its current form runs the risk of being too blunt an instrument to evaluate the quality of teaching; there are other, more imaginative ways that will yield more accurate and meaningful intelligence. In the final section of this chapter I return to this issue of organizational policy and ask what might be done.

This tension was less noticeable in the medical education literature on one-to-one support (Butterworth et al., 2001). This may be because medicine is a closely regulated profession in a way that academia is not, and such encounters are more common. This research strengthens the view that teaching observations cannot simultaneously be used for appraisal and professional development, and change will involve more organizational commitment and a review of current organizational policy (see Appendix 2).

To use data from observations for QAA purposes, along with conditions of probation and promotion, is to associate forever its purpose with appraisal, performance management and evaluation (Gosling, 2005). Academics in the United States face a more protracted and complex process when seeking permanent positions, referred to as 'securing tenure' (Greenberg, 2012). It is also common practice for the evaluations of the academic students to be included in teaching observations, therefore it is unsurprising that many are sceptical of teaching observation being used benevolently (Worth-Nelson, 2012). No matter how it is packaged and sold, if it is seen as a 'high stakes' activity with no discernible benefit it is unlikely to be viewed positively.

This correlates with my experience when conducting this research. Participants reported a willingness to engage with the process when the emphasis was an open



and honest discussion about one's teaching practice, leading to a greater understanding and consideration of what practices might be celebrated, refined or altered. I certainly underestimated the extent to which such events told me about subject specific pedagogies, students and curricular development.

Gibbs and Angelides (2008) use the term 'invasive collaboration', an apt term for describing how some teaching observations in this organizational context are managed. In the past I have been asked to observe someone I have never met and will never see again, with limited time allocated for discussion before and after the observation. I would add two terms of my own: 'forced collaboration' and 'cynical collaboration'. The former is when an academic, often studying for a postgraduate teaching qualification or on probation, is informed that someone will be coming to observe them teach. The latter refers to a situation when an observer has arranged to observe another member of staff but tells them this is merely a formality to satisfy regulatory requirements and the event is carried out with minimal investment of time and effort. Weller (2009) expresses concern at the level of collusion and potential reinforcement of mediocre practices.

### **The importance of pre-meetings between observer and observed**

The preliminary meeting prior to observing someone's teaching is vital. It usually invites the individual being observed to identify which aspects of their teaching might be observed. The thinking behind it is to ensure that the experience is customized to individual need. For example, the University of Windsor (2011) provides observees with a list of 30 items, prompting them to identify areas for feedback and always obtaining general feedback from the students participating in the class. In my opinion there are advantages and disadvantages to these strategies. The advantages are that it would itemize the dimensions of effective teaching in a comprehensive list of seemingly observable behaviours that provides structure and expectations. The disadvantages are that the work that needs to be done is not in creating lists, but in using them as the basis for providing meaningful feedback and an edifying conversation. I found that the participants in this research were able to identify two or three areas in which they were interested in seeking specific feedback without any *aide memoires*. These areas reflected concern or curiosity about a particular issue that they were uncertain about or that had arisen earlier in the module with their student group. For example, these may be managing discussion, giving feedback to students, teaching a particular concept or managing the dynamics of a student group. Because the participants in my study were observed on three occasions, I found recurring themes specific to their style, needs

and growing edge, and together we uncovered new things relevant to the session being observed.

### **Challenging the ambiguity of ‘excellent teaching’**

We need to challenge the drivers behind some institutional teaching observation policies. Do students actively research quality of teaching or do reputation and other factors count more? Is continuity interchangeable with uniformity and poor fit? Is the notion of ‘exceptional teaching’ and ‘exceptional student experience’ helpful in the context of teaching observation dialogue? How realistic is it? Besides, if everyone is an ‘exceptional teacher’ or has ‘an exceptional student experience’, then surely it ceases to be exceptional and becomes the norm.

The criterion for Middlesex University Teaching Fellowship Awards (see Appendix 16) is evidence of individual excellence, raising the profile of excellence and developing excellence. Applicants for the award need to demonstrate sustained excellence over time.

Is it likely that anyone can become an ‘excellent teacher’? Not everyone can be awarded a first class degree. What is wrong with ‘good enough’ teaching? Surely that is acceptable and certainly more attainable. None of these terms are wrong in themselves, but there is vagueness about them and they need to be more clearly defined.

### **External factors which impact on teaching activity**

My findings revealed the emergence of additional categories that, although categories in their own right, overlapped with the teaching activity categories and impacted on the participants’ capacity to deliver the most effective learning environment. Of particular interest is ‘repairing the curriculum’. It became apparent that in some cases the overall design and delivery of a programme, including learning outcomes, continuity and consistency between academic practice and assessment strategies that were fit for purpose and offered clear guidance, were mitigating against best learning and teaching. I would therefore argue that teaching observation must be viewed and situated in a wider context, not reduced to an individual act but regarded as a collective responsibility. It is too restrictive to say that the only purpose of teaching observation is to open a window on individual practice, because I have found it to tell us much about teaching and learning practices in subject-specific pedagogies and across programme teams, if we are interested enough.

## **Adopting a more holistic approach to teaching observation**

The potential for discovery is not limited to the individual because the findings reveal much about a collective experience alongside relevant social and political factors. Through teaching observation we are able to gain insights into and awareness of the student experience while the nuances and strengths of subject specific pedagogies are thrown into the spotlight. When I embarked on this research I began with the question, 'What do we see when we observe teaching?', which changed in the course of the research to 'What might we see?' My findings show that what we might observe is limited if we rely only on the naked eye and within a short timeframe. To refer to it as mere observation is to misrepresent it as a reductionist act and the encounter shrinks to a moment in time when bright meaning is greatly reduced, if not eradicated all together.

Clearly, what I am suggesting requires an investment of time and resources. However, it needs not only that; it requires a change in language and culture. Observing others is extremely useful and the experience needs to be seen as reciprocal, with the end of the teaching observation offering a beginning and an opportunity to increase knowledge and understanding for the individual and the academic community.

If we focus solely on the actions and competencies of an 'individual' within the teaching observation we are missing an opportunity to look at the meso level, that vital middle layer that tells us so much about the health of a curriculum and the pedagogic principles embedded within it. Interestingly, the data suggest that this model has the potential to lead to further peer collaboration and communities of practice. The study provided the freedom for participants to identify areas where they needed help and not to feel badly about this. The participants initially had a cynical view of teaching observations. The data suggests that there is potential to alter the perception of the benefits of teaching observation, including the dialogue.

The more relevant information the observer has in advance, the easier it is to make sense of what they see and hear. In theory, with this information it is possible to tell if the individual has achieved what they set out to do. However, previous experience of observing had taught me that, firstly, academics often struggled to complete satisfactorily the sections on session context, and secondly, if observing a single session, it was not always possible to state confidently that the learning outcomes had been met.

### ***The contribution of educational developers***

An obvious way forward would be to work directly with programme teams. It would seem that an intellectual hunger for feedback is stimulated if seen to be relevant for subject pedagogies. This might be done in overt or covert ways. Open and agreed ways of working or instigating change by stealth? Academic policy can be hard to change and what people want and need is not necessarily what they end up receiving, as I have learnt to my cost when seeking to introduce what I considered to be a more enlightened Teaching Observation Policy in 2012 (see Appendix 2). The shift of emphasis from judgement to development while safeguarding standards requires careful planning and unambiguous messages.

My specific focus on first year undergraduate modules allows me to discover some fundamental things about the nature of studentship and how the participants felt the profiles, abilities and attitudes of the students enhanced or restricted their ability to do well. When teaching observation does not fall into appraisal territory it is easier for academics to be open and honest about what they perceive as barriers and gateways to academic success with students.

Allowing a realistic view of teaching in higher education, some of the views expressed by participants may be seen as at odds with the increasing emphasis on student satisfaction as the key indicator of success (Complete University Guide, 2013) and, of course, that is not to deny the importance of the student experience. Higher education is increasingly packaged and sold as a commodity in an open and competitive market (Greatix, 2011), using language traditionally associated with marketing such as 'consumers', 'brands', 'value for money' and 'satisfaction'. My findings are that many of the participants struggled with this 'sea change' and its implications on their practice. They did not feel they had 'signed up' for this approach to higher education to be incorporated into their daily work (Ecclestone and Hayes, 2008) and it was frequently raised in our conversations.

Participants in the study taught diverse groups of students in challenging circumstances with varying degrees of success. Crucially, the less successful episodes were not necessarily due to the performance of the lecturer but to myriad other factors, and the data show that the potential benefits yielded by teaching observations are enhanced under particular circumstances, and that these might be created and sustained on a much larger scale. The findings support and strengthen previous studies (Peel, 2005; Shortland, 2010) and suggest ways of seeing a bigger picture and acting accordingly. For this reason I wish to argue that the teaching observation

experience reflects both individual and collective responsibilities and is a social and political act linked to wider agendas.

While I believe in academics taking ownership of the process and the need to be proactive, this research has taught me that there are issues in how individuals subscribe to the process. There are clear links between theories of clinical leadership in a nursing context (Antrobus and Kitson, 1999) and this research. How ideas are presented and sold is crucial, along with who is doing the 'selling' and how they are perceived by their target audience. This is supported by the study findings and in particular data obtained when interviewing the participants, whose testimony reported a lack of detailed feedback from previous sessions. I have sought to generate knowledge in a creative way through engaging in dialogue with others, and should like to see the practices I have introduced being employed to provide a better integration into University culture.

Aptly, Tight (2007) reflected on how few reflections of everyday experience, that is, on the lives of departments, relationships with courses and students, are recorded as unsatisfactory and that even fewer reflect failure. I feel that, when researching their own practices, educational developers need to share accounts that are honest rather than only success. So what dialogue can I have now with my community of practice? It should reassure individuals that sometimes there are no 'magic formulas' and that academics face many challenges that they will manage differently. Given my background and the results of this study, like Rogers (1969) I maintain that the way forward lies in engaging academic staff with by asking them to identify what they need and then nurturing their self-actualizing tendencies, which is their capacity for personal growth (Rogers, 1969).

Political geographies in academic development and complexities, nuances and politics surround the role of an educational developer. In my learning journal, one entire entry is spent pondering what I perceive to be my role on the margin, hovering on the borders of disciplines and departments. I have found that educational development is political work, dependent on the building of trust, credibility and alliances when there is seen to be mutual benefit. In the literature (Holmes et al., 2012; Little and Green, 2011) the need for neutrality in educational developers and their units has been debated. Wuetherick and Ewert-Bauer (2012) describe how the positioning of educational development units would be strengthening by 'de-colonizing' them and striving for integration rather than being seen as an outpost. While I have experienced the frustrations of a lack of institutional power and how it feels to be out of step with institutional directions, I agree with Moses (2012) that we cannot and should not be

neutral. My educational development work is informed by research and evidence and will continue to be so. However, I value marginality because it enables me to introduce and maintain change and improvement through stealth rather than through institutional policy. My reputation, as the findings demonstrate, ensures that what may first appear as powerlessness may conceal strengths. If we return to the post-colonial language used by some of my educational development peers, proving oneself by means of a successful outcome that supports and challenges in equal measure is the way to enter the 'trading zone'.

### **Attempting to change local policy**

There are clear links between theories of change theory and this research. How ideas are presented and sold is crucial, along with who is doing the 'selling' and how they are perceived by their target audience. This is supported by the study findings and in particular data obtained when interviewing the participants, whose testimony reported a lack of detailed feedback from previous sessions. I have sought to generate knowledge in a creative way through engaging in dialogue with others, and should like to see the practices I have introduced being employed to provide a better integration into University culture.

At the end of the first stage of the action research cycle I considered that the problem of teaching observation at the University was not with the policy but its implementation, but how it is perceived and experienced by the staff who both observe and are observed. This view is supported by the literature (Peel, 2005; Gosling, 2009). I maintained it would be sufficient for the accompanying paperwork to be rewritten with supporting guidance notes. Insisting on a minimum of annual observations for all academics would only be effective if integrated into the fabric of departments and perceived to be of tangible benefit to individuals, departments and the institution. At this point I developed a revised Teaching Observation Policy (see Appendix 13) and sent it to the Academic Progress Committee in June 2012. After due consideration, they rejected it. This was because the University wanted a policy that sought to measure performance and achievement in a more quantifiable way.

In retrospect, having undertaken the action research cycle several more times, I can see that my proposal would have served nobody well and that changing the language in an attempt to avoid that of appraisal scored an 'own goal'. A feature of action research by practitioners is to seek improvement through change. It is imperative to try new tactics and evaluate them after data analysis. Some will be proved successful and others less so, but it is important to adapt them, revise ideas in the light of further

evidence and try again. In a further iteration of the action research cycle, I realized that one could have a policy for teaching observation as appraisal and a policy for teaching observation as development, but that there should not be one policy for both purposes.

This conclusion was informed by my experience of observing others and the conversations that followed feedback from critical companions. Their input was integral to this research, enabling me to develop my thinking and strengthen my arguments.

This was replicated in my interactions with participants who were given opportunities to engage in 'dialogue', share their thinking and reasoning in a way that is difficult to do alone. What intrigues and troubles me is the difficulty in proving sustainability and tangible outcomes in ways that might be measured. There might appear to be a tension between the coupling of 'critical' and 'friendship', at face value an oxymoron if the role of 'critic' is perceived narrowly and negatively. However, it is possible to critique respectfully and constructively and, under the right circumstances, it offers a precious gift.

When the views of a School and the observations of an educational developer are in perfect synchrony it is deeply satisfying for the latter. Many of the concerns that I had identified about teaching and learning approaches began to be addressed in a brave and ambitious move by a particular School, School of Science and Technology (formerly School of Engineering and Computing Sciences) that sought to review its first year BSc Computing Science curriculum.

### **The nature of 'first yearness'**

Several months after I completed my observations and interviews, the University created a new School of Science and Technology based on a strategy to develop Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects explicitly. This provided the opportunity for both myself and the School to look critically at its suite of undergraduate computing science programmes. Although benchmarking and performance indicators were consistent and satisfactory, there appeared to be fundamental problems with first year modules resulting in capability not being actualized:

- First year modules were necessarily general across a broad range of programmes, leading to some students feeling they were not being extended in the specialist area they were interested in.
- Achieving satisfactory progression required learning outcomes suitable for all students on modules. In particular, where a particular programme might benefit from specialist foundational material, this was often left until later years.
- Pedagogy was largely determined within modules, making it difficult to achieve a culture and ethos suitable for particular programme areas.
- Students were largely left to synthesize materials across modules in unsupported ways (as the first year was not entirely common, as no assumptions were possible on what else was studied concurrently).

Continuous development of the curriculum was difficult, as changes could only be made if appropriate and acceptable for all programmes and groups of students, including those at partner institutions. This has become a significant problem as the department has made the move towards a research-intensive environment with approximately 70% of staff are eligible for entry to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise. Feeding research into teaching at all levels in a systematic way was inhibited as any change was complex.

**BSc Computer Science programme overview paper for validation (2013)  
Middlesex University**

In the findings chapter a recurrent and prodigious theme is the seeming discrepancy between students' actual and potential achievement, apparently indicative of a wider problem not wholly caused by participants. Some felt the curriculum was to blame, whereas others felt the students were struggling to achieve at the requisite levels. Supporting documentation for the validation of new programmes demonstrated commitment to redressing this balance. It was felt that this would be achieved through a radical and ambitious review of the existing first year curriculum, in particular how students' progress was monitored and assessed.

Interestingly, and reassuringly, the proposed restructuring of Computer Science BSc was aligned to my observations and findings. In summary, the main changes suggested were:



- Reducing the number of lectures and using these as an entry to threshold concepts, road mapping the curriculum and facilitating cohort cohesion.
- First year students to spend most of their time in practical/seminar/workshop sessions with a group size of less than 20, mainly in specialist laboratory facilities.
- Rather than a series of small assessment tasks not necessarily related and often featuring a series of repetitive tasks, a pre-defined set of projects across the year.
- A single programming language used across all four projects so students become confident and conversant with the fundamentals.

This identifies the potential of teaching observations, carried out across programmes and departments, as a validating tool which addresses important issues such as integration.

As part of the validation panel that had been invited to review the new curriculum, it was gratifying to me to receive the following email, which tells us about the dynamics of change, from the Dean of Science and Technology:

Sent: 13 February 2013 17:45

To: Heather Clay; Carole Davis

Cc: Sue Wellstead

Dear Heather and Carole (and Sue, of course)

Thanks for making the validation such a pleasant affair. Both externals clearly enjoyed themselves, and my team thought the whole thing was extremely positive (I think a few of them cannot believe how well it was received). This is probably the most ambitious curriculum development I have ever attempted, as it requires a real culture shift, and the extra lift you gave people today has really helped. There is already a real buzz around the place with people wanting to get on with things.

Martin

## **Feedback dialogue**

So why does feedback dialogue matter? Based on these findings, it matters because of an assumption that we know how to undertake competent feedback intuitively and without real consideration of what makes it effective. In descriptions of peer observation policy the focus is on the logistics and the areas that might be covered, rather than the actual words used. My earlier action research (Davis and Ryder, 2012) indicates that this is vital and that the affective domain is as important as the cognitive and behavioural when seeking to change teaching practice. This approach, and this is where the new knowledge resides, allows for the breaking down of academics' defences and allows their practice and mine to develop and evolve. What I seek as my 'product' are guidelines on how this might take place.

My findings reveal how broadening the scope and aspirations of teaching observations, by increasing the frequency of observations and attending carefully to the conventions of the discourse, leads to individuals engaging in richer dialogue and feeling better about themselves. It offers a rare opportunity for detailed, thought-provoking and enabling feedback within a safe environment and a quality of attention seldom experienced in our adult working lives. Teaching is so often a private act and having another present, but not participating, can be uncomfortable and potentially threatening.

Brookfield (1995) argues that the best way to become a critically reflective teacher is to engage in discussion. Much of my working life centres on critical discussion, whether I take the role of facilitator or convenor of meeting or give feedback to others. The framework that I developed promises new questions, different conversations and better actions for academic colleagues.

The mere act of referring to something as 'observation' suggests a potential imbalance of power between observer and observee, while setting up an expectation that one will receive a judgement on one's performance. The teaching observation literature is keen to emphasize the personal benefits of being observed (Donnelly, 2007; Gosling and O'Connor, 2006) and the freedom bestowed on the individual to 'own' key aspects, including when, what and who observes you (Shortland, 2007), all of which reflect open, egalitarian good practice. Yet, according to the testimony of C, one of my participants, it would seem that sometimes it is not happening and value is limited even when they are:

C to Carole: I wonder how many people are in a position to give that level of feedback as well within the University. From other observations that I had the feedback wasn't as rich as the insights you were able to give me. You almost feel sometimes when other people are observing they're just ticking a box to say yes don't worry, the observation's being done, rather than it being a meaningful activity.

What appeared to me to be missing from the literature were cogent and detailed examples of how an observer might then turn observations of such phenomena into meaningful dialogue and edifying conversations. While there was some acknowledgement that giving feedback on teaching required care, tact and skill (Kell and Annetts, 2009), with particular conditions likely to make this process run more smoothly (Gosling, 2009), the implication was that it was a procedural rather than a performative consideration.

In fact, my research corroborated the findings of Rogers (1969) that effective teaching is dependent on congruence, authenticity and unconditional positive regard. I would like to claim that teaching observation feedback when carried out with mutual respect and purposefulness can be a highly satisfying and stimulating form of teaching. A study by Sadler (2013) reports on the effect of confidence on new academics and how he found it was acquired primarily through experience being gained while engaged in the act of teaching. Sadler recommends that to nurture these new academics and build their confidence their managers should ensure that they have continuity of modules and teach subjects with which they are familiar. I would argue strongly, as shown by the results of this study, that it is not just new academics but more established academics that need their confidence built and sustained. Kolb (1984) provided us with a model that encourages a critical and purposeful approach to learning through experience, a concept which has been shown (Kreber, 2007) to be highly relevant for those who teach in higher education. I would argue that providing all academics, new or more established, with an opportunity to engage in conversation with educational developers about the experience of teaching that accelerates the trajectory during which confidence is acquired.

The literature (Leeds Metropolitan University, 2011; Yiend et al., 2012) champions the benefits of a pre-observation meeting and prior to the research, and this was already an integral part of my custom and practice. The tone of this meeting can go far towards setting optimal conditions.

Even for an experienced and expert educational developer, it is noticeable how useful is observing others and the many opportunities for developing personal practice. This is

not necessarily conveyed in the literature, which emphasizes the utility to those being observed and for staff to learn while observing others (Donnelly, 2007).

Lending an increased prominence to post-observation dialogue is crucial to winning hearts and minds. Reviewing documentation from other institutions developed my thinking further and encouraged me to consider how my findings might open up the debate. I have undertaken this through conference presentations and delivering seminars on my research as other HEIs. Publishing the work in the near future will provide yet another platform.

As an expert practitioner who regularly finds herself in the position of accompanying less experienced colleagues on their learning journeys, it is necessary for me to create the optimal conditions under which practitioners interrogate and develop their own practice and in doing so improve the student experience. Feedback affirms, challenges, validates, acknowledges, gives permission, recognizes, nourishes, encourages reflection, empowers and offers specific examples. These are skills that need to be developed and practised, yet frequently they are not possessed by academics. The conditions conducive to feedback include trust, credibility, empathic understanding, humility, congruence, authenticity, equality, mutual respect, active listening, acknowledging complexity, openness, unambiguous language, expertise in theory and practice of teaching and learning.

These observations took place within specific disciplines and their sub-disciplines. When reviewing the findings and considering their implications, it is necessary to take this into account. Much of the literature on teaching observation in higher education tends to discuss generalities rather than subject specificities. I strongly recommend that further research explores the nuances of subject and its relation to dialogic interaction between observer and observee. There are specific pedagogic variants between subjects that may not be immediately obvious to an observer, however if I had not explored these with participants prior to joining their classes in conversation with them, the omission would not have featured in my review.

Asking participants to describe pedagogic distinctions relevant to their subject allowed me to discuss how they might best motivate their students, articulate and package theory within lectures and labs in planned and purposeful ways, along with the need for a problem-driven curriculum. One of the main challenges of the subjects taught, in particular computing science, was the rapid pace of changing technology and application areas. To be a supportive and constructive observer I would attest that it is not necessary to be able to comprehend the details of these changes, but essential to

know that it is a feature of teaching and learning at this level and to discuss with academics how they address this.

This further supports the evidence from my action research project on the importance of situating feedback and conversations in a wider context of institutional and strategic change. Before embarking on this project I was convinced that the primary benefit of teaching observations was to the individual themselves, about them and for them. Repeated cycles of action and review revealed that the individuals' actions, experience and needs were often contextual. As I learnt over and over again, demarcation lines could not be easily drawn, nor meanings or questions about cultural norms assumed or the nature of academic leadership ignored. Where we have leaders we will inevitably have followers. Where we have power, we will have resistance. This has to be taken into account when considering new approaches to teaching observation. As with all changes, it was important to support the application of change and to support the people involved in it.

Below is a journal entry that captures the richness that can come from feedback dialogue:

Today I met with H at Trent Park to review the team teaching he had done with a female colleague on the Product Design Programme. The areas that he wanted to talk about were the challenges involved in team teaching; what are the most effective way to give feedback to students on their work; structure versus non-structure; did he demonstrate too much empathy towards students which resulted in him not setting limits with his students which then potentially compromised learning and how do you know when to do the right thing. (Carole Davis, 6 June 2012)

I invited H to comment on my practice, particularly in relation to how I gave feedback, and he responded that it was 'a great process' that was tremendously reassuring for him. The importance of an objective observer was seen as crucial. When unpacked this implied that, within departments, agendas and team dynamics may tarnish the process and render it unsafe and lacking in authenticity. Thus independent feedback is critical, but 'credibility' and 'experience' equally so.

This account illustrates how feedback dialogue leads to the actualization of capabilities for both H and I, using the ideas of Gibbs (2014), and how emancipatory and democratizing practices may be encompassed within the act of dialogic interaction and giving feedback.

It is important to state that dialogic interaction post-teaching observation, done well, involves emotional labour and it is here that, if not acknowledged, the invisible wounds of educational development can fester. For those of us who undertake many

observations it is essential that we have places to talk about how entering the worlds of others makes us feel and think. The educational development literature has bequeathed to us a tremendous legacy relating to policies, protocols and practices, but less on how to manage the troubling things it may reveal about the 'secret lives' of departments.

I have felt an affinity with work being done in medical education around observation of teaching, feedback practices and reflection (Ramani and Leinster, 2008). Much of this can be transferred into higher education and, in particular, the focus on dialogue, flexibility, impact and the link between feedback and the quality of teaching and learning within an organization.

The originality of this study lies in the extent to which dialogic interactions between observer and observee have been scrutinized, the willingness to address some uncomfortable questions, to extent to which issues of power dynamics has been addressed and to consider the needs of academics and students jointly, to change and improve teaching observation practice. Research into the feedback process has highlighted the reciprocal nature of edifying conversations between colleagues. Despite the many protocols and policies that exist, it remains that a tool is only as good as its operator and different approaches are needed before it can become an integral part of professional life.

Language and terminology is a recurring theme and I recommend that we properly explore the assumptions and presumptions surrounding the use of the term 'peer' to avoid confusion and misrepresentation. It is most important that issues surrounding power, hidden agendas and intention are addressed here.

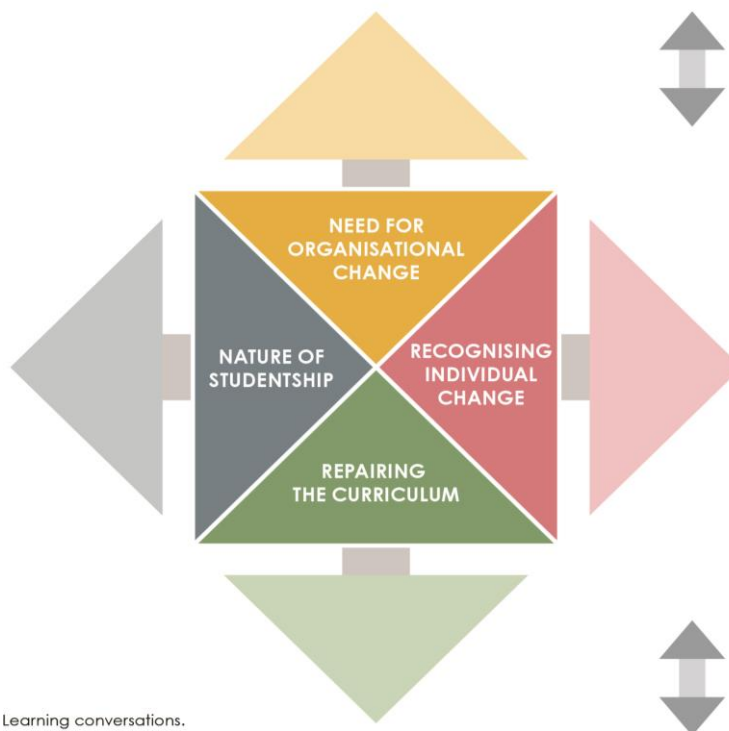
In concluding this discussion chapter, I ask what the data findings are capable of and how this informs my conclusion and recommendations. I wish to avoid raising unrealistic expectations, yet want to model best practice through practice-based research that seeks to articulate how explicit knowledge might be communicated. The question of whose responsibility it is to affect change is complex.

Prosser et al. (2006) and Knight (2006) suggest that academics develop most as teachers in situ and in praxis, which chimes both with the methodological approach I took. That is, the action research undertaken when exploring these issues and my own philosophical stance concurs with that of Schön (1984), that people learn by doing and then having an opportunity to talk about it in a meaningful way with a critical friend, making sense of what might come of it.

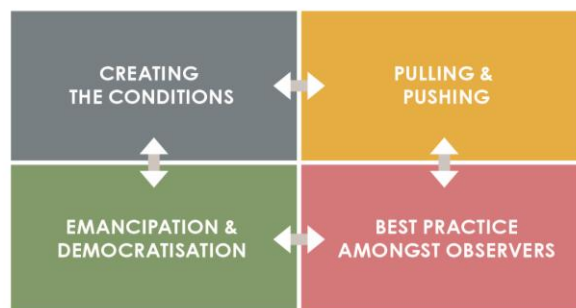
To model best practice in teaching observation and to encourage productive learning conversations I have developed a conceptual framework. The following three diagrams comprising Figure 6.1 illustrate the framework.



Types of teaching activity.



Learning conversations.



Dimensions of effective observer practice.

**Figure 6.1: Conceptual framework for teaching observations (Davis, 2014)**

## Chapter 7: A reflexive account of my personal learning and professional journey

### **Learning the extent of my strengths and weaknesses**

These past four years have seen me on a voyage of discovery. I started with a destination and directions but discovered upon my approach that certain passages were closed and it was necessary to find alternative routes. Sometimes those reopened for me and sometimes I did not need them, because I no longer needed to go there. Travelling to new places was at times unsettling yet often exhilarating, while returning to places I thought I knew well and seeing them through a different lens was revelatory and humbling.

In completing this doctorate I have travelled in parallel. The focus has been on others receiving feedback from me, while I have been receiving feedback on the content and quality of my thinking and written work from my advisers. My experience has been especially intriguing as, while I gave time and support to others based on my expertise I was simultaneously offered this myself. I learnt at first hand how constructive and affirming feedback can improve your perception of yourself in the best way imaginable, giving you wings and allowing you to fly.

I have allowed myself to acknowledge how challenging the role of the educational developer is, subject to a number of competing priorities that sometimes conflict with my personal values and beliefs. As one committed to practitioner research and an authentic action research approach, I am willing to recognize and write about my own learning journey, my successes and my failures, but also the tensions that inevitably exist in large organizations that impact on that practice. In my discussion chapter I have identified the key issues that I believe capture the leading edge of educational development practice.

Crucially, I have been open and honest about the limitations of my study. From the outset I have made claims not for sweeping changes but for improvements in practice and recommendations for alternative approaches. By far the most important thing that I have learnt is that I have no need to feel reduced and inadequate because I cannot influence the policy changes in the way that I should like. These limitations lie not with me but the situation I work within, together with the infrastructure that supports it.

I have thoroughly enjoyed undertaking this project because it has made me a more reflexive, effective practitioner who is much braver. Importantly, I have learnt to love questions rather than to become frightened by them or defensive about my practices. I



enjoy and am deeply committed to my work and to contributing what I can to make things better during the sometimes terrible challenges of small and large-scale change that has an impact on so many areas of life, not least the personal. For a long time I have been in love with how effective feedback and edifying conversation serve to improve the quality of life for those whose work may be confusing and difficult. In the last year of this professional doctorate I have experienced the power of a nurturing yet appropriately demanding adviser, whose words and actions made me immediately feel understood and capable.

### **Becoming a practitioner researcher**

I had always had a love–hate relationship with research; loving to read well written and interesting research reports while hating what I considered to be some of the superiority and jargon of those who called themselves researchers. I felt like there was an invisible ring of steel designed to keep out people like me. When embarking on this research I aspired to be a researcher, yet felt about my research skills much as I felt about my academic writing skills. They seemed woefully lacking and in those early days it seemed that the more I read, the less I understood. Now I perceive the point of action research; you have to give yourself up to the process, going backwards and forwards again and again, and then when you reach to the end you realize that you know much. Finally, I am growing to love research. I now want to do more research, seeing myself as a competent action researcher with something important to say.

Growing to love research and seeing oneself as a researcher was not easy. I looked at successful DProf Projects to gain a sense of different notions of 'authorial voice'. Writing in an active voice was a real struggle for me, despite being given permission to do so. The challenge was in capturing the personal and political aspects of this project in appropriate ways that struck a balance between castigating the organization in which I worked while identifying the need for improvement. At times it was difficult to know for whom I was writing and I felt restricted by the possibility that my findings might prove uncomfortable for some.

### **Dissonance and struggle**

I harboured crippling anxiety for a long time in the early stages of the project. This came from a concern that my project was too unwieldy, and fettered with plenty of heart but no centre and no edges. At a low point I looked at completed DProf projects by successful candidates, hoping to find reassurance and inspiration but also interested in how they had written their narrative account and organized the various

sections. This exercise was a turning point for me in so many ways. Having read the work of many whom I know as colleagues, I realize that there is nothing about the quality of their work that sets them apart from me intellectually. What sets them apart is that they crossed the threshold between 'knowing' and 'writing' so, while I may possess convincing evidence and have carried out a strong action research project, nobody will believe me until it is written. I remember thinking at that point, 'If they can do then so can I' prioritized this DProf. The notion of an outstanding researcher being someone who thinks about their research and adds to it every day resonated with me and, in the time taken to complete it, there has been no demarcation between life, work and research.

Something I took away from reading the work of others (some of whom I was in awe of, so beautiful and fully formed was their work) that, as Mo Farah said when winning the 2012 Olympics, there is often no magical formula, just 'hard graft'.

Traditional doctoral students are often young, do not work full-time and tend not to have children. This is not to assume that they do not face other significant responsibilities, but working mothers do face particular challenges. I have experienced dissonance in blending my role as a mother and a doctoral student (Carter et al., 2013). I had on average only three to four weeks dedicated study leave each year, so annual leave and weekends were regularly dedicated to the task. My children when I embarked on this journey were not young but teenagers and young adults, with their own particular practical and emotional needs. They were remarkably supportive and accepting in the early years, yet I oscillated between guilt and resentment; guilty because the doctorate took me away from my family and resentful because my job took me away from the doctorate.

One of the things that I have learnt is to accept my situation and, while not making light of the challenges, to see some of the positives. For example, my children see that achievements will not be satisfying unless they are hard won and tell me my resolve and determination has strengthened theirs when studying. So I blend my role as a mother and a doctoral student, and look at that blend as being a positive contribution to my roles in both areas. While work might have kept me away from the actual writing, it was closely aligned to the project focus. Through reviewing my journal entries I became aware of the link between my daily practice and the research.

Other concerns were less easily managed. Further dissonance was experienced when emergent research findings suggested that practices I was involved with as part of policy and protocol at my own and other organizations were at odds with best practice.

However, by listening to feedback on my work, over time I came to accept that I had specific skills in giving feedback and in the pedagogies of teaching and learning, and that having expertise does not preclude a respectful, equitable working relationship. I realized that my 'not coming forward enough' approach was colluding with the notion that educational development is not a subject in its own right. Coming forward for me is about doing something about what I hear and taking action to right things instead of accepting the status quo because it is 'accepted practice' in the culture. Educational developers are not be credible if they cannot do something about development. The undervaluing of self was another ghost that was laid to rest in this research.

I also struggled with the responsibility of being told things and then feeling uncertain what to do about them. For example, there were accounts by participants of observation and feedback practices that were counterproductive at best, and obstructive at worst. I was aware of the anger and sadness I felt at the damage this kind of experience can do to an individual's confidence, along with missed opportunities for development and creative problem solving. My way of coming to terms with this was to surrender to my inability to alter what had happened in the past and to make recommendations on how this might be improved in the future. This is why the project has been so important.

I have identified complex ideas that still needed unpacking but that capture the leading edge of educational development practice. I have made mistakes and hopefully learnt from them. The research has helped me do this. It has also drawn attention to the gap between the contradictions and challenges inherent within teaching observation policy and practice.

Years of experience have left me reflexive, acutely aware of the challenges in my own practice, and convinced that by embarking on a critique of my own practice it would be possible to make an illuminating and practical contribution to the subject.

To assume that a magic formula exists to turn large amounts of raw data into a credible, original, useful theory that resonates with a wide audience would be naive. Arguments and interpretations are created through analysing the data and being cognizant of key points embedded there. I viewed the data at my disposal as the theoretical and ideological equivalent of an archaeological site and I needed to dig deep, excavate and reveal useful seams of knowledge.

## **Positioning of self as a practitioner researcher**

In this research I sought to set out my own standards of practice and judgement and show how I am meeting them. These standards have emerged from my experience as an educational developer and expert practitioner in the field of teaching and learning in higher education. My previous training as a nurse and person-centred counsellor led to the adoption of particular professional values that persist in my current role. These values are respect for others, empathy, authenticity, congruence and honesty. I can now state unequivocally that these values are the golden threads running through my practice, with life-affirming words and actions a constant presence in my teaching and learning relationships.

There is a skill in therapeutic practice in recognizing a good moment or opening, so I wondered if the same principle might be applied to teaching observation dialogue, but in all the accounts I have read this is strikingly absent. Indeed, most accounts seemed to imply that if academics could embrace the need to give good feedback then they would be able to do it. This is not the case. There are qualitative differences in feedback, fraught with issues around projection and power dynamics: being too abrupt, expecting too much, being patronizing or bland, or too kind, obtuse or bored.

I had hoped to find something valuable when I embarked on this quest, but it was not a foregone conclusion. Now I have reached the end I firmly believe that my practice has changed dramatically and certainly for the better. My critical thinking faculties have improved, as have my evaluative skills, and I have explored new literature. Standing on my own authority I am now able to ask the following questions and embark on a dialogue that seeks the answers.

Do teaching observations divide academics into two camps, those who actively welcome being challenged within a supportive environment and those who prefer to maintain the status quo? One might argue that the research culture within academia traditionally encourages a critical approach to the work of others and that this is seen as acceptable. Why should teaching not be held up to the same scrutiny? What I have learnt, which I have applied to my work with others, is that the conditions need to be in place and careful attention given to feedback dialogue. So, while I might have previously approached the observation and the discussion that follows from a deficit model, I am now much more open.

Critical incidents allow me to illustrate best my professional and personal odyssey, so allow me to share several pivotal points.

## **Role modelling and empathy**

Halfway through the project I decided to be proactive and to arrange a teaching observation of myself for the first time in three years. It was important to put myself in the position of being observed so I could be more empathetic. Undertaking this project has made me more courageous and determined to be a good role model whose 'espoused theories' match my 'theories in use' (Argyris and Schön, 1974). The following is an extract from my diary a day before the observation:

I have invited a colleague to observe a session on 'Learning Theories' which I have taught many times before but rarely with a sense of satisfaction at the outcome. I do feel that I understand the subject matter better now and am able to take a more critical stance and make better links to practice. Often I don't think I am a particularly good teacher in a classroom setting and generally much better on a one-to-one. No, let me take that back, I am an adequate teacher whose teaching is 'good enough' and I will console myself with the thought that it is just as well that this session does not stand alone and is bolstered by other sessions, resources and online discussion.

I have prepared well although like an actress worry about forgetting my lines and being a clumsy performer who misjudges the group, her timing and confuses rather than informs. I have thought carefully about what I want the students to get from the session and am likely clearer on this than I have ever been. This makes me feel that all the reading and examining of my own practice and that of others has had an impact.

I have invited feedback in these areas and given permission for the observer to seek evaluative comments from the students. It is going to be such an interesting experience to receive feedback tomorrow and to consider my thoughts and feelings about the content and the way it is given. I will ensure that I write a detailed and thoughtful reflective commentary.

The following extract was written the day following the observation:

A day has passed since I was observed and I haven't written anything about that experience yet BUT every time I think about it I feel warm inside. So let's unpack that a little. On the day of the observation I did feel somewhat nervous and how fortunate the observation was taking place late morning so was put out of my misery relatively early on in the day. So why was I nervous? Well this was a new group who I had not taught before thus creating a sense of the unknown; the colleague observing me knew a great deal about the subject and also was perceived by myself to have a tendency to be critical with strong views on a number of subjects, at times uncompromising and rather blunt.

Anyway, the session went well with me feeling fluent, informed and credible. My management of the group was good and all appeared engaged. I realized not for the first time that this topic requires two and a half hours and not 75 minutes so in future will allocate it more time.

I had given V detailed information beforehand to provide a context for session along with my intentions and areas I would particularly welcome feedback on. V joined in fully with all activities which made me think my current rigidity about observers not getting involved might be misplaced. Her being there did not affect me negatively and her presence felt comfortable and supportive. We had talked previously about a conscious decision on my behalf not to introduce her and explain that there was an observation going on based on me picking up some anxiety from them at the beginning of the day and I didn't want any additional distractions for them.

V and I sat down immediately after the session was over for feedback and discussion. The feedback was positive and, affirming leaving me feeling proud of myself having had my good practice and role status as role model affirmed. I really value V's opinion but the best thing was having someone tell you things about yourself which you had taken for granted which are tremendously effective for example, 'warmth with control', structuring of group feedback, inclusion, movement, use of voice, clear explanation, making students curious to know more, putting my individual stamp on things, relating student feedback on practice to theories, acknowledging different subjects and roles.

What this experience has done has confirmed that my teaching and research practice has altered significantly since I embarked on this project, acquiring considerable expertise and insights that I rarely see addressed in the literature and certainly not in this way. So I must write about it and see it as valuable; I must write more and I must write often because, as I am so fond of saying to others, by writing we develop our ideas and, of course, 'first drafts are shite, but necessary shite'.

I am struck by the sustainability of receiving positive feedback from a credible observer. Thus, by the use of the term 'credible' I have revealed something about how I perceive teaching observations and this would be interesting to pursue—what makes an observer 'credible'?

When I think about my recent experiences with academics at an another institution in my role as an external assessor I see that their experience of me observing them and giving them feedback bestowed on me the label of 'credible', yet I would love to deconstruct what it is in this context and explore whether these things might be shared and consequently taught. In his email, R thanked me for the generous gift of time and 'penetrating insight'. It was at this point that I realized this was with this subtext of going beyond mere financial reward and departmental policy. Teaching observations had to do something beyond fulfilling a University policy: they had to leave something lasting. Critical incidents are illustrated by several more examples that encapsulate 'road of Damascus' moments.

I met F for the first time on another matter. He is an academic whom I was keen to recruit into my fieldwork and I was overwhelmed by his enthusiasm both to take part and to participate. We agreed the three teaching observations, then he suggested other opportunities for observation which I had gently to refuse because of competing demands on my time. Do you know what I thought? I am really good at conveying the potential benefits of this project so individuals want to take part—so, is that about me and how others experience me, or is it because there is such a lack of personalized, individualized feedback and opportunities to discuss 'teaching and learning issues' ? Or are there other factors? I wanted to bring such questions into my project.

### **Time and timing**

Another issue was settling on 'time': whether to observe more than once and what this might reveal. It could not be replication as the students might be different and if they were the same the conditions might be different, for instance the room, the content or the purpose of the session.

On 3 May 2012 I wrote in my journal:

I became curious about the idea of 'time' and observing the academic 'again' and the 'students again'—what might this tell us? How is the second time different? Also, when such feedback is given and at what point in the feedback discourse do I feel the initial resistance of a sceptical observee dissipating?

In Appendix 19 I have included further diary entries that go into more depth about time and timing and winning hearts and minds.

### **Learning conversations**

Reflecting on the experience of undertaking the project and what I have learnt, I am struck by how feedback as a theme appears again and again as something both problematic and life enhancing. In Appendix 19 I have included a journal extract illustrating how one of the participants is grappling with the most effective ways of giving feedback to students and how these might be perceived by students and colleagues. What starts off about a conversation about feedback becomes a conversation about objectivity and subjectivity associated with student feedback and subject pedagogies.

On reflection, team teaching was also a recurring theme, and how comparisons with other academics often characterized the learning conversations. Does it complement, exclude, collude, reinforce poor practice and stifle debate, or offer alternative

approaches and solutions? I would love to recommend further research in this area, especially because I recently supervised a Masters' student whose dissertation focused on this.

### **What have I learnt about the process and practices of teaching observations?**

I have learnt that teaching observation divides academics into two camps, those who actively welcome being challenged within a supportive environment and those who prefer to maintain the status quo. Conversely, I might argue that research culture within academia traditionally encourages a critical approach to the work of others and this is seen as acceptable. Why should teaching not be held up to the same scrutiny? What I have learnt, which I have applied to my work with others, is that the conditions need to be in place and careful attention given to feedback dialogue. Whereas I might have approached the observation and the discussion that follows from a deficit model, I am now much more open.

This research has caused me to ask about the precise nature of relationships between academics and their peers. Are teaching observations seen as less necessary for mid-career and end-career academics than for new academics? If the evidence suggests that some peer observation may merely reinforce poor to average practice, why do organizations persist with it? Who counts as a peer? The peer relationship suggests equity and parity free of judgement or managerial responsibility, yet testimony and my own experience suggest otherwise. This is another area where the limitations of the research meant that such questions could not be answered fully, leading me to recommend further research in this area.

### **What did I know and how has that changed?**

Often, what we consider to be 'knowledge' is embedded so deeply that it is necessary to go back to a time when we did not know it. If I go back five years to when I first undertook my current role as an educational developer I see that my goal was to help individuals acquire observable teaching skills and techniques, usually focusing on the acquisition of a particular teaching method. The majority of the interactions centred on the delivery of workshops and observing one-off incidents of traditional teaching. My approach was largely generic, behavioural and certainly not discipline- or subject-based.

Following feedback from academic staff, formally and informally, and exploring what aspects of these interactions were proving most successful I began to refine my



approach based on this 'new knowledge'. As a result subsequent practice experiences acknowledged and addressed the view that teaching is different (at least in part) in different disciplines because the structure of knowledge is different. However the most important factor in my own professional development was the distinctive nature of the feedback dialogue between me and the academics I was working alongside. The distinguishing feature of this dialogic interaction was that it was simultaneously constructive, scholarly, encouraging and motivational. Importantly, it had integrity and coherence while retaining a collegial feel.

### **How do I know what I know?**

In engaging with others, observing and asking questions, I found meaning through the exploration of my own mind and that of others. In the duration of this project the new knowledge has emerged from me examining my own practice, the personal testimony of others and observation, thus creating a different set of meanings.

My knowledge came from synthesizing the literature and reflecting on my own experiences, including relevant institutional examples, which include a new academic direction that sees teaching and learning in post-1992 universities regarded as less of a priority than research.

I believe that new knowledge comes about not only by critical introspection but by initiating actions and an evaluation of those actions. A starting point for me was thinking about my current role and determining from whence comes the knowledge necessary to fulfil my role and carry out its responsibilities. I have concluded that it comes from my previous occupations and areas of study, which include nursing, counselling, medical education and social sciences. Now, as I find myself in a relatively new academic discipline, that of teaching and learning in higher education, it is inevitable that I will use knowledge from other disciplines to enhance my practice.

In the quest for 'new knowledge' I asked myself what I might discover through this approach. Might I use it to examine the relationship between theory and practice in educational development? Yes, because it contextualizes my experience and can be imposed on a reflective practice model, which is an integral part of an action research design.

In my experience, relying purely on empirical knowledge for exploring lived experience in this context dehumanizes people and fails to get at the heart of what practice is. It is important to frame the experience in an authentic manner, which is why purely relying on indicators of impact and performance to measure the outcomes of this project is

insufficient. My epistemological stance draws on the body of work that Schön (1983) has produced on the reflective practitioner. Argyris and Schön (1974) talk about the contradictions between desirable intent and actual practice (target vs. reality), which has been a theme for me with this project.

I have never viewed 'knowledge' as finite and believe that practice should evolve from authentic lived experience, which in turn should inform policy in a transparent manner. Thus, what appeals greatly to me is the potential of 'heuristic tools' to offer a structure based on sound principles and evidence-based practice for a particular activity namely, teaching observation, while allowing practitioners to transcend the framework in order to respond flexibly.

I have come to view myself in relation to my social situation, which has led to a questioning approach and exploration of my values and assumptions. I started off from a somewhat naïve perspective that my proposed project was non-threatening and low risk. I quickly realized that this was not the case and that the mere intention of taking action is inherently political. I also thought that I knew best and all there was to know about good teaching. Following exposure to an incredible diversity of lecturers, subjects and teaching approaches, I feel there are fewer absolutes than I had previously envisaged concerning the most important issue of whether the lecturer is given an opportunity to discuss, reflect on and evaluate their own experience.

Intrinsic to the epistemology of this project is how collegiality, communication and the creation of communities of practice informed the research design. The invaluable role that internal and external colleagues, peers and those I have observed have played in both supporting and challenging my professional practice is also now more fully understood, and has been written into the findings.

Reviewing current information and knowledge relevant to my project has led to the realization that the focus of my project provides me with a golden opportunity to create new knowledge. Diversity amongst academic staff and students has been revealed to a greater extent than I had ever imagined, in particular amongst those who have studied outside the UK. This has been incredibly interesting and prompts me to ensure that I include in my special project those academics who teach in the UK HE system but who received their own formative education elsewhere, as preliminary insights reveal that this is new knowledge ready to be critically analysed and synthesized.

The study has enabled me to say 'I don't know' and that has transformed my teaching, research and managerial practice, all of which have a tendency to overlap at times. Border issues regularly characterize my work as an educational developer. I am not a

subject specialist, instead allocating my time across disciplines and a wide range of academic staff. Access in this context was sensitively negotiated by me and generously given by them. This reciprocity facilitated a different kind of professional response that allowed me to take up temporary residence elsewhere.

I firmly believe that this knowledge that has been created has been transformative. It is now up to me to make it generative, meaningful and influential and link this project to the concept of school based educational developers.

In exploring and developing my own practice, what is it I have learnt? One of the distinguishing features of action research is that, as practitioner researchers, we are thinking and researching all the time. It has been difficult at times to be discriminatory and to filter. Looking back I can see how my practice in this area has evolved from drawing on previous professional experiences and seeing the links between what is needed in my current role. It is important not to be seen to be mounting a sustained attack on other academics because, if there is no adequate preparation or training for and no authentic opportunities to discuss teaching observation, why should they be held accountable? The 'novice to expert' continuum is a concept that might be usefully applied to teaching observation feedback (Benner, 1984). Hansman (2001) writes about the concept of 'cognitive apprenticeships' and communities of practice, which again could be highly contextual to teaching observation dialogue. I have learnt the importance of working collegially and the importance of valuing the perspective of others.

An uncomfortable but satisfying aspect of being simultaneously an insider and a practitioner researcher was casting me as a 'subject'. Going around the action research cycle for a final time, what is it I see? Being simultaneously inside and a practitioner researcher has made me wonder to what extent my boundaries have been clearly defined and my interpretation unbiased. However, I have learnt not to rush things but to return to complex issues further into the action research cycle and see this as part of my continuing professional development. To paraphrase Schön (1983) I have accepted that 'there are messy lowlands of practice'.

I have grown to see personal, practical knowledge as valid and how an action research approach allows me to engage others through meaningful dialogue in educational enquiry. Along with others I have achieved personal growth as well as an evaluation my own practices and a deeper understanding. From the outset I have been obliged to question my assumptions and my established ways of doing things.

Action research starts with values and I have asked myself whether my values are justifiable values. My beliefs and values are central to the research. I have liked to think that I lived my values through providing my participants with a space in which to think for themselves and make their own decisions. The necessary checks and balances, facilitated by critical companions and the participants, have enabled me to ensure that I am not imposing my values on others and that my interventions are helpful. Also crucial has been understanding the politics and revealing the perceived injustices.

The participants in this research, although situated in a particular discipline, are representative of my wider work as an educational developer. Those who participated have enabled me to extract meaning and actions from our work together that, in turn, will influence my future work. The participants and I have considered how we have influenced each other's learning. At the same time I recognize the involvement and power distribution between researchers and researched, although I would suggest that the researched actually do have power and influence over me. In any organization reputation and credibility is critical, so participants can certainly exert a sway over how I am perceived.

Previously I had been concerned that as educational developers we might put up barriers through the language we used. There is a need to examine the accessibility of educational discourse and its linguistic complexity.

I see feedback as a gift to be used to my advantage. I believe that adopting this approach leads to me being considered a good role model and consequently a more effective, credible practitioner. If I had not adopted this outlook I would spend my professional academic life repeating the same year over and over again.

### **What next: The future**

It is important to state that the success of the project does not rest solely on implementing strategic change on a wide scale but rather on outcomes that focus on understanding, thinking about and implementing new approaches to educational development in one organization.

A cul-de-sac I found myself in during this journey was the powerlessness that one can feel within a large organization, feeling both insignificant and lacking a voice. The biggest lesson I have learnt is that not having formal power does not make you powerless. This is because it is the 'quiet work' that occurs under the radar that has a huge potential for transformatory change and I have evidenced this through my

research. New levels of knowledge are generated by working in corners, spaces, bends and turns.

Currently I believe that the University could do more to promote expansion of the ideas that have come out of my research but, in the meanwhile, I will continue to work in the margins and on the basis of my reputation. Consequently my reach is expanding.

I wanted to re-imagine a world where resources are not finite and academics receive nurturing and restorative support. I did not understand how constructive and affirmative feedback could be so high a priority for our students and yet so low a priority for those who taught them.

'To tell it like it is' has required honesty and courage, but my resolve has been strengthened by the testimony of the participants who have given validity to these views, and my supervisor and adviser who have enabled me to refine my arguments.

I realize that work such as this is, by its nature, political in nature and has the potential to be socially disruptive. My conclusions and recommendations suggest that current custom and practice surrounding teaching observation needs to change if there is to be progress. It suggests that the narrative constructed around teaching observation is flawed and a misappropriation of effort. Happily, a way forward has been shown based on the insights and ways forward identified here.

Reflection asks serious questions of oneself. The most important questions for me are: 'What use is this work?' How much of this knowledge can be regarded as objective, generalizable and made public (Saunders, 2007)?

Slowly and regretfully, I have had to accept that I will need to introduce my proposed changes in, for instance, the non-policy route. In terms of the claims my projects will or will not be making, I believe that I have been very clear. So, while I will not be able to generalize beyond Middlesex University, I will be able to say that I have introduced tangible educational development initiatives following my own research that are evident in my teaching observation practices and new partnership models for educational development. These new partnership models have resulted in a more collegial, proactive, discipline-focused approach to educational development.

## Chapter 8: Recommendations and conclusion

### Recommendations

An outcome of this research is a conceptual framework (see Figure 6.1 on p. 156). These recommendations are informed by the framework. The implementation of these recommendations can prepare the way for a 'cultural shift' in the perceptions and potential of teaching observations.

This research has already had an impact on my practice and the practice of my team colleagues within the University and in networks of educational developers external to it. This is evidenced by feedback and requests to speak at internal and external meetings as well as national and international conferences on ways forward for educational developers in the changing knowledge environment.

However 'influence' is not a 'cultural shift'. A 'cultural shift' in my organization will take longer, as most organizational changes do. There are many variables in the environment such as change in the University Executive, shifting strategies, political and economic agendas, together with the movement of key figures across and out of the University. However, what is more attainable is a culture shift amongst the community of educational developers, who, if they are convinced of the value of the research and have a good working model or framework, can introduce changes in their own environments and in their own thinking, encouraging more research.

An individual in a large organization who is not a member of the Executive does not have much chance of bringing about a change in culture, but an active community of practitioners does (Lave and Wenger, 1998). We have common ground and interests. It is not only about myself writing for publication, delivering workshops locally and nationally; delivering papers and being a part of symposiums at local, national and international conference and being a visiting fellow at a Centre for Learning and Teaching in Canada, but encouraging others in my community to do the same.

Having a framework to work with that is reliable insofar as it is based on evidence produced from research is a significant step to encouraging development in thinking and practice and is flexible enough to be modified as other members of the community of practice begin to test and contribute to the framework. It provides a lens through which practitioners can challenge their assumptions and interpret and position their practice experience. A framework is adaptable to different contexts.

The purpose of this research was to contribute an appreciate approach to teaching observation at Middlesex University. The framework I have developed can be implemented at the University through my roles and through my recognition as a Middlesex Senior Teaching Fellow. The framework is a significant step because it is an easily identifiable articulation of how and what to do for those embarking on teaching observation in an observing or observee capacity. If this helps academics become more confident teachers, then this will be taken up by the deans and a cultural shift will be supported.

The framework is not the answer to everything; it cannot mitigate all variables, but it articulates a possibility. This framework is part of the groundwork that will be laid.

Argyris and Schön (1974) talk about the contradiction between desired intent and actual practice. This theory has been found to have some relevance to some university teachers who may find themselves unable to put their ideas into practice (Norton et al., 2005). The same can be said of educational developers, and there is evidence suggesting that they are not always able to put their beliefs into practice (Cousins, 2013). I accept that there are limitations to the recommendations, but this does not mean that there cannot be improvement. Bearing this in mind, the recommendations I propose have emerged from my actual practice and not just my espoused practice, being realistic about what might be achieved.

My recommendations have emerged from the findings and in the spirit of action research have their focus on improvement. They examine the need to create the necessary conditions to allow useful and enabling learning conversations to take place. They advocate that educational developers form partnership models with teaching teams at that most important meso level (Fanghanel, 2007). Crucially, they support a broadening of teaching activities and areas associated with teaching observations that will enrich the feedback dialogue. The main target is academics teaching on undergraduate and Masters programmes.

My recommendations are as follows:

1. A team of educational developers needs to be trained to create the conditions for educational development of academics by carrying out their own practice effectively. It cannot rest with any one individual, going it alone. A team ensures the learning conversations I have described in this research occur on a wider scale. Such individuals would include other academics across the University. I will offer a series of workshops and one-to-one sessions with interested parties

to develop skills, knowledge and confidence in this area, examining feedback discourse and sharing my experiences with them.

2. An open and frank dialogue is encouraged about the discourse that needs to take place in teaching observation to ensure that it is a meaningful and edifying experience for all concerned. This discourse would be one that does not focus exclusively on behaviourist and technical-rational notions, but includes the affective domain as well. The discourse should be informed by field notes made during the teaching observation.
3. A move towards a partnership model between departments, teaching teams and educational developers is needed. This involves working with another discipline or sub-discipline around team teaching. These initiatives will include an ongoing review evaluation focused on 'evidencing value' (Bamber, 2013).
4. I would offer to establish communities of practice for academics within subject disciplines. These would negotiate collaborative activities with members to expand their approaches to teaching and learning. These initiatives will include an evaluation of 'evidencing value' (Bamber, 2013) through teaching observation and team teaching.
5. The encounters I describe encourage reflective practice, make visible good practice, improve and develop existing teaching methods and resources. It is vital to separate them, in terms of both the paperwork and the approach, from performance management and appraisal so the discussions that are intrinsic to them are free from the fear of judgement and remain authentic. There needs to be an increasing emphasis on the dialogic interaction present in pre- and post-observation meetings.
6. The focus should be on dialogic interactions relating to teaching with established academics, who often miss such opportunities due to their focus on those new to teaching in higher education. However, all staff who teach should be given the opportunity for feedback, which can help everyone to stay at the cutting edge of communication with rapidly changing student attitudes and technological, social and economic environments and expectations.
7. Partnership models should be used that involve an educational developer working closely with departments and programme teams, as negotiated, to focus on particular concerns about programmes and vitally, the everyday realities of academic lives. These may conflict with organizational objectives. Focusing on particular student groups and subject disciplines, as in this



research, would be particularly beneficial to students and academics whose subjects are non-traditional.

8. Acknowledgement is required that academic leadership roles at programme and module leader level need preparation and support, and the role of the educational developer could be used to assist in teaching support. .
9. Decoupling peer observation for development from that for evaluative purposes while encouraging ownership and personal record keeping is essential, developing and supporting the observers, including other activities involved in teaching and learning, rather than limiting it to a moment in time.
10. Wider issues emerge through this approach to teaching observation and thus need a forum where they can be addressed.
11. It is desirable that, for example, the Executive, senior managers and academics of the University work together to create a more appreciative and supportive environment for academics.

## **Conclusion**

My goals for this research included being able to distinguish between the knowledge that already existed and the new knowledge that has emerged from my research. The key outcome is the development of a framework to support the enhancement of learning and teaching in higher education. I identified six different types of activity: delivering content; assessment and evaluation; boosting student engagement; managing learning spaces; demonstrating interpersonal and communication skills and painting a bigger picture (see Figures 5.1 on p. 95 and 6.1 on p. 156). Each of the six categories was divided into sub-categories that provide further prompts and areas of consideration for 'learning conversations' with academic staff. It was recognized that, while discrete, these sub-categories were also identifiable as part of the dynamic of the interactional space between learning and teaching.

The framework does more than list teaching activities. It identifies additional areas that offer a possibility for teaching observations to explore pedagogic practices in general, including removing barriers to learning, which may involve organizational and individual change. This includes a consideration of the purpose of higher education and the dimensions of studentship, looking beyond a single teaching session to wider curricular and programme issues, together with offering individual academics opportunities to recognize and plan for individual change (see Figures 5.2 on p. 109 and 6.1 on p. 156).

Importantly, the framework makes explicit the dimensions of effective teaching observation practice, which comprises three main areas creating the conditions: pushing and pulling; best practice amongst observers; and emancipation and democratization (see Figures 5.3 on p. 122 and 6.1 on p.156).

Although not claiming my findings are generalizable, I am contributing to key issues. I outline here the new knowledge that emerged from my work as an educational developer:

1. A conceptual framework which i) captures teaching activity ii) addresses what else might get talked about in the course of teaching observations and iii) identifies best feedback practices and dimensions of dialogic interaction has been created. This is shown in Figure 6.1 on p. 156.
2. I found that the participants in the research also confirmed my views that the teaching observation experience cannot be simultaneously judgemental/performance related and developmental/affirming.
3. Limiting the observation process to giving feedback is unduly restrictive .The term 'learning conversation' is more apt because this is more democratizing and emancipating.
4. Educational development in my organization needs to move in a different direction and be viewed through a different lens, from decentralized rather than centralized and through more facilitative, personalized collegial roles. This prizes the situated and social nature of teaching.
5. Tacit and professional practices of educational developers and academics in teaching roles need to be shared and disseminated within this organization through conference presentations, papers, workshops and one-to-one work.
6. Frameworks by themselves will not provide, in the words of Gosling and O'Connor, 'safe, constructive and contextualized within scholarly practice dialogue' (2009: 5); only people can do so, and any attempt to impose frameworks needs to be collaborative and open to modifications as practice and thinking evolve.
7. Dialogic interactions allow for a narrative-based perspective on what had occurred in the learning environment/session that had taken place, allowing academics to arrive at their own solutions and gain confidence. This allows more of the complexity of teaching to be revealed and academics to make

disclosures about teaching and learning in higher education, both generally and discipline specific.

8. Change in teaching practice has to be linked with teamwork and collective action because this allows for critical engagement with other professionals.
9. Knowledge development within specific disciplines is intrinsic to teaching practice and therefore needs to be more recognized as part of a holistic approach to teaching development.

The desired impact of this research may be different from the actual impact. The policy route without implementation strategies appropriate to the context has been shown not to be the way forward in making a 'cultural shift'. In the process of undertaking this work the focus of my research has shifted. I recognize that practice roles such as mine have restrictions and these are characteristics of the power dynamics of all institutions. However, my role as a practitioner and educational development manager does allow for some autonomy and freedom. Therefore I believe that the work I perform can still have a positive influence. Now that I am able to articulate more clearly the issues and use the framework in such a way that will identify effective approaches to operating in the context of this complexity, I hope to be able to persuade more staff at senior levels of the value of this way of working.

From the outset I was clear that the undertaking of this research was about improvement. The conceptual framework I have developed as a consequence of this research challenges existing limitations around teaching observation policy and practices locally in my own institution and within the educational development community.

I will start with my peers in the Department of Education, within my small team of educational developers at the University and the University Teaching Fellows Network. I have already talked about how I have presented aspects of this work at local, national and international conferences and workshops, on each occasion meeting with interest and a positive reception. I plan to disseminate my research through publication. The framework will allow for an easily identifiable articulation of the possibilities that teaching observations will offer for new academics, established academics, heads of department and deans of school. I will focus on the following:

- Introduce the framework across the University to all educational developers and those with an interest in educational development, which includes those in the

Department of Education, Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement and Middlesex University teaching fellows.

- Replicate this research within other teams, e.g. Fashion Design.
- Run workshops for academic staff that provide an articulation of the advantages of outsider peer observers using the conceptual framework.

In essence, I am presenting a collaborative framework that offers something I have found edifying and that I hope others do, too.

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Middlesex  
University

## Appendix 1

# Session Observation Form A to observee, AGC

<b>Name of observee:</b>	<b>Academic Group:</b>
<b>Purpose of observation:</b> PGCertHE Progression Promotion Probation Peer Observation	
<b>Name of observer:</b>	
<b>Title of session:</b>	<b>Session type*:</b>
<b>Module name:</b>	<b>Module number:</b>
<b>Length of session:</b>	<b>Observation date &amp; time:</b>
	<b>Length of observation:</b>
<b>Any comments relating to the composition of student group?</b>	<b>Number of students:</b>
	<b>Level:</b>

*\*eg large group, small group, lecture, tutorial, seminar, laboratory, workshop, studio-based work etc*

## Completed form goes to:

<i>PGCertHE</i>	<i>Completed form to be returned to observee for use in portfolio</i>
<i>Probation/Progression/ Promotion</i>	<i>All sections of the completed forms to be returned to Academic Group Chair for forwarding to Dean of School, then HRS for Probation</i>
<i>Peer Observation</i>	<i>Completed form to be returned to observee for their CPD files</i> <i>Copies of <b>Sections A &amp; D</b> to be returned to Academic Group Chair within two weeks of observation.</i> <i>Copies of <b>Sections C &amp; D</b> to be forwarded to DCLQ/Quality Manager</i>

## Session Context for Observer

## Section A

The next three items **must** be completed prior to the session by the observee, so that the observer can understand more clearly why the tutor has planned strategies for a particular session or group.

### A1 Specific intended learning outcomes for the session

--

### A2 Structure/purpose of session and relationship to learning outcomes

--

### A3 Specific strategies to support intended session outcomes

--

Signatures: Observer \_\_\_\_\_ Tutor Observee \_\_\_\_\_



**B3 Organisation and presentation**

*How, for example, does the tutor:*  
*plan and organise material effectively, in line with session learning outcomes?*  
*interpret material clearly?*  
*make clear what is expected from the class?*  
*use equipment and space effectively?*  
*ensure quality of visual presentation/audio-visual support?*

A large rectangular box with a solid black border, containing horizontal dashed lines for writing.

**B4 Content**

*How, for example, does the tutor:*  
*remind students of what they should already have understood from previous sessions?*  
*relate content clearly to other parts of the module?*  
*ensure material factually accurate and appropriate for audience?*  
*relate material appropriately to research/scholarship?*

A large rectangular box with a solid black border, containing horizontal dashed lines for writing.





**Academic Policy Statement 19 Review of Professional Practice  
in Teaching and Learning (formerly Teaching Observations)**

<p><b>Outcome requested</b></p>	<p>Academic Board is asked to consider the revisions made to APS19 and to approve these.</p>
<p><b>Executive Summary</b></p>	<p>Since 2008/2009 when APS19 was last reviewed the scope of “teaching” has broadened significantly and is now regarded as encompassing all activities that contribute to student learning. These activities include the design of curricula and assessment that may be facilitated and supported at distance often using technology in addition to traditional forms of classroom teaching.</p> <p>This has required those facilitating student learning at HE level to develop and adapt their professional learning and teaching practices to take a more holistic approach to student learning and to engage with new tools. The UK Professional Standards for Learning and Teaching published in 2012 following an extensive consultation period acknowledges this change and suggests that all those involved with student learning should undertake review of their teaching and learning practices.</p> <p>APS19 has been reviewed and rewritten to reflect these changes as well as internal structural changes and directions whilst maintaining the individual, interactive and developmental nature of the original process.</p> <p>The major changes (highlighted in yellow) proposed are:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moving beyond “an observation of teaching” to consideration of the whole scope of the learning experience including assessment practices, use of technology and consideration of impact in terms of student achievement and satisfaction</li> <li>• Requiring a review to be conducted ideally annually but at least every two years (formerly this was 2 to 3 years)</li> <li>• Identifying a pool of experienced teachers from which reviewers can be drawn (formerly with the exception of probation anyone could undertake teaching observations)</li> <li>• Clearly defining the role of the Learning and Teaching Strategy Leader as co-ordinator of the process within Schools.</li> </ul>

<b>Regulatory/Statutory reference points and links to University strategy</b>	Links with ELTA, Probation and Promotion Policies, Staff development Policy and with UKPSF 2012.
<b>Reporting/ Consideration route for the paper</b>	Review undertaken by a working group reporting to Teaching and Learning Committee. Consultation undertaken with Teaching Fellows. Work completed too late for final consideration at May 2012 TLC, and so Chairs Action sought from DVC Academic.
<b>Timing</b>	This report is required at the June Meeting of Academic Board
<b>Author(s)</b>	Carole Davis Programme Director PGCert HE & Caroline Reid Head of Learning and Teaching
<b>Date of publication</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> May 2012
<b>Senior Management sponsor</b>	Dr Nicky Torrance, Director of Learning and Teaching

## A Review of Teaching & Learning Support for Professional Practice at Middlesex University Academic Policy Statement APS19

### Review of Professional Practice in Teaching and Learning

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 Middlesex University is committed to ensuring that the **UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF, 2012)** is met. It is also committed to investing in its staff by providing opportunities for training and development to enable them to respond positively to the changing needs of students. The aim of this Policy is to contribute to the enhancement of good teaching practice by developing a culture of review of professional teaching & learning practice for all those directly involved in learning and teaching, including full-time, fractional and part-time hourly-paid academics. We are working towards all colleagues participating in a review of teaching & learning support professional practice (RPP) once a year. The emphasis is on first achieving this for less experienced staff.

1.2 The Review of Professional Practice (RPP) is developmental and outcomes should be discussed and agreed between practitioner and reviewer. The key objective of this process is to agree action and development that may be undertaken to enhance professional practice and maintain the standards set out by the UKPSF. Equally important is the opportunity this affords for the reviewer to learn from reviewing the practise of others.

1.3 **21<sup>st</sup> century teaching is no longer defined as a classroom activity that must be directly observed and encompasses all activities that contribute to student learning. The scope of teaching therefore includes the design of curricula and assessment that may be facilitated and supported at distance and blended using technology in addition to traditional forms of classroom teaching.**

2.1 There are three different types of professional practice review. Whilst the overall purpose is the same the function of each is different:

- a) RPP for probation/progression/promotion
- b) RPP for summative assessment for those undertaking the PG Cert HE
- c) RPP for ongoing development in keeping with UKPSF

2.2 **Review of practice could include a large group, small group, one-to-one tutorial, group tutorial, seminar, lecture, laboratory, 'crit', workshop or studio-based work, group online, e-learning materials as well as within the work place / practice setting . It could also include discussion of assessment and marking practices, team teaching, review of online materials and activities or plans for other curriculum innovations. There is an expectation that student success and satisfaction will form part of any RPP discussion.**

**A: RPP as part of probation/progression/promotion**

2.3 As part of the probation report for new members of staff, there must be **two** RPP events to assess the performance of the member of staff. RPP is also required for progression through the Lecturer to Senior Lecturer scale and for all academic promotion purposes (except to Senior Manager). Heads of Department and Directors of Programmes will normally be responsible for carrying out the reviews. **After each review the reviewer will ensure that the relevant paperwork is sent to the Head of School with a copy to the relevant Learning & Teaching Strategy Leader.** For probation and progression purposes Heads of Department will take responsibility for the process while in the case of promotion the individual themselves will take ownership and initiate the process in a timely manner.

2.4 After each RPP the reviewer will provide a brief written report for the Head of Department and Dean of School.

**B: Session Observations for the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PG Cert HE)**

2.5 Professional practice review forms an important part of the PG Cert HE. Over the duration of the one year programme participants engage in one formative and one summative RPP as well as being required to review the practice of others including peers on the programme and colleagues. These, together with the participant's reflections on the review event, will be included within their e-portfolios and learning journals. The formative RPP is normally carried out by their PG Cert HE mentor. The summative RPP is normally reviewed by a member of the programme team or possibly the Learning & Teaching Strategy Leader and can be included within the probation requirements.

**C: Review of Professional Practice for ongoing development**

2.6 The purpose of RPP is developmental and is intended to enable all those who are directly involved in learning and teaching to become better practitioners. RPP is expected to be beneficial for both for the reviewer and the practitioner, has a strong reciprocal element and is one of the ways in which effective practice can be shared across the University. Both reviewer and practitioner may wish to discuss the use of RPP as a development tool in their annual appraisal discussion. The review is intended to be supportive and enabling, helping individuals to critically reflect upon their teaching. It can result in individuals trying out new ideas, reaffirming what is already being done well as well as adapting existing practices. Individuals are encouraged to use RPP to identify their own individual learning and teaching related development plans and to discuss these in their annual staff appraisal.

**3. Responsibility**

3.1 The Dean has responsibility for ensuring that RPP take place for:

- Probationary members of staff
- Staff due to progress from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer
- Academic staff promotions from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and from senior to Principal Lecturer

The Dean may delegate responsibility for organising RPP for these purposes to Heads of Department.

3.2 For RPP for ongoing development, the Head of Department has responsibility for ensuring that there are systems in place to ensure that **all staff involved in teaching and support of learning are reviewed ideally once every year but at least once every two years**. During annual appraisal staff may discuss with their appraiser ways in which RPP could support development. This will be included in their Individual Development Plan.

3.3 Each participant on the PG Cert HE and its individual modules is responsible for organising his or her own professional practice review. They should discuss with the Head of Department where it is appropriate to also use a PG Cert HE RPP for probation.

3.4 Staff who review practice shall be trained as reviewers (see paragraph 7). Probation reviews will normally be undertaken by someone more senior/experienced than the person being reviewed and the reviewer shall not be the person who is his or her induction mentor.

3.5 **The Centre for Learning & Teaching Enhancement (CLTE) will collate all the reports, recording details of the strengths, effective practice and areas for development within Departments/Schools as well as record the number of staff currently at D1-4 on the UK Professional Standards Framework. This report shall form part of the Quality Monitoring Report at departmental level.**

#### **4. Confidentiality**

##### **Probation/Progression**

4.1. RPP forms for probation and progression are seen by the Head of Department/Dean, who indicates on the completion of probation form that these have been satisfactorily completed/not.

##### **Promotion**

4.2 RPP reports for academic staff promotion will be seen by the Head of Department/Dean and following submission of the application for promotion, members of the promotions panel. RPP's submitted for this purpose will be securely retained with the application for promotion for the requisite period of time.

##### **Ongoing Professional Development**

4.3 RPP remains confidential between the parties involved unless the practitioner decides otherwise. For example, the practitioner may wish to share the feedback form with their appraiser or line manager. However, a digitalised form (indicating that the RPP has taken place and identifying staff development needs) is returned to the Head of Department for record keeping and for staff development planning purposes. The University is working towards the use of e- portfolios documenting continuous professional development (CPD) for staff which will commence with a pilot study during 2012/13.

**PG Cert HE**

4.4 RPP for the PG Cert HE is confidential to the participant and programme team unless they are also being used for probation. A participant is required to include their RPP's in support of an application for progression or promotion and may choose to share them with their appraiser at their annual appraisal meeting.

**5. PROCEDURES****Frequency**

5.1 RPP for probation shall be undertaken twice during the probationary period.

5.2 RPP for progression from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and for promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and from Senior Lecturer to Principal Lecturer shall take place in a timely manner when required.

5.3 RPP should be undertaken ideally once a year, but at least once every two years for all staff involved in teaching and learning support.

**Organisation****Probation/Progression/Promotion**

5.4 Human Resources shall inform the Dean and Head of Department of those staff who are to be reviewed for probation /progression. The Head of Department shall organise reviewers for promotion/progression and ensure that the review take place within the timescale required. The Head of Department shall inform practitioners when a review is required and, where necessary, who shall be the reviewer.

5.5 In the case of probation/progression the reviewer shall contact the staff member to be reviewed to agree which session(s) shall be reviewed. In the case of promotion the staff member should contact the reviewer themselves in a timely manner. They should agree what to review e.g. type of teaching/learning support session, type of student; full-time/part-time, face to face/online etc and the staff involved should discuss the scope of the review. The scope will include a discussion of how e-learning materials, assessment strategies, curriculum development, student progression and achievement may be relevant to the review.

5.6 There should be a meeting (about 20 minutes), prior to the review, to discuss the context, focus and scope of the review and to provide the reviewer with access to any relevant materials which may include module handbooks or other curricula documents.

### **RPP ongoing development**

5.7 The Head of Department will draw up a list of staff that will be reviewed each year. This is will be circulated to the Department in September and included in the Departmental Staff Development Plan.

5.8 The Head of Department will draw up a schedule of RPPs, following discussion with members of staff, listing who is reviewing whom and shall circulate this at the beginning of each term to members of the Department. Reviewers will normally include Learning & Teaching Strategy Leaders, Middlesex University Teaching Fellows and Directors of Programmes. A list of who is available to review with contact details is available on the staff intranet.

5.9 The reviewer shall contact the staff member to be reviewed and both shall agree the scope of the review. They should agree what to review e.g. type of teaching/learning support experience, type of student, full-time/part-time etc, face to face or online. The reviewer should also consider the use of e-learning materials assessment strategies and the curriculum, where appropriate and how these relate to individual sessions.

5.10 There should be a meeting (about twenty minutes), prior to the review, to discuss the learning objectives of the session and to give the observer any materials that the student shall receive (including the module handbook, where appropriate) and a meeting after the review of approximately 30 minutes.

### **6. Follow up action**

6.1 The following action is recommended after RPP for probation/progression/ promotion and peer observation (excluding PG Cert HE which is confidential between the participant and programme team unless used for probation/progression purposes):

- The School Learning & Teaching Strategy Leaders(s)(LTSL) shall evaluate the organisation of and any general recommendations arising from the RPP with the Head of Department. This should include assessing staff development needs and organising appropriate staff development events at School level.
- In addition, the Departmental Quality Monitoring Report will identify examples of effective practice and identified staff development needs.

### **7. Training**

7.1 Workshops on RPP and it's alignment with the UKPSF, will be provided regularly as generic workshops by CLTE or as customized workshop if required by Schools/Departments. It is expected that all reviewers should attend a workshop prior to undertaking RPP which will be customized to their subject discipline and role. The Head of Department may agree exceptions to this. In addition, further guidance notes and other resources will be made available.



**Associated documents**

PPR Form for Probation/Progression/Promotion

PPR Form for PG Cert HE

PPR Form for Development

Staff Development Plan

Associated Policies

Probation HRPS13

Appraisal

Recruitment and Selection (Appendix 3)

Coaching and Mentoring

This policy was originally developed through consultation with Schools and NATFHE. It was approved by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the Academic Board on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2003. It was reviewed in 2004/5 and approved by Academic Board in 2005. It was again reviewed in the Academic 2008/2009 and approved by Academic Board in 2008. This review has taken place as required during 2011/12 for consideration at the June 2012 Academic Board meeting.



### **Appendix 3 Participant Information Sheet**

## **Study title: An exploration of the teaching observation experience in one UK University**

### **Invitation paragraph**

This is an invitation for you to take part in a research study which is part of my professional doctorate award. Before you decide whether to accept this invitation it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Do feel free to ask me for any further information and clarification relating to this study.

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

The teaching observation experience will provide the catalyst for both myself, as the practitioner researcher, and the study participants to enter into a dialogue about the role of feedback and support within the context of the professional development of lecturers in higher education. It is intended that the findings will contribute to not only a significant review of the way teaching observations are conducted within this organization but also provide recommendations and suggestions for new directions for educational development within the sector

### **The research project will focus on three main outcomes:**

- 1) To identify the most effective way of carrying out teaching observations, within a range of learning environments, which would culminate in the production of guidelines for the organisation in carrying out teaching observations.
- 2) To analyse whether a shared experience e.g a teaching observation and then deconstructing the subsequent dialogue between the observer and observed increases intellectual and professional knowledge about best feedback practices, most effective practise and consequently the potential for improving the experience of students who study at Middlesex University.
- 3) To critically evaluate whether teaching observations as part of a sequence rather than a one-off event can act as a powerful trigger in altering an individuals'

perception of their own teaching practice through the processes of reflection and review. The study will last approximately twelve months.

### **Why have I been asked to take part?**

You have been asked as an academic member of staff who has experience of teaching within the School of Engineering and Information Sciences at Middlesex University. Your experiences will be used to inform developing theory and best practice both in your discipline and in a higher education context. Ten staff will be invited to participate in this research project.

### **Do I have to take part?**

Your participation in the research study is entirely voluntary.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. You are free to withdraw with no penalty.

### **What will happens if I take part?**

You will be observed teaching on three separate occasions over the course of one academic year. The important thing to note here is that as a participant you take ownership of the process by deciding which teaching sessions you would like to be observed. For the purpose of this research the term 'teaching' is viewed broadly so while you may opt for lectures and seminars to be observed you may also include labs, workshops, one-to-one tutorials and online teaching.

The post-teaching observation interview and discussion will be recorded and analysed. The intention is to explore the impact of feedback on teaching practise and an action research approach will be the most effective way of answering my research question.

You will be observed teaching on three separate occasions over the course of one academic year by Carole Davis. The post-teaching observation interview and discussion will be recorded and analysed.

### **What else do I have to do?**

If you decide to take part in this study you will need to sign a consent form.

### **What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no risks to participation.

### **What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

By taking part you will contribute to the ongoing development of the learning and teaching experience for both staff and students in the School of Engineering &

Information Sciences and Middlesex University. The project aims to identify both the triumphs and challenges of teaching observation dialogue. As a result the project aims to identify best practice, locate this within the body of literature on teaching observation and identify potential new theories.

**Will my participation be kept confidential?**

All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you which is used will have your name, address and module/programme information removed so that you cannot be recognized from it. All data will be stored, analysed and reported in compliance with the Data Protection Legislation of the United Kingdom.

**What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results of the project may be circulated via publication and / or conference. This may include quotes. In both instances you will remain anonymous and non identifiable. A summary will be available from Middlesex University Research repository.

**Who has reviewed the study?**

The study has been reviewed and given ethical approval by the Institute of Work Based Learning as part of their project approval process.

**Contact for further information**

You can contact the researcher Carole Davis directly :

**Telephone,** 020 8411 4709

**Email.** [c.l.davis@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:c.l.davis@mdx.ac.uk)

**Post,** Carole Davis , CLTE, Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon, London, NW4 4BT.

**Thank you for your participation in this study.**

**Appendix 4**

Participant Identification Number:

**CONSENT FORM**

(Staff)

**Title of Project:** An exploration of the teaching observation experience in one UK University**Name of Researcher:** Carole L Davis

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated .....for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree that this form that bears my name and signature may be seen by a designated auditor.
4. I agree that my non-identifiable research data may be stored in National Archives and be used anonymously by others for future research. I am assured that the confidentiality of my data will be upheld through the removal of any personal identifiers.
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of participant	Date	Signature
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Name of person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
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Carole L Davis

Researcher	Date	Signature
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1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher;

Appendix 5

The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning  
**in higher education**

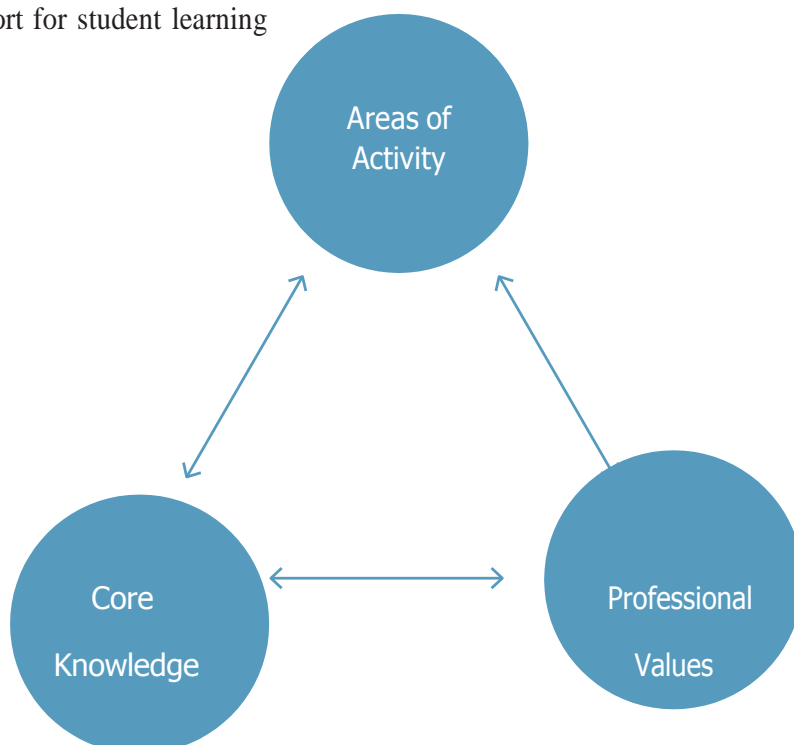
2012



▪ **Aims of the Framework**

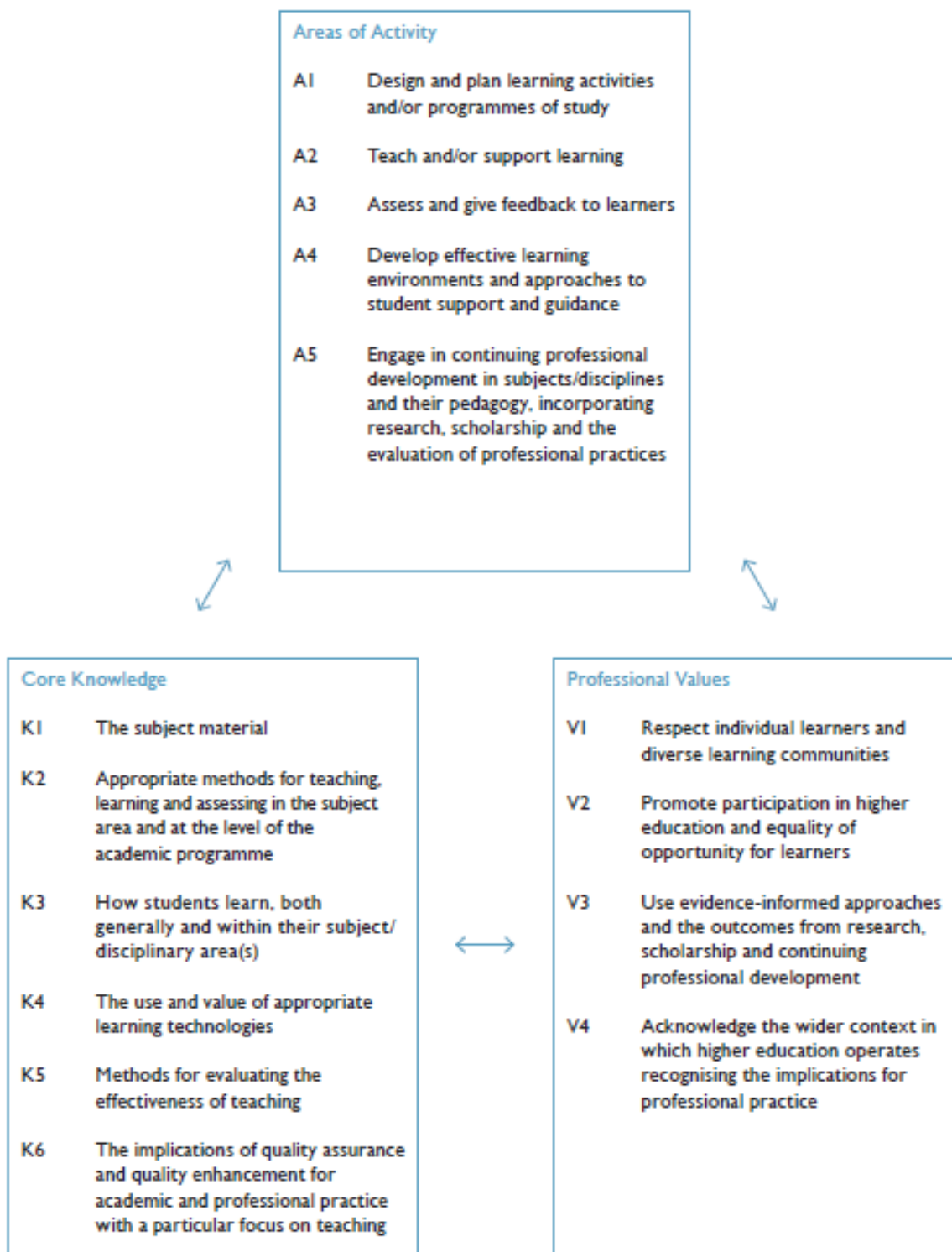
The UK Professional Standards Framework:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supports the initial and continuing professional development of staff engaged in teaching and supporting learning</li> <li>2. Fosters dynamic approaches to teaching and learning through creativity, innovation and continuous development in diverse academic and/or professional settings</li> <li>3. Demonstrates to students and other stakeholders the professionalism that staff and institutions bring to teaching and support for student learning</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Acknowledges the variety and quality of teaching, learning and assessment practices that support and underpin student learning</li> <li>5. Facilitates individuals and institutions in gaining formal recognition for quality- enhanced approaches to teaching and supporting learning, often as part of wider responsibilities that may include research and/or management activities</li> </ol> |
|--|---|





▪ ***Dimensions of the Framework***



Descriptor 2	Typical individual role/career stage	Related HEA recognition
<p>Demonstrates a broad understanding of effective approaches to teaching and learning support as key contributions to high quality student learning. Individuals should be able to provide evidence of:</p>	<p>Individuals able to provide evidence of broadly based effectiveness in more substantive teaching and supporting learning role(s). Such individuals are likely to be established members of one or more academic and/or academic-related teams. Typically, those likely to be at Descriptor 2 (D2) include:</p>	Fellow
<p>I. Successful engagement across all five Areas of Activity</p>		
<p>II. Appropriate knowledge and understanding across all aspects of Core Knowledge</p>	<p>a. Early career academics</p> <p>b. Academic-related and/or support staff holding substantive teaching and learning responsibilities</p>	
<p>III. A commitment to all the Professional Values</p>	<p>c. Experienced academics relatively new to UK higher education</p>	
<p>IV. Successful engagement in appropriate teaching practices related to the Areas of Activity</p>	<p>d. Staff with (sometimes significant) teaching-only responsibilities including, for example, within work-based settings</p>	
<p>V. Successful incorporation of subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship within the above activities, as part of an integrated approach to academic practice</p>		
<p>VI. Successful engagement in continuing professional development in relation to teaching, learning, assessment and, where appropriate, related professional practices</p>		

Descriptor 3	Typical individual role/career stage	Related HEA recognition
<p>Demonstrates a thorough understanding of effective approaches to teaching and learning support as a key contribution to high quality student learning. Individuals should be able to provide evidence of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Successful engagement across all five Areas of Activity</li> <li>II. Appropriate knowledge and understanding across all aspects of Core Knowledge</li> <li>III. A commitment to all the Professional Values</li> <li>IV. Successful engagement in appropriate teaching practices related to the Areas of Activity</li> <li>V. Successful incorporation of subject and pedagogic research and/or scholarship within the above activities, as part of an integrated approach to academic practice</li> <li>VI. Successful engagement in continuing professional development in relation to teaching, learning, assessment, scholarship and, as appropriate, related academic or professional practices</li> <li>VII. Successful co-ordination, support, supervision, management and/or mentoring of others (whether individuals and/or teams) in relation to teaching and learning</li> </ol>	<p>Individuals able to provide evidence of a sustained record of effectiveness in relation to teaching and learning, incorporating for example, the organisation, leadership and/or management of specific aspects of teaching and learning provision. Such individuals are likely to lead or be members of established academic teams. Typically, those likely to be at Descriptor 3 (D3) include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Experienced staff able to demonstrate, impact and influence through, for example, responsibility for leading, managing or organising programmes, subjects and/or disciplinary areas</li> <li>b. Experienced subject mentors and staff who support those new to teaching</li> <li>c. Experienced staff with departmental and/or wider teaching and learning support advisory responsibilities within an institution</li> </ol>	<p>Senior Fellow</p>

Descriptor 4	Typical individual role/career stage	Related HEA recognition
<p>Demonstrates a sustained record of effective strategic leadership in academic practice and academic development as a key contribution to high quality student learning. Individuals should be able to provide evidence of:</p>	<p>Individuals, as highly experienced academics, able to provide evidence of a sustained and effective record of impact at a strategic level in relation to teaching and learning, as part of a wider commitment to academic practice. This may be within their institution or wider (inter)national settings. Typically, those likely to be at Descriptor 4 (D4) include:</p>	<p>Principal Fellow</p>
<p>I. Active commitment to and championing of all Dimensions of the Framework, through work with students and staff, and in institutional developments</p>	<p>a. Highly experienced and/or senior staff with wide-ranging academic or academic-related strategic leadership responsibilities in connection with key aspects of teaching and supporting learning</p>	
<p>II. Successful, strategic leadership to enhance student learning, with a particular, but not necessarily exclusive, focus on enhancing teaching quality in institutional, and/or (inter)national settings</p>	<p>b. Staff responsible for institutional strategic leadership and policy-making in the area of teaching and learning</p>	
<p>III. Establishing effective organisational policies and/or strategies for supporting and promoting others (e.g. through mentoring, coaching) in delivering high quality teaching and support for learning</p>	<p>c. Staff who have strategic impact and influence in relation to teaching and learning that extends beyond their own institution</p>	
<p>IV. Championing, within institutional and/or wider settings, an integrated approach to academic practice (incorporating, for example, teaching, learning, research, scholarship, administration etc.)</p>		
<p>V. A sustained and successful commitment to, and engagement in, continuing professional development related to academic, institutional and/or other professional practices</p>		

### **Framework Guidance Notes (FGN)**

The UK Professional Standards Framework is supplemented and supported by a series of Framework Guidance Notes (FGN). These are designed to highlight and disseminate good practice in a given area as well as outline issues that institutions and individuals may want to consider in using the UK Professional Standards Framework.

### **Relationship to the Higher Education Academy National Accreditation Scheme**

The Higher Education Academy recognises the importance and value of the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and aligns its Fellowship categories with the Descriptors. Its accreditation scheme provides a national professional benchmarking of provision that reflects the best practices in the sector. Guidance and support is offered through the work of the Higher Education Academy to higher education institutions wishing to be accredited for their application and use of the UKPSF.

Please see <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk> for further details.



## Appendix 6

### Instructional Observation Form for the Peer Collaboration Network

**PURPOSE:** Colleagues can make substantive contributions to one another's efforts to improve instruction. But classroom visitations typically occur as part of a formal promotion and tenure review and they precipitate some trepidation. The Peer Collaboration Network incorporates colleague input in efforts to make instruction more effective, independent of the promotion and tenure process. Colleagues can help colleagues to improve teaching if they are asked to provide feedback about the effects of specific aspects of instruction. Those aspects should represent areas of interest to the instructor being observed and the attached instrument allows for the design of a form to represent those interests. The professor selects and assembles items that are shared with the colleague observer prior to a classroom visit. The purpose is to give the colleague a set of guidelines that will add focus and direction to the instructional observation.

**PREPARATION FOR USE:** Begin by reading the list of suggested items before the colleague visits your class. Mark those of interest. Add to the list if you wish. Assemble the selected items on the form with the blanks provided, organizing them in the categories appearing on the list. Be realistic as to the number of items a colleague can carefully observe during a given class. (About ten.) If the items selected exceed the spaces provided, that may indicate the need for two visits. Review the assembled instrument with the colleague doing the observation prior to the scheduled visit. Providing relevant background can be useful: Why are these areas of interest? What precisely would you like to know about them? Encourage the colleague to fill out the form and make notes where appropriate during and after the class visit. Consider completing a copy of the instrument yourself after the colleague observation. This provides a good point of comparison with the colleague's observations.

**INTERPRETATION:** Plan to discuss the observation and completed form with the colleague with a view to understanding his or her observations. Sometimes observations regarding one's teaching are hard to understand – especially in terms of deciding what to do differently based on the observation. That is because teaching is typically described in very abstract ways. The problem can be alleviated, to an extent, if your conversation about teaching focuses on behaviours. If the colleague observes, for instance, that your teaching “lacks enthusiasm,” try to identify what it is you do (or don't do) that caused the colleague to so conclude. And be sure to take a colleague's comments in perspective. Learn what you can from the colleague's observation, but your own intuition, a second observer, or student feedback may lead you to a different conclusion or course of action regarding a given aspect of your teaching.

**Form for Instructional Observation****1. ORGANIZATION**

- Begins class on time in an orderly, organized fashion.
- Previews lecture/discussion content
- Clearly states the goal or objective for the period
- Reviews prior class material to prepare students for the content to be covered
- Provides internal summaries and transitions
- Does not digress often from the main topic
- Summarizes and distills main points at the end of class
- Appears well prepared for class

**2. PRESENTATION**

- Incorporates various instructional supports like slides, films, diagrams, etc.
- Uses instructional support effectively
- Responds to changes in student attentiveness
- Uses a variety of spaces in the classroom from which to present material (i.e., does not “hide” behind the podium)
- Blackboard writing is large and legible
- Speech fillers, (for example, “OK, ahm”) are not distracting
- Speaks audibly and clearly
- Uses gestures to enhance meaning and not to release nervous tension (repetitive gestures tend to do the latter)
- Communicates a sense of enthusiasm and excitement toward the content
- Use of humor is positive and appropriate
- Presentation style facilitates note-taking
- Speech is neither too formal nor too casual
- Establishes and maintains eye contact with students
- Talks to the students, not the board or windows
- Varies the pace to keep students alert
- Selects teaching methods appropriate for the content

**3. RAPPORT**

- Praises students for contributions that deserve commendation
- Solicits student feedback
- Requires student thought and participation
- Responds constructively to student opinions
- Knows and uses student names
- Does not deprecate student ignorance or misunderstanding
- Responds to students as individuals
- Treats class members equitably
- Listens carefully to student comments and questions
- Tailors the course to help many kinds of students
- Recognizes when students do not understand
- Encourages mutual respect among students
- Credibility and control
- Responds to distractions effectively yet constructively
- Demonstrates content-competence
- Responds confidently to student inquiries for additional information
- Uses authority in classroom to create an environment conducive to learning
- Speaks about course content with confidence and authority
- Is able to admit error and/or sufficient knowledge
- Respects constructive criticism

**4. CONTENT**

- Includes illustrations
- Selects examples relevant to student experiences and course content
- Integrates text material into class presentations
- Relates current course content to what's gone before and will come after
- Relates current course content to students' general education
- Makes course content relevant with references to "real world" applications
- Presents views other than own when appropriate
- Seeks to apply theory to problem solving



- [ ] Explicitly states relationships among various topics and facts/theory
- [ ] Explains difficult terms, concepts, or problems in more than one way
- [ ] Presents background of ideas and concepts
- [ ] Presents pertinent facts and concepts from related fields
- [ ] Presents up-to-date developments in the field
- [ ] Relates assignments to course content
- [ ] Clearly organizes assignments
- [ ] Carefully explains assignments

#### **5. INTERACTION**

- [ ] Encourages student questions, involvement, and debate
- [ ] Answers student questions clearly and directly
- [ ] Uses rhetorical questions to gain student attention
- [ ] Gives students enough time to respond to questions
- [ ] Refrains from answering own questions
- [ ] Responds to wrong answers constructively
- [ ] Allows ample time for questions
- [ ] Encourages students to respond to each other's questions
- [ ] Encourages students to answer difficult questions by providing cues and encouragement
- [ ] Allows relevant student discussion to proceed uninterrupted
- [ ] Presents challenging questions to stimulate discussion
- [ ] Respects diverse points of view

#### **6. ACTIVE LEARNING (LABS, PE ACTIVITIES, ETC.)**

- [ ] Clearly explains directions or procedures
- [ ] Clearly explains the goal of the activity
- [ ] Has readily available materials and equipment necessary to complete the activity
- [ ] Allows opportunity for individual expression
- [ ] Provides practice time
- [ ] Gives prompt attention to individual problems
- [ ] Provides individuals constructive verbal feedback
- [ ] Careful safety supervision is obvious

- Allows sufficient time for completion
- Provides enough demonstrations
- Demonstrations are clearly visible to all students
- If the discovery method is employed, schedules time for discussion of results
- Required skills are not beyond reasonable expectations for the course and/or students
- Provides opportunities for dialogue about the activity with peers and/or the instructor
- Allocates sufficient clean-up time within class section

## Form for Instructional Observation

### INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE OBSERVER:

Using the items below, identified by and discussed with the colleague you are observing, determine the general effectiveness of the faculty member for each item. Your mark on or somewhere between the distinctions “does well” and “needs improvement” should indicate your views. These general conclusions should be discussed with the faculty member involved. You should be able to explain your observations with specific examples of what the instructor did or did not do to cause you to so conclude.

(The Professor being observed is also encouraged, but not required, to collect student feedback to gain the student perspective on his or her teaching. We suggest that it be formative, unsigned, simple and occur a week or so prior to the scheduled class visit)

#### 1. ORGANIZATION Needs Review Does Well

	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

#### 2. PRESENTATION Needs Review Does Well

	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

#### 3. RAPPORT Needs Review Does Well

	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]



<b>4. CONTENT</b>	Needs Review			Does Well	
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

<b>5. INTERACTION</b>	Needs Review			Does Well	
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

<b>6. ACTIVE LEARNING</b>	Needs Review			Does Well	
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
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<b>7. OTHER</b>	Needs Review			Does Well	
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
-----	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
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**Appendix 7**

Examples from Field Notes

**Field notes showing initial coding example**

The definition of a prototype is clarified using the whiteboard in a clear and confident voice.

A video clip is used to for further clarification which will appeal to those with a visual learning preference.

The sound quality of the video clip is somewhat dubious but students seem engaged.

B then deconstructs what happens when you construct a prototype using an example of Gill’s work.

The students are assigned a task where working in pairs they are to design an app for an i phone. They are given pens and paper for the task and encouraged to brainstorm first.

Energy levels are high and students move quickly into task

B moves around the room ensuring that students understand the brief and are embarking on the task. V is assisting (designer in residence) with facilitating which with large group is a good thing.

One group appears peripheral and in 10 minutes has not been approached by B or V. They appear behind on task.

( A question from me : I am wondering about whether B and V might decide in advance what groups they will individually take responsibility for facilitating to ensure none are missed and receive equal attention)

B and V continue to give feedback to students on their app.

B stops them working and addresses group asking them how easy they found the exercise and this generates some discussion.

One student says “ there isn’t an app that is yet to be invented” and a group discussion ensues

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*Introducing a key concept*

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*Communicating key information*

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*Using appropriate resources*

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*Range of learning platforms*

---

*Clear instructions*

---

*Breaking an idea down*

---

*Interactive activities*

---

*Planning*

---

*Evidence of student engagement*

---

*Demystifying*

---

*Giving feedback*

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*Inclusion*

---

*Trouble shooting*

---

*Challenges of team teaching*

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*Feedback*

---

*Managing discussion*

---

*Encouraging student viewpoints*

**Appendix 8: Learning Conversation Transcripts**

- Int I'm talking to F I'm trying to think how many days; this is four days after that it joined you for the session, which was part of digital forensics. So, it was third year. And they had a crime scene and it was very CSI. They were working in teams of between four and six. They were given a brief: so we had yourself and two colleagues acting as if they were the...
- R Criminals.
- Int Yes, criminals. ((Laughter)) I was going to say perpetrators. However innocent till proven guilty, right? Then they had to go and follow guidelines.
- R Actually they were thinking as criminals so it felt like that.
- Int I'm really interested to hear from your point of view how you thought it went. Anything you would have done differently? Anything that surprised you? Anything that you were really pleased with? I have some feedback to share. So, just go for it.
- R It was the second time we run this field study. The programme of studies, the forensic computing graduates are at level six, which makes then final year three students. The model is digital evidence, BAS3228. And this is part of the rather kind of hands-on unorthodox way of teaching that I've introduced in this model when it was created.
- We have similar activities going on almost every other week. I have additional lectures with slides, but we have quite a lot of workshops going on. The idea is that they are able to communicate ideas and go through videos. This one in particular it's impossible to create a crime scene myself because of health and safety issues, security issues and so on. So, what we do is we create, in one of the labs we established that there are sufficient computer resources there, and the idea is that they have ten minutes in groups of four to six people to come in, while they're being observed and being video recorded, in order to establish that they have a specific plan and procedure to follow that will allow them to collect sufficient resources that will be admissible into a court case.

The way that this runs – and I’m always comparing with previous occasions because I want to make sure that I improve it – so I didn’t change too much in terms of the actual structure of the experiment. So, the procedure was the same. You being in the room was not a factor that affected it at all, as I said.

The first what I would say went well was the students realizing their weaknesses and the fact that this is a practical experience that they don’t get in other modules. Also what is unique about it is that there are no other similar programmes in the country that go to the extent of such data collection; followed by we would then have a visit from a senior investigation officer from the Metropolitan Police who would actually provide his feedback. That always takes place after the experiment because I don’t want them to follow the theory; I want them to go as students as they would in person.

Int So, go with their instincts and it’s the application.

R Exactly.

Int For me that was what made it really exciting. I do a lot of work in medical education and we would call that simulation and what we understand. It’s a great learning opportunity; it’s a big adventure. And as you say that element of self-assessment.

R Reality check.

Int And feedback. That was really impressive.

R That went really well. Also what went well was role playing; because from day one in the module this is what I want to achieve. I don’t treat them as students. This particular module, because it’s so focused on a niche market the idea is that I don’t want them to be treated as students. I’m trying to follow a work-based learning approach, although they’re not work-based learners. So, I’m focusing all their assessments towards a portfolio. The reason being these particular students have enormous difficulties getting a job unless they possess the right skills; the reason being such a small market. It’s not like IT students who would claim various jobs. So, that went well.

So, two things went really well.



A couple of things that I think I would improve in the future would be provide a little bit more structure. The reason is – although I don't want them to have structure because if they have structure they tend to follow it religiously because they're not confident doing an experiment like this. And I want them to do mistakes and I want them to learn by their own mistakes. Perhaps I would have provided – the previous week I've given them certain guidelines – I may have provided maybe a specific written scenario helping them with their role play, be a little bit more prescriptive.

Int I was thinking about that because I was wondering does there come a point when the role play takes over and it becomes acting rather than about what they need to know, what they need to apply. Because the last group were really getting into it: they'd dressed up; they had some special props. And that's always the risk, isn't it?

R It is, yes.

Int It's about where does the learning come from.

R This takes us to the second point that didn't go well. Although because I'm so fond of my ideas in that way I struggle a lot to find negative aspects there. But in that one I think it would be something to improve also the data that I get back from the students by having a written scenario, because it would allow me to correlate even more between the groups.

The second thing that I would definitely – I think this is a weakness that comes naturally – all the students, especially the last group who they had special constable in it, they steer away from the digital evidence apart of the module and it becomes like a police activity.

Int Yes, so police procedure.

R Yes. This is why I interrupted them so many times, reminding them that they're students of that module and the focus is not on making a perfect arrest; but actually finding the... But it's difficult because it's so easy to get distracted and be excited. Even ourselves eventually, by trying to give fake names and fake... we enjoy it.

Int And I think that's a question for you, because one of the things that I wondered, because you're facilitating the whole thing and that's a very

important role, is it better for you to be outside the role play so that you can observe.

R The problem is resources. My initial plan was to have only volunteers and then be an observer. However that would mean that as an observer I would not be able to interrupt – although I had to interrupt at certain occasions. For example, one of the things I had to remind them was there is a camcorder recording you; speak up because then you won't be able to listen to yourselves when you use that later on in the module. So, there are some logistical issues.

Int Yes, because that was the thing they found most difficult. They'd be doing what they were doing, but they weren't articulating what they were doing and why. One of the things that struck me was perhaps it's about the brief and, as you were saying, the written guidelines.

R The idea is that this is a formative assessment element.

Int It's a good one, a really good one.

R Again, the amount of time and people to help – in other words ideally I should have a summative element so they should be able to do that in ten weeks time and see how they improved. If that was summative of course I would be the observer; I wouldn't say anything; I would just have a list of criteria to use for their assessment.

Int Is that feasible?

R Unfortunately not.

Int Not this year but next?

R Unfortunately we don't have enough time, because we have the day in court and we have other activities lined up.

One of the other things that we cannot afford doing is seriously we don't have enough people to participate in these. That was the bare minimum. Ideally what I'd really like to do is have ten people in a room full of computers. When they would come in that would mean that they would have to prioritize which computers to assess. So, with that activity, it's a great one, but I've merely scratched the surface of what is to be investigated.

- Int It feels like you're at the beginning of something and you could develop it. Because I feel like with planning you could easily get more bodies who would act that role.
- R We've tried this for three years. I was developing this module for two years before it was offered, because it was a new programme. And literally the original plan was that actually we would even have a proper room designed as a court room, and we would actually have quite a realistic court case going on. That went out of the window because we didn't have resources there from the law department.
- What I really like about what we offer to the students as a programme is that first of all it provides them with skills that are outside a typical classroom. The students realize that. And secondly the idea of role playing and acting. For another school that would be a norm; but for a computing discipline it's not a lot of times when they actually get into that role playing situation. They find it quite different and interesting. You could see from the body language and behaviour and engagement. So, it was really, really changing – I wouldn't say life changing – but definitely a different kind of life experience for the students.
- Int I think it's very transformational. I did wonder, because some people were more engaged than others, I was interested in the role of the person who took the lead; and there were some people who seemed very peripheral and marginal. And I think it's quite difficult, isn't it, to look at all the people in the group, particularly if you've got four to six. But as you say, it's formative assessment. I think for them it's a review process afterwards: what did I miss.
- R True. This is where I have the video camera.
- Int Which is fantastic.
- R Because then the camcorder is the... However I've done similar experiments with Second Life, which is a virtual world; because we monitor there is more data there it's easier to provide feedback. What I would have done is like I've given them immediate feedback which was recorded on the camcorder; they have reflection based on their movements; I've given them lists of criteria that I would like to see.

- Int I just wonder whether it's a project for any of the film students.
- R Oh, that would be great.
- Int I'm just thinking that would be just the kind of thing, then you wouldn't have fixed camera; you could have a moving camera.  
Would it be all right if I give just some of the things I thought of?
- R Of course, yes.
- Int Because when I got into the room I was thinking, the key words were me was the set-up: it took a lot of effort to set that up and a lot of planning. And I think you do very well on that.
- R Thank you.
- Int You're good on detail. And for me it was about applied knowledge; simulation, which I think is a very powerful tool; role play and actors. I think the jury is out for me because I was thinking when does the acting take over.
- R It's a very thin line between, yes.
- Int Because I know what I like. Trust: those students trust you,
- R Thanks for spotting that.
- Int They trust you.
- R It takes a lot of effort to create it.
- Int That's why they believe what you will say.
- R I find that that is, with all my modules I'm trying to establish that. You've known me for so many years, and usually it's mostly IT projects that I use technology to facilitate. Two of the things that I really picked up from seeing at summer schools that I've been before: one of them is the acting and the role playing, which is like one of the examples we've discussed now; and the other one is using stand-up comedy for establishing a nice break in an activity. Actually I've changed it now into the delivery mode. So, if you attend one of my lectures you realize – for example, when X, our Deputy Dean, shadowed one of the students – I think she was quite surprised to realize that the actual lecture is more like in a stand-up comedy mode in terms of delivery, especially with the younger students. And that is very difficult to

control. I attended a couple of workshops in order to be able to control the interaction. But that allowed, if you like, established a rapport and communication that here with the role playing there hasn't been because it's not my area. Role playing and acting is not my field, and therefore attempting something like that would be far more difficult, without having the students offering themselves in a classroom environment it wouldn't be possible.

Int You're a very warm person, but it's warmth with control. And that's a term that I use. So, in actual fact the students find you very accessible and they're engaged. The benefits of the activity, it was all on time. I was really, really impressed. The things that I pick up on are equality within the group.

R I was going to say, was it easy for as an observer to notice the ones...? At the end of the day the strong students took the lead.

Int Yes.

R But could you see the lack of confidence? What I'm worried about is when you have a lecture you can try and gauge the weak ones or the shy ones. In terms of managing acting it's impossible to engage really with everyone.

Int Yes. I think there are a lot of different things going on. So, you had people who wanted to get involved, but because they had a very strong lead who excluded them and was taking them down a particular path. And I think there were people that knew what they were doing, knew what to do but didn't speak it.

R True.

Int So, you couldn't really assess them in that way. There were people who looked like they weren't confident, they weren't certain. But I think mainly people were trying. A lot of people had stage fright.

R Oh yes, shaky hands so many of them.

Int What they had underestimated was the need to work together as a team in terms of coordination and approach. And you did notice that the group who had spent more time together, so the group who went first were the least coordinated. Then they seemed to improve a bit;

whether it's because they'd had time to talk about it. So, that meeting as a group is very important.

R It is quite important.

Int And whether that goes back to the brief and the guidelines. But then it's whether once they get into the room all the guidelines can go out of the window because they're centre stage.

R Of course. And they don't realize something, which is if you have four or five members eventually one of them – let's say it's a weak student – if they delegate to take the photographs of the monitors, even something so simple, because the leader has to coordinate four or five people, and they get stressed out because they don't realize that they have four or five people. In theory they think yeah, it's easy, I'll tell them what to do. But because when they come in they have to narrate what the group is doing then eventually the weak links or the shy students may be on their own in their devices even for half a minute. And that is nerve wracking in terms of being able to feel confident that I'm not messing up the entire team.

Int Yes. It is complex; but I would also be realistic and give yourself permission to actually think it does what it says it does this exercise, because it's about people learning procedure, what you do. And I'm a really firm believer in learning through mistakes.

R I believe so too.

Int That's why you have them recorded and you have them self-assess, peer assess. I think it's vital that as a group they have a post-mortem.

R We will have it next week when we will discuss.

Int Brilliant. So, you've got it all going on. If it stopped at the role play and no-one did anything after that that would be a problem; but the fact you're unpacking it.

R This is why, if you remember, what we did was just after the experiment we gave the feedback, the three of us talked on the camera, all the negative aspects there. So, at least they have it recorded express. Then I did a little bit of wrapping up. Mostly it was providing the main mistakes but it was quite light.

- Int Yes.
- R Because it was very stressful; it could be easily turned into a victimising exercise.
- Int Yes, and they could end up feeling really discouraged, when actually it's a very powerful tool and a really good learning exercise. And it's formative.
- R It is, yeah.
- Int It's all for development. We're not expecting them to get it perfect.
- R And this is why after the end of it I discussed something completely irrelevant for the individual work so they clear their minds now. I've given them a copy of the cam – the good thing with digital is they have already the video with them. So, I told them to watch the video over the week. And next what we will do we will discuss with each group; because next week they will have three hours of individual and group feedback. So, for three hours I'm going to be discussing with each one of them and then it groups how they felt, what went well, what didn't go well, key learning skills, key learning issues and all that. And eventually what we will get is like a list of items that will be the 'to do' list of how to go further.
- Int What I really like about that: I like the structure that it's very aligned to tangible learning outcomes – so what you are aiming for that people will emerge at the end of that experience more knowledgeable and competent than at the beginning and they can apply it. Because I'm really interested in digital forensics and digital technology and employability. Because I think a lot of them come in with an expectation that they will get some big glamorous job.
- R Experts, yeah.
- Int In actual fact there aren't that many jobs in that area. But you want to give them the edge. That was why I was really heartened because you're actually: how can I make people more employable.
- R Exactly.
- Int Stand out a bit. And it's about the transferable skills. That comes across very strongly.

- R This idea, yeah. I'm asking for a portfolio. And in the board of studies throughout the three years now, it's the third year of that particular module, because it's year three, and there is a theme regarding feedback: all of them complain about the workload. To tell you the truth it's one of the things that I never improve on. The reason being that they think it's a lot of workload but it isn't really; it's the variety of the different aspects that they have to do. Because they have to do an individual reporting, group reports, prepare for the court case, do the investigation.
- Int So, it's layered up, isn't it?
- R The first board of study they're always worried that there is a lack of structure and there is a lot of work. The second board of study they go into saying oh, actually now it makes more sense and it's manageable. And then when they graduate they realize now they reflect. But from day one I tell them: this is the story; you will remember that you will complain in October; it will make sense in March; and then by June you will realize that it was quite manageable.
- And the benefit is that I tell them from day one when they graduate they will have a portfolio for the group project and a portfolio for the individual work. In a job interview they will only get the chance of having two pages of CV and a very short interview. Most of the students will try to claim, oh I got 70% in a module; I'm a good student. With them I usually say to them go in an interview with your final year project; nobody will read it, but at least you will show them in two pages what you have done, and that portfolio. Showing that portfolio you don't even have to open the page; you can just tell them I have a video showing me doing an individual investigation, a video showing me doing a court case and 20,000 words worth of stuff doing group and individual work.
- Int So, it's meaningful, actually meaningful: this is what I can bring. I'm also interested about student expectations that when there is a lecture we actually have to say, "Trust me; this is going to feel overwhelming, but this is part of learning that it feels weird and uncomfortable. But this is about preparing you for life and work, which is also quite difficult and uncomfortable".



- R Exactly. This is why I have the comedy bit in there. In a sense what I've learnt from that is part of stand-up comedy routine would be to open up either genuine or fake vulnerabilities; like being vulnerable talking about your mother-in-law or your wife having a fight with you the previous day. Either you choose a real story or you create one.
- Int So, this is about being human.
- R Exactly.
- Int I'm quite interested in that about how we create an environment where people feel quite comfortable and we present ourselves as being accessible and empathic and all of those things.
- R Exactly.
- Int I think it's also about boundaries, isn't it?
- R Oh, that's the difficult bit.
- Int That you can be that; but then you actually have to say, "You know what, you need to raise your game. You crossed a line; this will not do".
- R It takes ages to master that. And one of the things that I did learn from experience and from the theory is being able to find the balance between two stories and a fake identity, if you like, when you're providing this stand-up comedy. So, basically if somebody crosses the line you do not immediately feel threatened. The beauty of it is that you allow this trust environment to be created; being able at the same time to control. Because at the end of the day eventually you will have students who are unable to see the line, because they get excited or...
- Int So, it's a high-risk activity; so it's about how you're able to respond.
- R It needs a lot of training. This is why I did it after the SEDA summer school. I talked to a professor who actually is a stand-up comedian who is doing these sessions. I've read that again and again, and I'm looking for more opportunities to go and actually attend more stand-up comedy classes.
- Int So, it's something about how we, as academics, our personality and our style actually affects learning and how we teach.

I know you quite well; you've been teaching for a long time. I'm interested in – the purpose of my project – about feedback; it's about what it's like for you having me give you feedback and discussing quite openly; maybe asking challenging questions.

R To tell you the truth I'm 37 years old now, and although it sounds weird I have 14 years academia experience and to teach. The reason being when I was 23 I was the first graduate at UMIST in Manchester. They had a lack of resources and I had to help, and because I had the biggest grade in a group project I was given my first class into that group project. I remember the critical aspects of my job then was the being afraid of receiving the review forms and criticism – partly because it was quite difficult as a person to accept criticism; and secondly because of the specific way of providing criticism there was too formal, overwhelming, especially for somebody new.

I've realized that I've gone a long way to being able to be receptive to criticism because I consider it a constructive part of being reflective and receiving feedback for your work; especially feedback for your feedback or even feedback for the way you feed back.

I remember other teachers' suggestions of feet forward and all that. The most difficult place for me is to be able to compose myself in a minute that I receive feedback, especially if it is feedback that is unprepared or impromptu in terms of somebody providing some comments. And what I've changed is the following: before I would allow some emotions to surface before even understanding what the feedback is about. These days what I usually do is I have a filter where actually the first thing I do is try to filter how this feedback arrives, who's provided the feedback and whether there are underlying politics or underlying agendas.

Int That sounds big, doesn't it? So, I'm kind of thinking how might we apply it – because I'll be observing you two more times. So, the context that you and I are working together: that I'm a practitioner; I'm looking to improve how I'm working with staff and giving feedback I suppose...

R But when feedback comes from you in particular I have a – unfortunately I have to use the word – but I have a pigeonhole. For example, when feedback comes from Carole, and this can be a

weakness, I tend to get it filtered in a sense. I trust in her as a source of feedback. Therefore what I do is record more and more and try, as we speak now for example, rational thinking, killing quite a lot of grey cells thinking how can I get... she just said that so I should do that.

Sometimes, for example, I've seen in observations you have somebody, a colleague, may be a friendly colleague or somebody that admires you, and everything is perfect. Even then, what I do then is usually phase it down because I'm thinking maybe this is unrealistically positive. And of course sometimes when you get feedback from somebody who wants to challenge you, be it a programme leader or... which eventually you have some comments which might be very polite and nice, but like wrapped up with a sentence that actually could leave something open in the air.

Int Yes.

R Then I'm afraid quite a lot of academics do the same mistake: they think that it is a challenge; they need to address it. What I'm saying is I don't address it anymore.

Int So, you edit what you're hearing.

R Yeah, quite a lot.

Int And it's contextual.

R Quite a lot.

Int And depends on the person and whether you value their feedback. That's really, really helpful.

R What helped me to change was several occasions where I got heard, realizing that actually the feedback provided was not in line with the feedback that I would get from other sources. So, one of the things that I did in previous studies, like I realized that I had to include a kind of 360 degree feedback for whatever I do in life, or at least attempt to. So, the first thing that I do is self criticism. So, if I know something is wrong, or if I know something is absolutely perfect – it can never be perfect but at least it's very positive – if something arrives which is quite negative the first thing that I do is: did I really get it wrong big time and I'm in a completely different reality. If that's not the case then I'm investigating

the source of feedback and the reason for that feedback, you see. I'm always improving.

But actually in order to do that you have to be confident, and it's years of experience. In order to get that confidence as a person what I do is I leave myself quite open, vulnerable to attacks disguised as feedbacks. And I've done this for several years. Doing this year after year and realizing a lot of positive feedback from peers, the way that the publication has been accepted and of course the student report, then you establish an immunity system. But unfortunately you cannot teach how to get that. If I could go back and teach myself how to become receptive to feedback I would say: be prepared to be heard for six or seven years before it takes...

Int So, it's a time thing, an experience.

R It is.

Int Well, I'm looking forward to us working together and I'm looking forward to establishing some more teaching. It's really helpful for me because it develops me as a practitioner.

R I could suggest an online Second Life session to see what it's like.

Int Lovely.

**Carole:** So, I am thinking a lot about the workshop and seminars that I joined you in last week. From that a lot came out, just thinking about where the students were in terms of their degree and struck by how hard you have to work to engage them. We talked about groups being different and sometimes from differences learn sub-discipline within the general discipline of computing science so you started to talk about this. I was really intrigued about the differences between the different tribes and territories in computing and for me, you know it is coming from outside. I would love to hear more about that.

**Interviewee:** They try and split the cohort for that module into programs to split the seminar groups. It is not a hard and fast rule but most of the forensic students will be in the same seminar and the BIS students will be in another seminar with business management, IT and they do differ in terms of their approach to learning and motivation. Also, differ in terms of academic reading and writing abilities and at the top the forensic students are always year by year the most motivated and I suppose the IT students are the least motivated and least confident about their academic writing, critical thinking or presentation skills. So, you have to make allowances for

that. In between we also got BIS and business students. The Business Management students have half of their module in business school. Business management students have to do more report writing and essay writing in their degree programs so they are bit more prepared. I suppose BIS students have to do a final year project too. Business management students don't do a final year project so, they are in the middle. It is uneven from seminar to seminar and it can be a real challenge as you saw. But that was a rather poor session because I did have some really good seminars with that group. They were much more motivated, more animated but you have this constant problem of how do you get students to prepared for a seminar and do some reading and to think about that reading and come prepared to discuss the reading otherwise they are just coming for the seminar with nothing really apart from their opinions, which will not get them so far.

**Carole:** We saw the young woman in a group who was arguing for the control saying I want to be in the other group. She was arguing against relinquishing the control so you know it is that kind of missing the point which is the ability to be able to compare and contrast arguments. Also, that you know in it is very interesting but I am also struck by the reluctant readers and we come cross not just this module but across the board about there is something going on and that people don't read. They have chosen the subject because they may think that they avoid reading and for this subject that you are teaching in this particular module it is necessary to read. Because that is the only way to do well! You know we talk about some mechanical things and practical things about how you limit the reading list. You give them something to read which is long and then you scale it up and you give those questions but still this fundamental mindset is that they are not enjoying it. Although, finding it challenging and whether that is determined by their sub-discipline which is that the forensic students are more inclined to read or it is that they starting from a higher ability that they can read!

**Interviewee:** Unfortunately, in my opinion they tend to be brighter students from year 1. It could be to do with their entrance requirement for the particular student that they select in a particular program.

**Carole:** So is it more competitive to enter in that program?

**Interviewee:** I think so, as they are more specialised. I think we are partly at fault that we are digging a hole for ourselves as we are not really preparing our students from the first year/semester to equip them with those skills. Need to be sure that they have academic knowledge of reading, writing, arguing, and debating skills. It is supposed to be embedded in the module as we talked about this last time we met. It hasn't really been embedded! Yes, it is across the board in all subjects and discipline. We find academics complaining about that the students as they are not reading enough. And, it is more of a problem in computing science; you have to be a bit more persuasive because it is a technical scientific subject.

**Carole:** I was really captivated by the point you making that you can't expect people in their third year to suddenly start doing things they haven't done before. I think this tells

us about the importance of the first year and also about the employability, we are not making people employable perhaps in the best way.

**Interviewee:** Since, we have the learning framework I am supervisor on the project module and I have noticed you know a whole cohort students coming. Through that I have realized that they are not well equipped as we have not given them skills to do a final year project. They don't know how to do a research, and don't know what literature review is. They also don't really know how to write i.e. how to summarize a set of issues or question or even to identify what a question or a problem is and we have really have to sort so we have failed in a way.

**Carole:** It is interesting that you say we have failed or does it actually goes further back to education, the academic courses/professional qualifications they may have come through or A levels because that is a very different approach. You know this whole notion about 'Adult Learning' if we apply it and personal responsibility that we saw then there is a mismatch and within that there were examples of some students who are making good effort in your group. There were two people one in each group who took leadership, who knew what to do and how to be able to mobilize others. They did their best to meet the target. It is also about the feedback and how hard you work therefore, created a really good session plan which was related well to the lecture and the nature of collaborative enquiry. Need to be true to yourself and true to the subject.

**Interviewee:** I would be tougher if you were not there.

**Carole:** You are confident, have the knowledge and know what you have demonstrated in class.

**Interviewee:** If you are going to be applying for a job in next six months' time and you are expected to do a presentation on this performance then you can't get the job. If you are not able to talk intelligently about reasonably straight forward topic with a clear summary then you cannot be successful.

**Carole:** Reasons could have been that it was not clear and they did not have enough time to exercise and in the end had extra ten minutes but they were still unable to do. I think that level of reproach it shouldn't be hard on yourself as you can't take responsibility of what they do if the framework is not good. I think what I really like about you was that you were very definite and precise so you move them around, you know it is Tuesday afternoon 4:30 but you are still keeping the energy going even though you may want to say to me, you know what just forget about the whole thing. I think that is very admirable you giving them the structure, framework and organizing stuff for them. You can argue that at that stage of the game you must be organizing themselves but they weren't attentive. I think the option might be to what extend do we say that the people haven't prepared, for example if they haven't come to the lecture or I see no point in me continuing.

**Interviewee:** I have done that in other seminars.

**Carole:** And how did that feel?

**Interviewee:** Pretty sort of horrible and demotivating experience but I did that near the beginning of the module with this group that I teach on Wednesdays i.e. the IT group, the worst group. I took this approach and it took a while but some of them did bounce back and some did raise their game, some disappeared into the sunset never to appear again. Some did actually raise the game and some did good work and made an effort. To conclude, it is a risky strategy.

**Carole:** It is a high risk strategy but you found it to work also, perhaps it is about doing what we can most comfortably and you know students can always contact us. We give the students to do their best and we expect them to meet us half way and if you are in a situation where you were transparent so what I say about you is that you created a clarity which ensures that they know exactly what to do. Reading list quite long but that can be easily remediated. You know there have been some problems with the module in terms of your colleague not always attending but you know there is a good basis, very interesting, it is very relevant. You ensure that your lectures were researched and the content is accurate to the level where it should at level 6. I think you can take some credit for this.

**Interviewee:** I tried to get them thinking critically. You done all these modules and a lot of them are technical such as about designing database system therefore, you probably haven't done a module like this until now. You are not going to get out of it without me trying to at least turn your head around and getting it think critically and to question and I am relentless on that. I do my sort of critical archaeology 'why? give me an explanation!'

**Carole:** And, that is exactly what you should be doing and what I would suggest is that you start doing. Focus on the people who are doing well because there is a tendency as you found with the IT crowd who you sent off when they haven't prepared let them be a metaphor. So, even if your success rate is less than 50% you are still adding value and I think that is what I would want to leave you with as sometimes our expectation are too high because you got people coming in down here and try to get them up to 40% mark you are doing really well with the amount of time and resources you have but you are not going to get them higher because of what they come up with.

**Interviewee:** That is true. It is just I don't know when you walk into one of those classrooms in Williams building where we talked about the layout desk front face and the classroom style and you just walk in there 4 O'clock on a Wednesday afternoon and then some of them are sitting in the back row right in the back corner with no pen or pencils. It just pushes my button to say that all the people sitting at the back please come in the front first of all and mix it all up. And, then I am asking them who went to the lecture and what the lecture was about.

**Carole:** I think that is absolutely right what you are doing and is set in your mind that you are in control.

**Interviewee:** It is like each week you have to start with from the same position, you start from almost scratch you know. Even you end the last week on high note with good seminar and then you go back next week they are all back at level zero.

**Carole:** I think that may be your perception that a lot of the students you have are terribly self-conscious. Some students don't want to appear too keen thinking that is not very cool and also actually it relates to you as a controlling parent and you are not comfortable with that. It is almost like when someone comes in and says we can start, so it is pattern of behaviour I mean very difficult in the Williams building because what you can't do is take the desk out and re-configure the room. And, whether you just let that go or you start by asking why you haven't moved down and take that on board.

**Interviewee:** They have just come in the room and sit at the back and wait till they all turn around and conduct the seminar from there.

**Carole:** I love that because actually that is making them think at some level and it is that element of surprise and whatever people can say but you are not boring and it also keeps everyone fresh. You know that it is a good practise and I think they know where they stand. Keep them on a task and it would be easier with a group that we saw last Tuesday sending them early and others you kept them there for the whole time and they did feel uncomfortable and a bit weird but that is part of learning.

**Interviewee:** Exactly!

**Carole:** I think you know nothing is wrong with that so I have talked about different pathways, the activities and also talked about how hard you are on yourself and possibly on them. For instance, we see sometimes and misinterpret them for being something else. This seems to be my observation - perception of particular lecturers being strict although you may not see yourself strict but students would see you in that light.

**Interviewee:** Yes, may be.

**Carole:** You know about many things, you know your height or that you are older, your voice is very authoritative but in a very positive way although you may not think that but you are respected, trusted and possibly feared but not necessarily mentioned. So, just thinking about put aside some of the assumptions you have.

**Interviewee:** I would think they definitely see me as a harsh marker when it comes to giving them feedback. I would think that it is a general view that I am quite soft which I don't think I am but I think I am very fair.

**Carole:** Is that something to do with other people being lenient?

**Interviewee:** I think probably X is a bit more generous in her marking. We will discuss this.

**Carole:** And, in terms of finding a comfortable place where you both can agree is that possible?



**Interviewee:** Yes.

**Carole:** I haven't met X but I do understand the challenges in running a module with someone whose style is different, approach is different and who perhaps looks for different things in the assessment. So, that can be very difficult for you and for students.

**Interviewee:** I know X has another problematic group on a Tuesday afternoon from 1:30 to 3:30pm. A rather large and rowdy group, some of the students that I know from the first year having taught them are rather weak students.

**Carole:** So, they are weak and rowdy. Therefore, very heady combination.

**Interviewee:** But, anyway we talked about that how to standardize the marketing approach.

**Carole:** That sounds good. I imagine that there might be an agenda issue; you know I come from social sciences background so I am interested in pedagogy gender and would appear to be an issue.

**Interviewee:** Yes, definitely because Y went into that group to do a session on academic writing and it was a complete disaster apparently. Not all of them obviously but there are some really good students and quite a few weak ones possibly gender is an issue.

**Carole:** Seeing a correlation between students who are struggling and behaviour sometimes these kinds of things you don't have to face because when I said about your classroom management skills are very good and have been developed over a period and you are very confident now. You know intuitively when to go in and when to back off. They seemed to respond to that and that is a wonderful thing to see. Been thinking a lot about labs and technical staff working they don't have that confidence and awareness.

**Interviewee:** It is probably experience, try and error, learning, tips and tricks from other people, sharing stuff with other colleagues.

**Carole:** You know often they have been teaching for a long time that those things seems very intuitive it is only when people come and observe us that we become aware . Then it is brought to our attention and you think well there was a time when I didn't know how to do that or the group you just described X struggling with would have confounded me. And, now I am a different person and a different kind of teacher and some of that is about survival, preserving our integrity. It is just about how we absorb it as we go along. You know there is another thing that is coming through us, "how students are affected?" So, we saw in one group the ability of one student to mobilize others. In the other group a guy trying really hard but unable to motivate others so, I am just thinking a lot about group projects and how it is a thing which students sometimes find most disappointing and they end up working often individually.

**Interviewee:** There is an issue. I mean there is no group work in this module, it is all individual but they do group tasks in the seminar and you get all the classic issues around it. There is uneven contribution some people don't say anything or make any contribution and some take over the whole thing and run it single handed. Again, you try to accommodate for that, go round from group to group and talk to people trying to get them talking, insist that everybody makes contribution to the presentation.

**Carole:** You know you are a good facilitator and you do it very skilfully so, I would like the inexperienced to come over to watch you because it is about not allowing people to opt. You have a significant number of students in EIS who are present in classes. Some students not contributing and may be some of them are not confident or feeling ill or anxious but it is very apparent that they are not allowed to opt out that's very clear message to them and rest of the group. You know how you keep the discussion on track and again you keep it tight. You always come well prepared. I am always very impressed with your organisational structure and your time management ever since I have known you. That is very good role modelling for students and you keep them on track.

**Interviewee:** How did you think about letting a debate run or letting someone talk? At what point to shut someone up or bring the debate back on the track! Although the contribution is really good or even though discussion might follow a tension which is not directly relevant. Will you allow it to develop and especially if it gets into a kind of jerry springer type thing you know? A little bit of that is good but not too much. That is good in a way because you want to generate some heat.

**Carole:** You want bit of passion and enthusiasm as long as they are developing their point. I say it is a balance of various sessions. You think about air time if there is only one person who is dominant and regular then that is not good. But it is fine as long as that doesn't mean that you never come back to the original point. I would certainly allow it as long as there is some attempt to have them at the end to bring them back to the original point. It is art of summary so what you can do within that going off the pace to invite them to summarize. An example some intervention but I think allowing people to work up ahead of steam is good. You didn't have it in this group but having them to respect each other for their contribution in the group is good and not to look over each other. Agreeing on some ground rules so rather than speaking at once people could raise their hand and could take these points in order. I want you to be concluding in no more than one sentence so you can mix it a little bit. If you are writing an essay which they are for the end of this program that you actually do get some marks for innovation, some creativity and doing something a little different. You are confident enough to control it so I would allow it.

**Interviewee:** You know some students start looking at you when their debate really gets going; sometimes you going to stop them as they are talking rubbish kind of things. Let it go so far and then do as you say try to bring them back to the topic and ask to summarize it.

**Carole:** The thing is we say a lot of this module is about debate, developing ideas, and trying to argue counter position. This is how you get good marks and so this is how you going to run our debate and I am comfortable with people stepping in and saying I think we are getting off the point or I feel so and so is dominating because you not just thinking about the art of debate that is dead isn't it. I was visiting Belgrade; students were debating champions and from all around the world. You know there is sense of British schools we don't attend to that we have to bring it back. It is about when someone disagrees with you and getting offended but actually you should think how I am going to respond to this.

**Interviewee:** There used to be a debating team where I taught in Boston and I used to be in a communication department at Northeast University. They actually had a debating team; I took a course in the art of priority and debate. And, then they debate with other colleges and had competition which was great.

**Carole :** You know it is wonderful because when I look at those first year presentations my heart goes out because it is a level of discomfort fact, expressing them being on the show and you want them to get to a point you know where they can be more confident over what they say. You know something that I think you and X could have that conversation.

**Interviewee:** I think we should be helping them in the first semester of the first year to do that.

**Carole:** That's what coming across very strongly from the research that I am doing the bar is being set too low. Actually there are lots of them who you treat them better than you think they will be. It is about the feedback when they give presentations that you really need to attend to the presentation, the techniques used as much the content which we are not doing much of either and even if you go to lecturers they should be the role models. I think it is certainly an area and one of the things I wanted to conclude with this if we would to take the experience we have and then the opportunity would you return later in the year about giving feedback but also having a dialogue about the whole teaching experience. What are the things that are helpful? So, let me rephrase the question, so I have come in and spent time with you and your students. But the feedback that I have given you has not been one sided but I have learnt a lot from you and you helped me inform my views of subjects specific pedagogies but also about what works and doesn't work in the classroom. And, the challenges you face and some ideas about how they might be resolved.

**Interviewee:** Well all those ideas were received and taken on board and valued. It is really useful as it sort of validates what I do as well and that feels really good. You wish that would happen more in schools and so people in management higher level would actually know what people are doing and how much work goes in to do this. It is really great!

**Carole:** You know I wasn't fishing for compliments because I have learnt a lot and it has been so useful to me. It has been affirming but I have also learnt new things that surprised me I have revised my position on many things and that has been very rich. I think there is an issue about when we come in by invitation to someone's classroom. We need to have a broader view so we have to put up single class within the context of the whole module, program, assessment strategy and infrastructure.

**Interviewee:** I could see how observations can be a little daunting and I am looking back to when I first started full-time, it was someone who was coming to observe. It is quite intimidating and scary. Less of problems for me now as I am more confident. Potentially it can be scary and there is a personal space that you are holding with your students and when somebody comes to see what you doing then you feel quiet exposed especially in a big lecture theatre. It has to be the right person who does that otherwise you get people picking up on incredibly small things. When I use to teach back in the days I was observed by my line manager and they picked up on small things and that made a real big thing about a particular gesture such as rubbing hands while I was giving the lecture. That was one of the main issues that they focused on.

**Carole:** It is something about the credibility and feedback.

**Interviewee:** It is a political thing when you are being observed by somebody who wants to pick fault for whatever reason and is quite a sort of difficult issue.

**Carole:** It is something about 'power'! Isn't it? So, if someone comes and asks who is your line manager? Then there is an element of benchmarking or making a judgement. I see that it is very hard to do is to say this is what i saw and do you want to expand on that rather than saying this is wrong. It seems to me also about the language of asking them nicely rather saying stop rubbing your hands. It is incorrect to say directly. I want to move towards much kinder, more supportive but not less challenging approach to people's practise. I could come in and make an observation but I might not be in possession of all the facts. I would want to make people comfortable and the whole thing nowadays is about making people feel good about themselves while being developmental.

**Interviewee:** It must be difficult for you to go in. I mean sometimes you might see somebody who is really struggling...

**Carole:** If someone is really struggling then you are not going to resolve it by watching them. You would need to work with them over a period of time and if they continue to struggle they shouldn't be blamed for that if they haven't got enough support or it is a bad fit. That is really helpful particularly around the people who had a bad experience with teaching observation and that has really impacted them on how they are recognised in the world. How I am with people? Particularly, we talked about credibility but also if it is possible I would do a teaching observation that is part of promotion and still be developmental and still be true and honest.

- Interviewee:** That is what I was about to say. Therefore, it is recognizing the different purposes and aims. We would need to know what the observation is for, who is doing it and being more transparent about it as much as possible and removing the politics from it. We would need to take this out of the hands from the people who might not be able to do an objective observation or might use it politically or insensitively for whatever purpose they think.
- Carole:** My view is quite radical and teaching observation should not be used for promotion purposes. I will have broader conversation with the people about their teaching in general and how they run modules. Teaching to be in a particular way which reveals to you immediately about where they are and their capabilities in a positive way and if the tutors need more development in their area of expertise.
- Interviewee:** My major concern for the long term is that teaching is now going to be less valued than research. The University strategies started to take shape from the top to down where the Vice-Chancellor is saying just to teach is not enough anymore! Where is that going to put us? I am bit worried really as it might change the value of good teachers.
- Carole:** I think that is a really valid question. In my opinion only doing research is never going to be enough and feel very political about that. Where do people think money is coming from? It is not coming from research grant and if you think actually what we are doing is teaching the - researchers of future. There is a huge research element to the teaching. I don't think if we can separate these two.
- Interviewee:** Especially with the module like this, it changes each time we deliver it because the contents and the issues constantly are changing. Now new topics have been introduced. I have read a whole lot of stuff to bring those debates. Perhaps that is research but it is not really seen like that or valued like that. The last textbook I had was in 2005 which are all out of date and in the computing field where things move so quickly so I am working on a new book and if that does get published that won't count as research.
- Carole:** You don't have to convince me and I feel your pain that is why it is so important for me to do this research into teaching. A very particular context of teaching we discussed and you are really offering a counter argument which is what really matters. This is a short sighted decision and you still have these thousands of students who cannot ignore the contribution of teaching. I don't think our students are interested in publications and journals and new buildings - they want a good teaching experience because that is how they make their way in the world and that is what equips them. Thank you very much for the contribution!

**Appendix 9 Focused coding in field notes example**

*Taking charge and student responsibility for own learning*

"I asked you to read in advance Chapter 5 which was on *Routing Protocols and Concepts* "

*Making complex ideas accessible and applying theory to practice.*

G is fluently speaking around the slides and focusing on the applicability of the content

*Getting the level right and acknowledging 'first yearness'*

Clear objectives are conveyed which are commensurate with study at first year undergraduate level.

*Concentrating on encouraging and establishing rapport*

G to students " you have come a long way in this module and most of you can be genius at this"

*Establishing links and joining up the dots*

Focuses first on what is familiar by reminding them what was covering in previous sessions

*Providing opportunities for students to participate*

Taking key principles and getting them to problem solve through scenario

*Signing of key content*

G to students "As a network student you need to pay particular attention to this"

*Providing examples which apply theory to practice*

Example given of FBI and secret service relationships followed by a perspective from the point of view of a hacker.

*Assessing knowledge level and understanding*

Conscript questioning is used to elicit the rationale and usefulness of a particular approach.

*Showing sensitivity*

When a student is unable to answer G moves onto the next student

*Establishing expectations*

G to student " Go back to this chapter and refresh your memory .. and that goes for all of you". Class we need to be on top of this" (firm but fair)

*Managing the quality of supporting resources*

Regular use of Q and A keep things going and maintain energy/attention levels.

(Font on slides showing diagrams need to be bigger as do mapping diagrams so perhaps aide memoir only and then refer to resources)

*Distinguishing taxonomies of question asking for learning*

Lots of signposting.

Important that G waits a beat or two when asking a question so this allows them to process the question and formulate an appropriate response. Otherwise this becomes about recall rather than problem solving and critical thinking.

*Receiving affirmation and encouragement which increases motivation*

Majority of students attentive and responsive.

Students receive feedback on their answers to questions and simple answers are probed further by G to avoid simple call and response questions for example "Why is it useful?" Correct answers are validated.

*Encouraging enquiry and complexity*

G tells stories from industry which illustrate the main points and humanize the learning. The stories focus on the responsibilities and the importance of trouble shooting.

*Flagging up a key concept in a subject discipline*

There follows an exploration of why and how trouble shooting is a key skill in the subject discipline.

*Demonstrating a particular teaching approach*

Good humoured and firm.

Students attentive and focusing.

*Making complex ideas accessible and scaffolding knowledge*

Jargon is broken down and explained within the context of the learning outcomes. Whole lecture is broken down into sections and sub-sections for example, verification and trouble shooting

G " Let us see if we can make sense of this?"

Use of we implies collegiality and respect for students as well as someone who is accompanying them on their learning journey.

*Creating rapport and demonstrating respect and empathy for student experience*

Flexibility and responsiveness is shown when a student asks a question and G uses the flip chart to explain the answer

*Aligning lecture content to lab sessions*

The content is linked to the scheduled labs which follow this weekly lecture and the routing information that they have opportunities to input and review.

(Question : might it be possible to briefly summarize each sub-section briefly before moving on)

*Establishing a subject identity and allegiance*

The sense of an academic and subject discipline is strong, for example, "... networking students you will come across".

The definition of a prototype is clarified using the whiteboard in a clear and confident voice.

A video clip is used to for further clarification which will appeal to those with a visual learning preference.

The sound quality of the video clip is somewhat dubious but students seem engaged.

B then deconstructs what happens when you construct a prototype using an example of Gill's work.

The students are assigned a task where working in pairs they are to design an app for i -phone. They are given pens and paper for the task and encouraged to brainstorm first.

Energy levels are high and students move quickly into task

B moves around the room ensuring that students understand the brief and are embarking on the task. V is assisting (designer in residence) with facilitating which with large group is a good thing.

One group appears peripheral and in 10 minutes has not been approached by B or V. They appear behind on task.

( A question from me : I am wondering about whether B and V might decide in advance what groups they will individually take responsibility for facilitating to ensure none are missed and receive equal attention)

B and V continue to give feedback to students on their app.

B stops them working and addresses group asking them how easy they found the exercise and this generates some discussion.

One student says " there isn't an app that is yet to be invented" and a group discussion ensues

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*Introducing a key concept*

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*Communicating key information*

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*Using appropriate resources*

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*Range of learning platforms*

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*Clear instructions*

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*Breaking an idea down*

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*Interactive activities*

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*Planning*

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*Evidence of student engagement*

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*Demystifying*

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*Giving feedback*

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*Inclusion*

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*Trouble shooting*

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*Team teaching*

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*Feedback*

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*Managing discussion*

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*Encouraging student viewpoints*

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The definition of a prototype is clarified using the whiteboard in a clear and confident voice.

*Explaining a threshold concept through multiple approaches*

A video clip is used to for further clarification which will appeal to those with a visual learning preference.

The sound quality of the video clip is somewhat dubious but students seem engaged.

*Providing unambiguous instructions*

B then deconstructs what happens when you construct a prototype using an example of Gill's work.

The students are assigned a task where working in pairs they are to design an app for an i phone. They are given pens and paper for the task and encouraged to brainstorm first.

*Academic facilitating active learning through participation*

Energy levels are high and students move quickly into task

*Giving feedback to students*

B moves around the room ensuring that students understand the brief and are embarking on the task. V is assisting (designer in residence) with facilitating which with large group is a good thing.

*Managing team teaching effectively*

One group appears peripheral and in 10 minutes has not been approached by B or V. They appear behind on task.

(A question from me : I am wondering about whether B and V might decide in advance what groups they will individually take responsibility for facilitating to ensure none are missed and receive equal attention)

B and V continue to give feedback to students on their app.

*Seeking student point of view and encouraging critical thinking*

B stops them working and addresses group asking them how easy they found the exercise and this generates some discussion.

One student says " there isn't an app that is yet to be invented" and a group discussion ensues



## **Appendix 10: Memo Writing**

### Teaching as emotional labour

Teaching is an intensely emotional experience with a huge investment of self. In standing up in front of a group of students' day in day out the academic makes themselves vulnerable to criticism, although often their harshest critics are themselves. They express uncertainty about their teaching abilities and especially what standard it is being measured against.

Strategies that are used to manage these feelings include repression and surrendering to them as an inevitable consequence of the job. By concentrating on the job in hand they might be diminished. However, when given an opportunity to discuss these feelings with someone trusted and empathic it is seized eagerly.

With the burden of emotional labour comes a need to discuss thoughts and feelings about teaching without fear of judgement. This is different from receiving feedback and being offered guidance on the practicalities. When emotional responses to teaching are encouraged, the opportunity is received gratefully. They appreciate being able to talk openly about themselves, how discouraged and uncertain they sometimes feel about their experience of teaching but also those celebratory moments when everything comes together and there is no feeling like it.

Being able to express openly and honestly the emotions that teaching in higher education evokes is liberating and energising.

(After I had written this memo I returned to my journal entries and the transcripts discovering that the links between teaching and emotional investment were much clearer to me)

### Personal attributes of observers

The overwhelming quality of an observer is seen to be a willingness to establish a relationship based on good communication skills, genuine interest and openness. Knowledge of a subject discipline appears not to be seen as relevant but what is important are the personal attributes which then make the observed want to engage in the observation process. Once these credentials are established there is a willingness to receive feedback and be prepared to consider alternatives. Also, receiving 'affirmation' and 'positive strokes' is greatly appreciated.

( I then went away and compared participants transcripts again to see if these views were expressed by others to see if this might inform an emerging category)

### The nature of studentship

I joined a seminar for undergraduate students in which they had been allowed time to address questions which related to the lecture content. A was not punitive or critical despite some students unable to contribute because they had not attended the morning lecture. How best then might the students engage when the lecture expand and develops concepts introduced in the lecture ? The relationships between student and higher education provider have altered

with students now paying in excess of £9000 a year in fees. Paying for a degree changes the rules of engagement as students are now the consumers. The academic may take for granted expectations about attendance and engagement which are not shared. A student may be engaged and they may be not but their level of engagement will impact on their peers and the academic who is teaching. It will affect their peers when they participate together in group projects and classroom activities. A has already admitted to being affected and is disappointed that the majority of the students have arrived so ill prepared for the seminar. Some students are not just ill prepared but they are struggling to develop cogent arguments relating to content that has been covered earlier in the module.

A is an energetic and enthusiastic teacher who encourages higher order thinking and designed a really good exercise for the students which is relevant, engaging and allows them to develop and demonstrate the skills that students in the final year of their undergraduate degree should be working towards.

A is a good teacher and fulfilling his contractual obligations to provide an engaging and participative environment, sharing his subject knowledge which is considerable and creating a supportive learning space. Yet what of the students and their responsibilities? A and I spent a long time discussing this in our learning conversations.

(Subsequently I began to develop a category based on this memo.)

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## Appendix 11

*Self-awareness*

*Approach to teaching preparation*

*Increased confidence*

*Giving permission*

*Providing expertise*

*Giving feedback to students*

*Confidence building*

*Identifying a weakness*

*Needs of first years*

*Feeling conscious*

*Benefits of preceptorship*

*Establishing a rationale*

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### Example 1 of initial coding of learning conversations

B: I think there's been a switch this year like a switch in my head it's just-, it's falling into place a lot more. I'm less concerned by it, I feel I need to do less over-preparation because I used to be very over prepared and think about every single detail. I feel more confident now to have a structure in place and be able to, not make it up as I go along, but to kind of go with how the exercise is going, so as long as so as long as I know the direction, I don't feel the need to prepare every word I'm going to say. I just feel more confident talking to them generally which is nice.

Carole: And I think that's about you trusting your own tuition but also yourself. When you talked about it as being an exercise in making them feel more confident but because you're more confident, they're mirroring you. You are their mirror because I love, I mean really, really love the way that you give feedback to them. So if I were to describe your approach it would be warmth but with control and also how you give feedback is in a very constructive way. So it's something that they can apply and use but is also very encouraging, so it will make them better because they will feel more confident.

B: I think maybe one of my weaknesses is that sometimes I'm a bit too nice with the feedback.

Carole: So, what would I say to that as someone who gives a lot of feedback and in some ways this research is about feedback that I would say they're first years...

B: Yeah, I think that's what I'm conscious of.

Carole: ...you're correcting and there's this phenomenon in medical education it's called the Five Minute Preceptor which is, you get people to take a position which they're doing by drawing, you-, you're getting them to pick a kind of rationale and that bit you might want to work on, why have you done it in this way, what were your thoughts? Non-threatening but helpful. But

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*Encouraging self-assessment*

*Challenging students*

*Desire to be an individual*

*Seeking Student perspective*

*Developing feedback skills*

*Higher order questions*

*Good versus not good enough*

*Determining best practice*

*Formative feedback as development*

*Increasing effort*

*Links with employability*

*Assessment requirements*

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then there's an element of correcting feedback and then you're moving them on. So I think you might want to think about when you say 'could I be stricter?' what that would look like is it that you're thinking about other people in the department and how they might give feedback or whether it's about...

R I'm not wanting to be like other people

Carole: So it's about you and a way of kind of closing that feedback loop is to come back to the students and say 'how's it for you?' I think that would be a really interesting thing to explore and that might be something we could do a bit of a focus group on because it's teaching a skill but actually you have-, you want to say to them, 'bad technique', sloppy habit but you don't want to say it in that way. You want the kind of the 'why', the 'how' and...

R But I think maybe like there's times when maybe they do need to be told either 'that's not good enough' or 'you've not done enough' and I think sometimes on those occasions I'm still maybe too nice, there needs to be the slightly harder side.

Int Yeah, and it's something about formative feedback which is about development and what you might do because we have this whole opportunity this afternoon, is about saying 'some of you are going to have to raise your game' but it is this is how. So I think that might be worth thinking about because at the end of the day we can all have a lovely time drawing but this is about getting a job. It's about passing an assignment, sticking to the brief, so I think that's something you can explore with V but I think that's a really useful thing to explore. Yeah, so that hour and a half before coffee that felt satisfying...

*Managing learning spaces***Example 2 of Focused Coding from Learning Conversation**

Carole: For me one of the key things is that you create a structure for learning, while not over controlling and you are friendly, respectful, approachable and helpful. For me what was very evident was that they trusted you, they were comfortable to ask you questions whether it was about option choices for next year or about the assessment portfolio .Now you created that environment which was enabling yet purposeful.

**A:** A lot of work goes in to building that relationship in the first 2-3 weeks.

**Carole:** Never underestimate it.

*Relationship building with students*

**A:** You build a platform and connect with them. What you haven't seen is the big lectures that I do for that module and you know I come in, play some music in the beginning and to get them set.

**Carole:** What kind of music?

*Engaging students*

**A:** I play various like instrumental, reggae, and salsa, just instrumental stuff for first five minutes when they are walking in and sometimes I have a little chat with them about music. So I play a bit of music and then try to keep it fairly informal to try to connect with them and move around the room but also am fairly sort of authoritative and not to allow too much talking and coming in late in the beginning and that always seem to work because you get that basic foundation.

*Maturity of students*

**Carole:** I think you are right and I would say that you can go in firm and then you can relax a bit. It is very interesting for me thinking about these particular students because they are young and they are in that transition particularly the first years .Some are fairly immature and I was very interested to watch because there was a lot of people who took a long time to get settled. There was one young woman in particular who wasted time and I was wondering if you needed to keep on to this but then I felt actually perhaps this is the part of the process. I also thought that your role is to be with the students who are applying themselves, who are interested. Actually if we say that higher education is about independent adult learning, do we want to recreate a situation that they feel that they are in school?

*Independent learning*

**A:** Some of them want you to create the school environment, they feel safer with that. Well this is university so if you don't want to do the work that is fine you know so I try to resist succumbing to that.

*First yearness*

**Carole:** That was a revelation for me because it made me think about my practice and review my appreciation of what effective learning environments are. To actually thinking that is absolutely fine and it is as it should be because I just think that we are in the long game here and you are teaching a lot. You're right in directing your energy into encouraging self-sufficiency and responsibility.

*Educational developer reviewing own practices.*

*Inviting reflection and self assessment*

*Using Innovation and unorthodox teaching methods*

*Active Learning*

*Simulated learning experience*

*Planned experience*

*Comparing with previous deliveries*

*Students self-assessing*

*Uniqueness of programme*

*Linking programme with outside agencies*

*Providing affirmation and approval*

### Example 3 of initial coding from Learning Conversation

Carole: I'm really interested to hear from your point of view how you thought it went. Anything you would have done differently? Anything that surprised you? Anything that you were really pleased with? I have some feedback to share. So, just go for it.

F: It was the second time we run this field study. The programme of studies, the forensic computing graduates are at level six, which makes then final year three students. The module is digital evidence, BAS3228. And this is part of the rather kind of hands-on unorthodox way of teaching that I've introduced in this model when it was created.

We have similar activities going on almost every other week. I have additional lectures with slides, but we have quite a lot of workshops going on. The idea is that they are able to communicate ideas and go through videos. This one in particular it's impossible to create a crime scene myself because of health and safety issues, security issues and so on. So, what we do is we create, in one of the labs we established that there are sufficient computer resources there, and the idea is that they have ten minutes in groups of four to six people to come in, while they're being observed and being video recorded, in order to establish that they have a specific plan and procedure to follow that will allow them to collect sufficient resources that will be admissible into a court case.

The way that this runs – and I'm always comparing with previous occasions because I want to make sure that I improve it – so I didn't change too much in terms of the actual structure of the experiment. So, the procedure was the same. You being in the room was not a factor that affected it at all, as I said. The first what I would say went well was the students realizing their weaknesses and the fact that this is a practical experience that they don't get in other modules. Also what is unique about it is that there are no other similar programmes in the country that go to the extent of such data collection; followed by we would then have a visit from a senior investigation officer from the Metropolitan Police who would actually provide his feedback. That always takes place after the experiment because I don't want them to follow the theory; I want them to go as students as they would in person.

Carole: So, go with their instincts and it's the application.

F: Exactly.

Carole: For me that was what made it really exciting. I do a lot of work in medical education and we would call that simulation and what we understand. It's a great learning opportunity; it's a big adventure. And as you say that element of self-assessment.

R That went really well. Also what went well was role playing; because from day one in the module this is what I want to achieve. I don't treat them as students.



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*Preparation for industry**Following work based learning concepts**Making links with assessment**Identifying niche job opportunities**Identifying areas for improvement**Need for more structure in session**Learning through mistakes**Improving written guidelines**Challenging lecturer participation in role play**Acting rather than role play**Revisiting learning objectives*

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This particular module, because it's so focused on a niche market the idea is that I don't want them to be treated as students. I'm trying to follow a work-based learning approach, although they're not work-based learners. So, I'm focusing all their assessments towards a portfolio. The reason being these particular students have enormous difficulties getting a job unless they possess the right skills; the reason being such a small market. It's not like IT students who would claim various jobs. So, that went well.

So, two things went really well.

A couple of things that I think I would improve in the future would be provide a little bit more structure. The reason is – although I don't want them to have structure because if they have structure they tend to follow it religiously because they're not confident doing an experiment like this. And I want them to do mistakes and I want them to learn by their own mistakes. Perhaps I would have provided – the previous week I've given them certain guidelines – I may have provided maybe a specific written scenario helping them with their role play, be a little bit more prescriptive.

Int I was thinking about that because I was wondering does there come a point when the role play takes over and it becomes acting rather than about what they need to know, what they need to apply. Because the last group were really getting into it: they'd dressed up; they had some special props. And that's always the risk, isn't it?

R It is, yes.

Int It's about where does the learning come from.

*Establishing a dialogue about actualisation of potential*

*Changes amongst student body*

*Differences between past and present*

*Changes mirroring society*

*Parental expectations*

*Status of academia*

*What lecturers might bring*

*Need for lecturers to understand*

*Speaking from a student point of view*

*Expressing empathy for students*

*Presence of emotional intelligence*

*Teaching with tolerance*

*What is good teaching practice?*

*Parallels between feedback to lecturers and students*

*Support and challenge needed*

*Assuming a character*

*Previous unsatisfactory experience*

#### **Example 4 of Initial Coding from a Learning Conversation**

Carole: And from that how can we create a situation which is constructive, affirming, but also where people feel safe?

G: Absolutely. And I think just to follow on that, Carole; students have changed a lot these days. I remember my first two years as a lecturer, middle section firstly; the students then were very different from what we have now. I think society has a lot to do with that. You find that the learners that we have today need something much more than was given say ten years ago. Learning has become a burden for students, I think. Often a lot of them would go and study because they'd been pushed into it by parents; not because they want to – because they'd rather be footballers and musicians and be in the entertainment industry. I just find academia is not as celebrated as it was years back. So, as a tutor or lecturer you need to bring something else to the table. And in doing that you've got to be able to teach from a position of understanding what goes on in today's world, so to speak, from a student's point of view.

Carole: Yes. I concur with that because when I was reviewing themes from discussions we had had and the field notes from my observations, and then I looked at the other participants and what had happened there, that a very strong emergent theme from you was about empathy; it was about the need for emotional intelligence in teaching; it was about understanding. And for me a word that I would use, and actually it came from your transcribed interview, was about tolerance.

G: Yes.

Carole: started off with this research where it was really about what does effective feedback post-teaching observation look like. But it also raised a lot of interesting questions about what is good teaching practice, and what can observing teaching tell us about how we might create a teaching experience. And I think something that I would ask you, because I think there's a parallel here between what you're trying to do with students and what I'm trying to do with my colleagues, who are academics, I'm saying as you do: the academic role has changed.

G: It certainly has.

Carole: So, something different is needed. How can I support but challenge through the teaching observation experience?

G: Absolutely.

Carole: I don't know whether you want to unpack that a bit more?

G: Well, I can try. I think for me now being in a classroom is role based. You have to almost assume a character. What I do with that character is often method based. I always imagine myself as a particular student who attended

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*Delivering content differently*

*Teaching in second life*

*Challenges in teaching*

*Giving permission to make mistakes*

*Promoting student engagement*

*Setting expectations*

*Detailed knowledge of students*

*Acknowledging individual needs*

*Encouraging reluctant learners*

*Managing time*

*Keeping students on track*

*Collaborative learning*

*Supporting students*

*Peer learning as problematic*

*Managing peer learning effectively*

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this lecture, may be dissatisfied about the previous class they'd attended, and wanted to seek out a bit more information from this particular class. Now, that approach would not normally be a friendly one; you find a lot of students are very sceptical about academics these days. And the reason for that is they come from a different world. So, they're trying to firstly found out if they're able to get on with you as a person; not so much your content that you intend to deliver.

And I think reaching that or being able to get through that initial stage of demonstrating that you're approachable, demonstrating that you're on their side, then you're able to get the best out of a student. Because I believe every student that attends a class or every individual that comes in for a lecture there is always good in them and it's your role to get it out – that's how I see teaching. And if you're not able to do that I think I would have failed in that sense.

### **Example 5 of Initial coding of Learning Conversations**

**E:** So, it's quite an exciting thing, had some project students who were looking at different ways to teach programming, one of my master students this year they were looking at teaching in a Second Life and having objects to kind of visually look at some of these thresholds but still it's very hard to do.

**Carole:** So, it sounds quite challenging and it's a process and one of the things which is always struck me when I've been privileged enough to join your classes is your patience, the effort in which you put in to create an environment where it's ok to make mistakes, it's ok to ask, what you clearly won't tolerate is people who don't apply themselves, don't use their time well that you convey that in a very subtle way so you make it quite difficult for people in your class whether its a seminar, a lab or a lecture to opt out completely and not engage and that is particularly evident in labs and seminars. I love it, absolutely love it.

**E:** What I try to do is engage with every student, earlier enough in the session so I know what they should be doing and I can keep coming back to it.

**Carole:** Yes, I see that and that tells me that you have a really good memory, for peoples' tipping point, for their place, their capabilities and the work left to do but also that that is then very apparent to them so if they are not there you miss them during, you remember before the second observation where we met the young guy in the corridor and you hadn't seen him for a little while and he was going to go somewhere else and then you persuaded him to come with you to a lab and then he stayed and did some useful work.

**E:** Hm..Yes. Yes I do, yes, that is very important. I want them to use that time, I'm very time conscious. They seem to think they have a long time to get through these modules but they don't really, it's very short term. They get really behind. The other thing I really like to do is deliberate facts, I like to get the student working together but I don't want them doing their work exactly for each other but they can often help themselves through little misunderstandings quite well and I like to do that.

**Carole :** So, they're peer learning but then that fine line between helping and doing for?

E: And, also if they are too reliant on their friends then doesn't work, that's very interesting subject. Sometimes I try and move them occasionally and say go and work with that person today.

## Appendix 12

### Open coding journal examples

Facilitating creative problem solving

*Today I met with H to discuss the team teaching I had observed him undertake with a colleague on the \*\* \*Programme. The areas that he said he particularly wanted to talk about were the challenges involved in team teaching and what are the most effective ways to give feedback to students on their work? We also talked about the advantages of structure versus non-structure and was he overly empathic with his students which resulted in him not setting limits, which then potentially compromised learning, and how do you know when to do the right thing?*

Identifying subject specific pedagogies

*The conversations about the pedagogies of art and design were fascinating as they brought into question the calibre of the students, particularly their ability to move from concrete to abstract thinking, and how in H's opinion as a preparation for degree level the Design & Technology A level is poor at best and damaging at worst preparation for degree level. X has experienced the subject as problematic (partly due to the perceived subjectivity of it) and the students disappointing.*

Deciding what is 'good' teaching?

*Feedback again emerged as a significant issue - how to get it 'right' when the sensitivities of the students are so heightened and the range of approaches that different lecturers adopt with H being seen as 'too nice'. How did we get to a point when teaching with emotional intelligence is confused with a drop in standards and lack of rigour? We talked a lot about the culture in the department and how certain individuals dominate and are not willing to compromise or adapt any of their teaching practices. So where H and his colleague end up is feeling uncertain about their practice. Because of this both have found being engaged in this research as precious and affirming.*

Identifying issues around academic leadership

*We found a comparison with those students who delayed doing further work on their models until they had been seen by the lecturers who would tell them whether it was 'alright' and lecturers who were desperate to be told their teaching was 'alright'.*

Team teaching

*I pressed H to comment on my practice particularly in relation to how I gave feedback and he responded that it was 'a great process' which was tremendously reassuring to him. The importance of an objective observer was seen as crucial which when unpacked implied that within departments agendas and team dynamics may tarnish the process rendering it unsafe and lacking in authenticity. Thus independent feedback was critical but 'credibility' and 'experience' equally so.*

Receiving affirmation and reassurance

Expanding the role of the educational developer

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*Collaboration between academics and educational developers*

*Conveying 'credibility' and experience through use of language.*

*The notions of 'credibility' and 'experience' have been cropping up a lot lately and I am hearing them often in the description of 'self' by others so I am tagging them because I would like to unpack them because they are crucial to this research and In defining my practice.*

*H and I made further plans to explore the inclusion of MCQ tests , outlines for workshops, carry out a further teaching observation later in the semester and for me to conduct a focus group at the end of semester 1 to try and unpack engineering pedagogies and ideas about effective teaching from the perspective of B Eng students. We also talked about writing up how he approached his lessons which to him felt very intuitive and unstructured but which to my eye were albeit in an unconventional manner.*

Facilitating creative problem solving

Identifying subject specific pedagogies

Deciding what is 'good' teaching?

Identifying issues around academic leadership

Team teaching

Receiving affirmation and reassurance

Expanding the role of the educational developer

### **Focused coding from journal example**

*Today I met with H to discuss the team teaching I had observed him undertake with a colleague on the \*\* \*Programme. The areas that he said he particularly wanted to talk about were the challenges involved in team teaching and what are the most effective ways to give feedback to students on their work? We also talked about the advantages of structure versus non-structure and was he overly empathic with his students which resulted in him not setting limits, which then potentially compromised learning, and how do you know when to do the right thing?*

*The conversations about the pedagogies of art and design were fascinating as they brought into question the calibre of the students, particularly their ability to move from concrete to abstract thinking, and how in H's opinion as a preparation for degree level the Design & Technology A level is poor at best and damaging at worst preparation for degree level. X has experienced the subject as problematic (partly due to the perceived subjectivity of it) and the students disappointing.*

*Feedback again emerged as a significant issue - how to get it 'right' when the sensitivities of the students are so heightened and the range of approaches that different lecturers adopt with H being seen as 'too nice'. How did we get to a point when teaching with emotional intelligence is confused with a drop in standards and lack of rigour? We talked a lot about the culture in the department and how certain individuals dominate and are not willing to compromise or adapt any of their teaching practices. So where H and his female colleague L (another participant in this research) end up is feeling uncertain about their practice. Because of this both have found being engaged in this research as precious and affirming.*

*We found a comparison with those students who delayed doing further work on their models until they had been seen by the lecturers who would tell them whether it was 'alright' and lecturers who were desperate to be told their teaching was 'alright'.*

*I pressed H to comment on my practice particularly in relation to how I gave feedback and he responded that it was 'a great process' which was tremendously reassuring to him. The importance of an objective observer was seen as crucial which when unpacked implied that within departments agendas and team dynamics may tarnish the process rendering it unsafe and lacking in authenticity. Thus independent feedback was critical but 'credibility' and 'experience' equally so.*

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*Identifying attributes of observers*

*The notions of 'credibility' and 'experience' have been cropping up a lot lately and I am hearing them often in the description of 'self' by others so I am tagging them because I would like to unpack them because they are crucial to this research and In defining my practice.*

*Engaging in collaborative practice*

*H and I made further plans to explore the inclusion of MCQ tests , outlines for workshops, carry out a further teaching observation later in the semester and for me to conduct a focus group at the end of semester 1 to try and unpack engineering pedagogies and ideas about effective teaching from the perspective of B Eng students. We also talked about writing up how he approached his lessons which to him felt very intuitive and unstructured but which to my eye were albeit in an unconventional manner.*

*Providing affirmation*



**Appendix 13**

## Academic Policy Statement APS19 Teaching Observations

### 1. Introduction

1.1. Middlesex University is committed to developing the standards and quality of its education. It is also committed to investing in its staff by providing opportunities for training and development to enable them to respond positively to the changing needs of students. The aim of this Policy is to contribute to the enhancement of good teaching practice by developing a culture of teaching observation for all academic staff, including full-time, fractional and part-time hourly-paid (working an average of 80 hours a year). We are working towards all colleagues participating in peer teaching observation once a year. The emphasis is on first achieving this for less experienced staff.

1.2. The aim of teaching observation is developmental and outcomes should be discussed and agreed between observer and observee. The key objective of this process is to agree action and development that may be undertaken to enhance professional practice.

1.3. Ideally, the observer should observe an entire/whole session to gain a complete picture (see paragraph 2.2 which describes the different types of classes or sessions that may be observed).

### 2. Scope

2.1. There are three different types of teaching observations. Whilst the overall purpose is developmental the function of each of these observations is different

- a) Teaching observation for probation/progression/promotion
- b) Session observation for the PGCert HE
- c) Peer observation for ongoing development

2.2. The teaching session to be observed in all types of observations could include a large group, small group, one-to-one, tutorial, seminar, lecture, laboratory, workshop or studio-based work, group on-line, e learning materials, within the work place / practice setting. It could also include discussion of assessment practices or plans for other innovations. The same proforma should be used for all types of observation.

## A Teaching Observation as part of probation/ progression/promotion

2.3. As part of the probationary report for new members of staff, two teaching observations must take place to assess the performance of the member of staff. Teaching observations are also required for progression through the Lecturer to Senior Lecturer scale and also for all academic promotion purposes (except to Senior Manager). After each observation the observer will provide a detailed analysis of the teaching observation for the Dean of School.

## B Session Observations for the PG Cert HE

2.4. Observations form an important part of the PG Cert HE, their purpose is developmental.

Observations take place over the year of the programme, these can include observations required as part of probation. Each year a tutor or tutor-associate (someone who has already completed the programme) shall observe the participant and each participant of the programme shall observe and be observed by other participants on the course. These, together with the participant's reflections on the observation event, will be included in each stage of portfolio submission. Additional optional observations may be included in the portfolio if participants wish.

## C Peer Observation for ongoing development

2.5. The purpose of peer observation is developmental and intended to enable lecturers to become better practitioners. Observation is expected to be beneficial to both for the observer and the observee and shall help to share good practice across the University. Both observer and observee may wish to discuss the use of observation as a development tool in their annual appraisal discussion. The observation is non-judgemental, it is supportive, and it helps staff critically to reflect upon their teaching. It can result in staff trying out new ideas, reaffirming what is being done or modifying existing practices. Staff are encouraged to use peer observation to identify individual teaching related development needs and discuss these in their annual staff appraisal.

### 3. Responsibility

3.1. The Dean has responsibility for ensuring that teaching observations take place for:

- probationary members of staff
- staff due to progress from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer
- academic staff promotions from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and from senior to Principal Lecturer (excluding Senior Managers);

The Dean will delegate responsibility for organising these observations to Heads of Department.

3.2. For peer observations, whilst the University is working towards annual observations for all academic staff, the Head of Department has responsibility for ensuring that staff are observed at least once every three years (experienced staff) and every one/two years for less experienced staff or staff known to need further planned development. During annual appraisal discussions staff should discuss with their appraiser ways in which peer observation could support development. This should be included in their Individual Development Plan.

3.3. Each participant on the PG Cert HE is responsible for organising his or her own teaching observations. They should discuss with the Head of Department where it is appropriate to also use a PG Cert HE Teaching Observation for peer observation.

3.4. The plan for all types of observations and general recommendations on staff development needs from Section D of Observation forms should be included in the Departmental Staff Development Plan. These needs will then feed into the School Plan.

3.5. Staff who observe teaching shall be trained as observers (see paragraph 7). Probation observations will normally be undertaken by someone more senior/experienced than the person being observed and the observer shall not be the person who is his or her induction mentor.

3.6. Generalised strengths, good practice and weaknesses emerging from peer observation will be discussed with Departments and Schools at their annual "Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Meeting. Generalised development needs will be discussed with the Dean and /Deputy Deans and appropriate measure put in place to meet these in the School/Department Academic Development Programme.

## 4. Confidentiality

4.1. Teaching observation forms for probationers, those progressing from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and academic staff promotions are seen by the line manager, the Dean and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The forms are kept in the staff member's file.

4.2. Peer observations remain confidential between the parties involved unless the observed member of staff decides otherwise. For example, the observee may wish to share the feedback form with their appraiser or line manager or include it in their portfolio during a promotions round. However, Sections A and D (the non-evaluative sections) of the observation form are returned to the Head of Department to confirm observation has taken place and for staff development purposes.

4.3. Session observations for the PG Cert HE are confidential to the participant and programme tutor, unless they are also being used for probation. A participant may choose to include them in support of an application for progression or promotion or share them with their appraiser.

## 5. PROCEDURES Frequency

5.1. Observations for probation shall be undertaken twice during the probationary period.

5.2. Observation for progression from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and for promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and from senior lecturer to principal lecturer shall take place when required.

5.3. Peer observations should be undertaken at least once every three years for experienced staff and every year or every two years for less experience staff or staff known to need further planned development.

## Organisation Probation/Progression/Promotion

5.4. Heads of Department are responsible for ensuring that observations take place. The Head of Department or their nominee will organise observers and ensure that observations take place within the time-scale required. The Head of Department shall inform observees when an observation is required and, where necessary, who shall be the observer.

5.5. The observer shall contact the staff member to be observed and the observer and observee shall agree which session(s) shall be observed. They should agree what to observe e.g. type of teaching/learning session, type of student, full-time/part-time etc. The observation should ideally be an entire session but can be, for example, the first hour of a two-hour session, the staff involved should discuss the best scenario. The observer should also review the use of e-learning materials, where appropriate.

5.6. There should be a meeting (about ten minutes), preferably immediately prior to the observation, to discuss the learning objectives of the session and to give the observer any materials that the student shall receive (including the module handbook, where appropriate).

## Peer Observation

5.7. The Head of Department draws up a list of staff to be observed in each term. This is circulated to the Department in September.

5.8. The Head of Department draws up a schedule of observations, following discussion with the members of staff, listing who is observing whom and shall circulate this at the beginning of each term to members of the department. This should not always be senior staff observing junior staff but should be a mix, for example, junior staff observing senior staff and staff on similar grades observing each other.

5.9. The observer shall contact the staff member to be observed and the observer and observee shall agree which session(s) shall be observed. They should agree what to observe e.g. type of teaching/learning session, type of student, full-time/part-time etc. The observation should ideally be an entire session but can be, for example, the first hour of a two-hour session, the staff involved should discuss the best scenario. The observer should also review the use of e-learning materials and formative assessment, where appropriate.

5.10. There should be a meeting (about ten minutes), preferably immediately prior to the observation, to discuss the learning objectives of the session and to give the observer any materials that the student shall receive (including the module handbook, where appropriate).

## 6. Follow up action

6.1. The following action is recommended after session observations for probation/progression/promotion and peer observation (excluding PG Cert HE which are confidential between the participant and programme tutor):

- The Head of Department should identify generalised staff development needs and include these in their annual discussions of staff development requirements. Examples of good practice, strengths and weaknesses should be discussed during the Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Meeting.

## 7. Training

- 7.1. Workshops on teaching observation shall be provided when required. It is expected that all observers should attend a workshop prior to undertaking any observations. The Head of Department may agree exceptions to this.

## Associated documents

Session Observation Form  
Associated Policies  
Probation HRPS13  
Appraisal

Recruitment and Selection  
Coaching and Mentoring

This Policy was originally developed through consultation with Schools and NATFHE. It was approved by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of the Academic Board on 17 July 2003. It was reviewed in the Academic Year 2004-05 and amendments approved by the Academic Board in March 2005. It was again reviewed in the Academic Year 2008-09 and the amendments approved by the Academic Board in November 2008. It is due for further review in 2011.

Review in 2001 was delayed in order to bring this in line with the Middlesex University Strategy 2012-2014. It has been reviewed and updated to reflect changes in structure and processes that have occurred in the last two years in July 2013. It will require a more fundamental review following the consultation and scoping of the new academic structure.

**Appendix 14****Produced by Human Resources**

October 2012

**Human Resources Policy Statement HRPS 18**

(Applicable to academic staff commencing after 1 April 2011)

**PROBATION POLICY FOR ACADEMIC STAFF****1. Introduction**

All newly appointed members of academic staff should be subject to a probationary period, during which time they should demonstrate their suitability for the post to which they have been recruited as described in the relevant job description. The University will provide effective guidance, support and training to ensure that new staff become fully effective and are able to understand and contribute fully to the University/School/Department corporate goals. In addition, all new academic staff shall be assigned a mentor in accordance with the University's [Policy on Mentoring](#).

**2. Scope of Policy**

The probation procedure shall apply to all core members of academic staff during their probation period. This will include permanent, full-time, part-time and those staff on temporary contracts of twelve months or more.

The University's normal Managing Underperformance Procedure will not apply but will inform the process during the probation period and any acts of misconduct or gross misconduct will invoke the Disciplinary Procedure as part of the probation.

The procedure shall not normally apply to existing staff who are promoted, re-graded or transfer to another similar post within the University. Where the post is substantially different, probation shall not normally apply unless agreed otherwise on appointment.

**3. General Principles**

- To provide the probationer with a clear statement of the objectives including the performance and standards to be achieved through a consistent and fair assessment;
- To ensure that the University appoints those people with appropriate skills, aspirations, ambitions and professional competencies required as an academic to contribute to the corporate goals within Middlesex University, as described in the job description;
- To allow the probationer the opportunity to familiarise him or herself with the academic environment and provide an opportunity to assess how he or she fits into the University;

- To help identify the probationer's training and development needs and provide appropriate resources and support to allow his or her full potential to be achieved;
- To provide the University with an opportunity to assess the performance of the probationer against the standards set by it before deciding whether or not to confirm the appointment and ensuring that necessary steps are taken where possible to improve the probationer's performance.

#### **4. Probationary Period**

The normal length of a probationary period will be 12 months. However it is recognised that there will be some circumstances that require the Head of Department or equivalent Manager to suggest to a longer period. This should not exceed 24 months. An example of this may be when additional time is required to successfully complete teaching observations; another may be to allow additional time to achieve set and agreed objectives.

#### **Interruption to the Probationary period**

There may be occasions when the probationary period is interrupted. In such circumstances it should be made clear to the individual and confirmed in writing by HR whether probation is continuing or is being suspended. If it is the latter an indication of the period it is suspended and the implications it may have on the action plan need to be confirmed.

#### **5. Responsibilities**

##### **Head of Department or Equivalent Manager**

Where the probationer is appointed as an academic member of staff within a School/Institute, they will report to a Head of Department who will be responsible for the member of staff's probation. If an academic member of staff is appointed to a Service they will report to a Manager who will be responsible for the probation.

It is essential that the recruiting manager informs HR if there are any conditional requirements that should be included in the contract of employment.

The Head of Department or equivalent Manager will be responsible for setting out in writing the overall objectives for the individual in terms of their main areas of work, overall contribution, delivery and adherence to contractual requirements and in their relationships with others at the beginning of their appointment using the [Action/Development Plan, Appendix A](#). They should also ensure that the mentoring arrangements have been agreed and are in place for the probationer during the probation period. It is important that the Head of Department or equivalent Manager ensures that the probationer has access to the necessary training, support and resources in order to complete their probation. They would also be expected to monitor the probationer's progress and performance and provide relevant feedback throughout the review process as a minimum twice using the [Probation report form, Appendix B](#), before making a decision about the confirmation of post.



### Probationer

- Will demonstrate their suitability for the post to which they have been appointed.
- Draw to the attention of their Head of Department (or Manager) or mentor any other induction, guidance, support or training they feel is necessary for the effective performance of their responsibilities.
- Enrol on the PGCertHe within the agreed timescale (if this is a contractual requirement).

### Human Resources

- Will confirm in writing any specific requirements of the appointment in the contract of employment if informed by the recruiting manager
- Will invite all new members of staff to the corporate induction
- Will send a reminder to the relevant line manager three months before the probation period is due to end including the probation report at [Appendix B](#)
- Will confirm the appointment following a successful probation
- Will assist line managers if the probation period is unsuccessful, to extend the probation and or facilitate probationary hearings where appropriate

## 6. Procedures

It is recognised that some of the criteria below may take precedence over others as determined by the requirements of the role using the job description, the level of appointment and as agreed by the Head of Department or equivalent Manager.

At the beginning of the probationary period, following discussion with the probationer, the Head of Department or equivalent Manager will clarify the relative importance of the different aspects of the post, setting objectives, and outlining the specific duties/actions to be undertaken during the probation period. This will be based on the job description and person specification used as part of the recruitment process. Objectives will be set in conjunction with the agreed work programme/plan with a possible reduction in teaching where, and if appropriate. He/she will also provide an indication of the standard of achievement expected in each area, in order for the appointment to be confirmed. The Head of Department or equivalent Manager should use the action plan (see [Appendix A](#)) which includes the probationer's development plan.

As a general guide, the following criteria will be used for assessing completion for the probation; this will be dependent upon the job requirement, the level of appointment and in line with the relevant academic role profile and job description, it will also be agreed as part of the probationer's action plan.

### A. TEACHING AND LEARNING (including scholarly activity)

**Qualification-** It is a contractual requirement for all academic staff (i.e. staff subject to the terms and conditions of the Academic Staff Handbook) to have completed an approved programme of continuing professional development through a recognised teaching qualification or have three years full-time teaching experience in accordance with the ITLHE guidelines. The University's

recognised accredited programme is the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCertHE).

Staff that are required to register on the PGCertHe or equivalent are normally expected to complete the programme within 24 months of enrolment. If delays occur this period should not exceed four years. The Head of Department or equivalent Manager will confirm whether the probationer is required to undertake further formal training prior to the start of their appointment.

**Teaching and Evaluation: These are examples and not an exhaustive list of the relevant duties:**

1. It is important that all probationers are given a clear explanation of the norms and standards for teaching for the department/service, including: contribution to course and curriculum development including preparation of module handbook.
2. Duties and responsibilities in terms of quality and frequency of all types of assessment, feedback appropriate to role and the relevant academic role profile.
3. Participation and engagement with Board of Studies and Assessment Boards.
4. Teaching materials on OASISPLUS. Assessment materials on OASISPLUS where appropriate.
5. Tutorial skills and performance as appropriate to level of appointment.
6. Undertake module and programme leadership as appropriate to level of appointment.
7. Undertake related teaching administrative duties, within the guidelines and requirements of Middlesex University.
8. Undertake relevant training from CLTE.

**Teaching Observations**

As part of the probation report, two successful teaching observations must be undertaken to assess the performance of the member of staff. This should be undertaken by the Head of Department, or an experienced academic as designated by the Head of Department. The first one should take place within the first 4 months of appointment, and the second no later than 8 months into the appointment within the teaching cycle. They should provide detailed analysis of the teaching observed. For further information, refer to the [Teaching Observation Policy](#).

**NB:** Where staff do the PGCertHE in tandem with their probationary year it is not possible to use their two summative teaching observations for PGCertHE as part of their probation.

**B. RESEARCH, CONSULTANCY and BUSINESS ACTIVITY**

It is important that all probationers are given a clear explanation of the norms and standards required by the department/service in one or more of the areas as appropriate to the job requirement, the level of appointment and in line with the relevant academic role profile and job description it will also be agreed as part of the probationer's action plan.

This is not an exhaustive list.

1. Establish expected quantity and quality of published output and other outputs, including major works in progress and outputs accepted for publication/exhibition/performance.
2. Grants application, bid writing, tender writing and funding secured for research studentships.
3. Income generation.
4. Supervision of research project teams.
5. Research student supervision as agreed by Head of Department or equivalent Manager.
6. Progress towards the completion of a research degree, where agreed.
7. Research related administrative duties, where appropriate.
8. External involvement in the work of Professional Bodies and similar organisations.
9. Engagement in professional, business and or consultancy activity and income generation.

## C. CONTRIBUTION TO THE TEAM/DEPARTMENT/ UNIVERSITY

As appropriate to requirements of the role and level of responsibility

1. Active and productive involvement in administrative work e.g. assessment boards (within teaching, research and enterprise) within Team/Department/University.
2. Leadership responsibilities for developing others e.g. junior staff, research students through coaching and, or mentoring.
3. Leadership for areas of responsibility within the Team/Department/University.
4. Engagement and contribution in other forms of activity which may provide tangible benefits to the Team/Department/University.
5. Contribution to the Team/Department/University community in order to enhance all aspects of the student experience.

## D. GENERAL

The probationer will also be assessed in regard to their:

1. Delivery and adherence to contractual requirements
2. Working relationships with managers, colleagues and students
3. Overall suitability for the post

### 7. Induction/Training

The Head of Department or equivalent Manager will provide the probationer with details about the structure of the Department/School/University. They will also be responsible for providing a copy and working through the [Academic Staff Induction Checklist](#) with the probationer using the [Guidelines for Managers](#). There are some mandatory requirements as part of the Academic induction which is detailed in section

11. Mentoring arrangements should be confirmed as part of this process, the induction checklist should be signed off at the end of the induction/probation period.

In addition to this the Head of Department or equivalent Manager may identify other development opportunities for the probationer as identified as part of their development plan: such as copywriting for materials, student employability, on-Line learning (OASIS), handling student complaints and disciplinary procedures, strategic planning for academic staff, quality assurance and enhancement, assessment and feedback, the importance of research and enterprise; availability of learning resources; MISIS; Research supervision.

## **8. Probation Assessment Report and Review (Minimum 2 reviews)**

Aside from the induction meeting and following receipt of the written objectives, the Head of Department or equivalent Manager should have a minimum of two formal review meetings. The first formal probation review should take place with the Head of Department or equivalent Manager and the probationer after the first three months of appointment, in order to assess the probationer's on-going development and performance against the written objectives. The second review should occur after six months and no later than 8 weeks before the end of the probation period. Heads of Departments or equivalent managers will be expected to complete the academic probation report at the end of each review period (see [Appendix B](#)), which will be presented to the probationer for discussion, comment and agreement. It is expected that such issues would have been discussed during the probation period.

Assessment should include relevant progress and achievements within the main areas of work with reference to the probationer's action plan, job description and development plan. Any other relevant achievements outside of the specified areas of work should also be included. The Head of Department or equivalent Manager would be expected to consider other information such as teaching observations, student feedback forms and any other relevant achievement outside of the action plan.

### **A.SATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

If all objectives have been met, the Head of Department or equivalent Manager should discuss the achievement of the probationer's performance under the main areas of work listed under section 6 A-D. A summary report should be prepared and presented to the probationer for comment and agreement. The probationer will contribute to this through discussion and will also be expected to sign the report, with an opportunity to include appropriate comments regarding the content of the report.

At the final review there should be a discussion with the probationer about their time at Middlesex, the developments and progress they have made in relation to previous reviews. All standard and mandatory induction should be signed off. There should also be discussion about future objectives which will form part of their objectives for their appraisal in the following year. When the report is completed, agreed and has been signed by the Head of Department or equivalent Manager and the probationer, the Head of Department or equivalent Manager would also have to indicate whether they will be making a recommendation to confirm the appointment. The report will be forwarded to the Dean/Head of Service, who will meet with the probationer and the Head of Department or equivalent Manager to discuss the overall progress (See 9

below). Following approval by the Dean the recommendation would be sent to Human Resources who would confirm the appointment in writing.

## **B. UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS**

As early as possible in the review process, where the Head of Department or equivalent Manager considers progress to be unsatisfactory, he or she shall meet with the probationer following discussion with Human Resources (if required) to:

- Explain which aspects of the probationer's performance are considered to be unsatisfactory in relation to the action plan and the required standard.
- Obtain the probationer's commitment to meet the objectives and/or reach the required standard within an agreed timeline. This should be confirmed through agreeing and signing the review report.
- Determine whether the probationer requires any training, development, support, advice and or guidance and agree a course of action. This should be recorded in the review report.
- Explain to the probationer what will happen if the objectives and/or the performance standard (s) are not met.
- If an extension of the probation is expected the manager should complete the report in the normal way and forward to the Dean (See 9 below) (no later than 8 weeks before the existing probation end date). Following advice from the Dean/Head of Service the Head of Department or equivalent Manager should discuss the details with HR. The Head of Department or equivalent Manager and the HR Business Partner should meet with the probationer to explain the reasons for the extension. This will be communicated and confirmed in writing to the probationer stating the agreed shortfall, targets and timeline. Progress should be monitored by the Head of Department or equivalent Manager during this period.
- In cases of misconduct during a probationary period, the appointment may be brought to an end by using the appropriate procedure (Disciplinary) within the probation.

If following the final review the Head of Department or equivalent Manager decides that they will not be recommending confirmation of the appointment, this should be communicated to the probationer, who will have the opportunity to include any comment they may have on the final review report, it should be signed by the manager and the probationer. This report should be sent to the Dean for discussion and review. (See 9 below). If the decision from the Dean supports a termination, the procedure at 11 below will be followed.

## **9. Probation Meeting**

A. Following the final review, the Head of Department or equivalent Manager should forward the paperwork detailed at (B below) to the Dean or Head of Service, who will arrange to meet with the probationer and their line manager to discuss the final recommendation. The purpose of this meeting is for the Dean/Head of Service to meet with the probationer and to have an overview of the probations going through the School/Service ensuring consistency of assessment and raising questions to the Head of Department or equivalent Manager as appropriate. The Dean/Head of Service would be able to ratify the decision based on the evidence and discussion and can support the recommendation to confirm, extend or support a termination. The Probation meeting shall normally take place no later than 6 weeks before the end of the probationary period.



B. The Dean/Head of Service/DVC should receive the following documents

- all probation review reports(including signed induction paperwork)
- agreed action and probationer's development plan
- job description
- relevant supplementary evidence including student feedback forms, teaching observations and any other contributions.

#### **10. Extension of Probation**

Any extension should be in writing and should include an agreed action plan with SMART objectives and an outline of the support that will be provided during the period of the extension. An extension of up to three months' can be approved by the Dean/Head of Service and must be confirmed in writing by Human Resources. However, where an extension is expected to be longer than 3 months', the case should be referred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor to consider. In both instances the documentation presented is as detailed in 9B above and should include the reason(s) for the extension clearly indicating realistic objectives that performance standards have been clarified, and performance problems have been discussed and identified with the probationer. Progress should be monitored by the Head of Department or equivalent Manager in accordance with the timeline.

#### **11. Termination of appointment**

If the decision is to terminate, the following procedure will apply.

In conjunction with Human Resources, the panel will write to the probationer outlining their decision and the reasons for this. The details would have been discussed in the final review meeting. The consequences of unsatisfactory performance will be that a formal hearing will be convened.

Human Resources shall convene a hearing giving the probationer a minimum of 5 working days' notice. The hearing shall normally be arranged before the end of the probation period.

The hearing shall be chaired by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor with a member of Human Resources in attendance to provide advice.

A report shall be provided which will comprise:

1. A detailed report from the Head of Department or equivalent Manager clearly indicating the objectives set and agreed, a summary of the progress and the shortfall in performance
2. Copies of all relevant documentation relating to the probation as detailed in 9B above should be included.
4. Any other supporting evidence.

The probationer shall have the right to be accompanied at the hearing by another person who is either:

- a. A work colleague in the University
- b. A full-time official employed by a Trade Union: or
- c. An elected Trade Union official from UCU

- d. Another elected TU official from a Union which is not recognised by the University, so long as s/he has been reasonable certified in writing by his or her union as having experience of, or, as having received training in, this role at formal hearings.

The Head of Department or equivalent Manager and the probationer will be given an opportunity to make representations to the Chair of the Hearing. The decision could be to confirm in post, to extend or to terminate the appointment with one month's notice or with pay in lieu of one month's notice. This will be communicated in writing as soon as possible and within 5 working days of the hearing.

## **12. Appeals**

The probationer will be given the right to appeal against the decision to dismiss, and should do so by following the [Appeal against Dismissal procedure](#).

## **13. End of Probation/appraisal process**

At the end of the probationary period, probationers who are confirmed in post should integrate their achievements and objectives in discussion with their line manager into the University's appraisal procedure using the appraisal action and development plan.

*This Policy was developed through consultation with senior academic staff and the recognised Trade Union, UCU. It was approved by Executive at the Joint Union Consultation and Negotiation Committee on 2 February 2011; revised in October 2012 to reflect changes in the Appeal against dismissal procedure and is due for review in February 2016.*



# Appendix A

## ACADEMIC PROBATION ACTION PLAN

<b>Corporate / School Objectives</b>	<b>Objectives</b> <i>What are your agreed objectives?</i>	<b>Actions</b> What steps will you take to achieve these objectives?	<b>Outcome</b> How will you know these have been achieved?	<b>Key Dates</b> When by?	<b>Review</b> When?

Probationers Name:

Signature:

Head of Department:

Signature:

Date:

**ACADEMIC PROBATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

<i>Development need and expected outcomes</i>	<i>Suggested Development Solution</i>	<i>Priority: Essential / Desirable / Optional</i>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name:

Signature:

Probationers' Name:

Signature:

Date:

Agreed by the probationers line manager

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Comments:

## Appendix B

### Academic Probationer Review Report

There should be a minimum of 2 reviews for a 12 month probationary period. The first review should take place after the first 3 months of the appointment and the second review should occur no later than 8 weeks before the end of the probation period.

- This form guides you through the areas in which the probationer must achieve a satisfactory standard before being confirmed in post. It should be completed following each review. Line managers are advised to contact their HR Business Partner if they have any concerns regarding the process prior to commencing the review.

- **To be completed by the Head of Department or Manager:**

<b>Probationer's Name</b>	
<b>Probationer's job title</b>	
<b>Name of Head of Department</b>	
<b>Department/School</b>	
<b>Start date</b>	
<b>End date of probation period</b>	

*Using the Action Plan and job description, indicate whether overall assessment of performance is good, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. If performance is satisfactory but requires further support, clarification should be given. If performance is felt to be unsatisfactory, this must be clearly documented and evidence should be provided in the main areas of work.*

○ **TEACHING AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES (including scholarly activity) in line with 6A of the Probation Procedure**

Teaching

Evaluation

Teaching observations:

Observation 1: satisfactory/unsatisfactory    Observation 2: satisfactory/unsatisfactory

Include assessment of whether probationer is progressing satisfactorily on PGCert HE programme:

Areas of difficulty:

Indicate action required, timeline and whether specific training/ development is required. Who is responsible for organising this?

General comments:

○ **RESEARCH, CONSULTANCY AND BUSINESS OBJECTIVES in line with 6B of the Probation Procedure**

Consider performance against one or more of the above areas as appropriate and as detailed in the action/development plan:

Areas of achievement:

Areas of difficulty:

Indicate action required, timeline and whether specific training/ development is required. Who is responsible for organising this?

General comments:

○ **CONTRIBUTION TO THE TEAM/DEPARTMENT/UNIVERSITY in line with 6C of the Probation Procedure**

Areas of achievement:

Areas of difficulty:

Indicate action required, timeline and whether specific training/ development is required:

General comments:

▪ ***GENERAL in line with 6D of the Probation Procedure***

Attendance and time keeping:

Relationships with managers, colleagues and students:

Other, if relevant:

Areas of achievement:

Areas of difficulty:

Action needed by School (indicating if HR and Staff Training and Development need to be involved):

General comments:

**Objectives for the coming year**

Please list the objectives that have been agreed with the probationer:

**I have read and agree/disagree with the contents of the report:** (please sign and print name)

**Probationer**

**Name:**

**Date:**

**Signature:**

**Comments:**

**Report compiled by:** (please sign and print name)

**Head of Department**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I confirm that I have completed the Induction checklist including all mandatory sections with the probationer. Please tick to confirm**

**Recommendation(at final review):**

**Comments:**

**Summary:** Please tick the appropriate box for each area below.

	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory		Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and Learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contribution to the Team/Department/University	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	General Performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**This section is completed by the Dean or Head of Service**

**I recommend that the academic probationer post should be confirmed/should not be confirmed/should be extended (if reasonable prospect of improvement, state period, max 3 mths specify reasons) \*delete as appropriate (please sign and print name)**



<p>(i) <b>Dean of School/Head of Service</b></p> <p><b>Name:</b></p> <p><b>Date:</b></p>	<p><b>Signature:</b></p>
<p><b>Comments:</b></p>	

**Appendix 15****Produced by Human Resources**

2013

**Human Resources Policy Statement HRPS 1****CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR THE PROMOTION OF ACADEMIC STAFF****Intentions**

1. It is the University's policy to normally appoint academic staff new to academia to the Lecturer scale. Such staff are required to complete a satisfactory probation period before applying for promotion. Similarly, staff appointed on the grounds of their experience to the Senior or Principal Lecturer scale are required to complete a satisfactory [probationary period](#) before applying for promotion.
2. Lecturers (Grade 7) shall progress, through annual increments, to the Senior Lecturer (Grade 8) scale in accordance with national agreements. Similarly, Senior Lecturers and Principal Lecturers shall progress, through annual increments, to the top of their grade pay scale in accordance with national agreement.
3. In addition to normal progression within grade and between the Lecturer and Senior Lecturer grade, the University shall offer opportunities for accelerated promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer and for promotion from Senior Lecturer to Principal Lecturer. Such opportunities shall be offered within an annually agreed budget provided that this does not conflict with any formal or financial constraints imposed upon or otherwise faced by the University.
4. Within this context of budgetary constraint, it is recognised that promotion is competitive and that it is unlikely that, in any one year, all candidates who may be considered to meet the criteria will be promoted.

**General Criteria for Promotion**

5. Academic staff applying for promotion either by accelerated promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer or promotion from Senior Lecturer to Principal Lecturer are required to demonstrate and evidence their contribution, performance and achievement in teaching and learning (including scholarly activity) and **either** research, consultancy and business activity **or** contribution to the team, department and University, at the level expected by the [academic role profile](#) and [job description](#) for which they are applying.

**Promotion from Senior Lecturer to Principal Lecturer**

6. Applicants are required to submit a letter of application and the following:

- a) A current Curriculum Vitae produced in the Middlesex University House Style (as set out in Appendix 1)
- b) A statement of no more than 3,000 words that provides a coherent claim for excellence at the level expected of a Principal Lecturer for teaching and of learning (including scholarly activity) and **either** research, consultancy and business activity **or** contribution to the team, department school and/or University. The statement should link to carefully selected material that provides evidence of achievement at the expected level.
- c) Two recent (within the last 18 months) teaching observations must be included these must have been undertaken specifically for promotion purposes.
- d) The names and contact details of three referees including their current line manager, an external referee and one other.

7. Applicants are advised to be careful in their selection of evidence to support their application. It is the quality of the evidence provided and the way in which it supports the statement that is important, not the volume of evidence provided.

8. The following section provides examples of evidence that may be useful to include, but this is not exhaustive.

- **Teaching and learning (Including scholarly activity)**

Applicants are advised to revisit Academic Policy Statement APS 12 [The Measurement and Reward of Excellence in Teaching and the Support of Learning](#) and to consider this in relation to the level of academic post they are applying.

- **Research, Consultancy and Business Activity**

Demonstration and evidence of excellence at the level expected by a Principal Lecturer in this area might include:- publication of papers and contribution to symposia and workshops based on original work; publication of specialist books, reviews and report; public exhibition or performance of original work; successful supervision of research projects/research students; consultancy resulting in major reports; evidence of external networks; liaison with industrial, commercial, public sector or voluntary organisations which have brought tangible benefits to the University; conference organisation; income generation; membership of external panels and committees; the design and development of new products and the establishment of knowledge transfer partnerships; and successful development and co-ordination of CPD Activities and non traditional programmes and learning events.

- **Contribution to the team, department and University**

Demonstration and evidence of excellence at the level expected by a Principal Lecturer in this area might include:- significant, active and productive involvement in the administrative work of the School, for example:- programme management, curriculum/academic leadership or similar responsibilities; cross institutional contributions (University task groups or committees); major contribution to student counselling and welfare; liaison with industrial, commercial, public sector or voluntary organisations which have brought tangible benefits to the University; significant external involvement in the work of professional bodies and similar organisations, with tangible benefits to the University; other forms of external involvement including external examining or

moderation or committee membership; involvement in income generating activities and educational liaison with Schools, Colleges and partner institutions.

9. The finished statement should be presented in a loose leaf A4 folder. Wherever possible the use of plastic sleeves should be avoided.

### **Progression from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer**

10. To progress beyond incremental point 37 (Lecturer Grade 7) (effective from 1 August) work and efficiency criteria must be satisfied.

11. For the purposes of progression to Senior Lecturer, the efficiency requirement means that staff must be undertaking their duties to the University's satisfaction and must be displaying attributes commensurate with the Senior Lecturer role.

12. It is important that this criteria continues to be implemented with rigour. Accordingly, the scheme is:

- Annually, Human Resource Services will inform Deans of School and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic, when staff are approaching the L to SL efficiency point;
- Heads of Department will be required to provide Deans with a justification for staff progression beyond the efficiency point. This must include evidence of two recent (ie: within the last 18 months) teaching observations, undertaken specifically for the purposes of promotion and a current Curriculum Vitae (see Appendix 1);
- Deans will forward the comments of the Heads of Department and advise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic of their recommendations; and
- In cases where progression is not recommended, Deans will advise the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic of actions that need to be taken prior to progression being reconsidered.

13. It is important that the efficiency requirements are met prior to transfer taking place.

14. **Additionally**, to be eligible for consideration for progression to the Senior Lecturer scale, academic staff must provide evidence of having obtained the award of PGCertHE (or equivalent) at the time of consideration. Those staff who are expected to complete their PGCertHE studies by September of the new academic year and whose studies are understood to be satisfactory and continuing at the time of consideration (i.e.: spring of the previous year), and assuming that they have met the necessary criteria, will be put forward for progression to the Senior Lecturer scale.

15. On receipt of the results of their PGCertHE studies, and assuming that these studies have been successfully completed, they will transfer to the Senior Lecturer scale. Any member of lecturing staff who fails or defers their studies will be allowed to transfer to the Senior Lecturer scale but will be held at the progression point until such time as they successfully complete the PGCertHE.

### Accelerated Promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer

16. Staff who wish to be considered for Accelerated Promotion must:

- Have their Heads of Departments provide Deans with a justification for staff accelerated promotion. This must include evidence of two recent (i.e.: within the last 18 months) teaching observations, undertaken specifically for the purposes of promotion and a current Curriculum Vitae (see Appendix 1);
- Evidence of having obtained the award of PGCertHE(or equivalent).
- Have completed the required probationary period.
- Be on spine point 34 or above.
- In addition to a current Curriculum Vitae (in the format set out at Appendix 1), a written statement of no more than 3000 words that provides a coherent claim for excellence at the level expected of a Senior Lecturer for teaching and learning (including scholarly activity) and **either** research, consultancy and business activity **or** contribution to the team, department school and/or University. The statement should link to carefully selected material that provides evidence of achievement at the expected level.
- Provide the names of three referees of which at least one should be external to the University.
- Following shortlisting, be interviewed by the Shortlisting Panel

17. Application for Accelerated Promotion will be invited annually, through Deans of School and through public announcement via the Intranet, providing this does not conflict with any formal or financial constraints imposed upon or otherwise faced by the University. Promotions shall normally be awarded in July of each year and shall become effective from 1<sup>st</sup> September each year.

18. Candidates for promotion are strongly advised to discuss their applications with the Dean of School and Head of Department prior to submitting their application.

### Consideration of Applications

19. Initially applications for promotion shall be considered at School level by a Shortlisting Panel comprising:

- The Dean of School (Chair and convenor);
- A Dean of another School;
- A representative from the School;
- A representative from another School; and
- Others as appropriate agreed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic

20. Deans of School shall present detailed written comments on candidates against the specified criteria.

21. Panels shall also have a minimum of two references on each candidate at the time of shortlisting. The Panel shall recommend to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic a shortlist of candidates for interview. In agreeing a shortlist, the School Panel shall ensure that each case is judged against the published criteria and shall record the reasons for not shortlisting candidates.

22. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic shall receive copies of all applications, references, the Dean of School's written comments and the reasons for not shortlisting candidates. He shall approve the final shortlist of candidates for interview.

23. Candidates who are not shortlisted for promotion to Senior Lecturer or to Principal Lecturer shall be fully and honestly counselled by the Dean of School who shall clearly indicate to him/her their shortcomings in the application. They shall also receive in writing the reason(s) for non-shortlisting. The importance of honest counselling as part of the promotion process cannot be overstated.

24. Shortlisted candidates for Accelerated Promotion from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer shall be interviewed following approval of the shortlist by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

25. Following interview, the Panel shall agree recommendations to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic who shall confirm the accelerated promotions provided that they are within budget. Unsuccessful candidates who have been interviewed shall be fully and honestly counselled by the Dean of School.

26. Shortlisted candidates for promotion from Senior Lecturer to Principal Lecturer shall be interviewed by a University-wide Panel comprising:

- Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic (Chair)
- The Dean of School (Convenor);
- Deans of Schools, as appropriate;

27. Following interview, the University-wide Panel shall agree recommendations for promotion in rank order. Candidates not recommended for promotion shall be fully and honestly counselled by the appropriate Dean of School who shall clearly indicate to the candidates the reasons for the Panel's recommendations.

28. Applications for promotion from academic staff based within a Corporate Service shall be considered using equivalent procedures. The membership of shortlisting and interview panels shall be agreed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic.

**These criteria were approved by the Chair of the Academic Board on 13 February 2012.**

## Appendix 1

### Content of Curriculum Vitae

#### Name

- Family name; given names
- Current post
- Title, grade
- Name of School or Service
- Membership of University and/or Faculty/Research Centre(s)
- Membership of School Research Group(s)

#### Education

- Secondary School(s) and/or FE College(s)
  - attended
  - dates
- Higher Education Institution(s)
  - attended
  - dates
  - mode of study

#### Qualifications

- first degree(s)
- postgraduate taught qualification
- research degree(s)
- higher research degree(s)
- honorary award(s)

Providing for each:

- full award title and class of honours (if any)
- title of thesis (for research degree(s))
- awarding body (for example, University; OUVS)
- date of award
- professional qualification(s)
  - full name of qualification and abbreviation
  - awarding body (for example, full title of professional body)
  - date of award

#### Membership of Professional Bodies and Learned Societies

- membership of professional body(ies) and/or membership of learned society(ies)
  - name of professional body
  - grade of membership
  - date of membership

**Career details**

- previous employment history giving for each post or appointment starting with the most recent prior to the
- current post
  - dates
  - employer
  - post title
- secondments, giving dates, name of organisation seconded to, activities of secondment
- Research and scholarly activity
- Details of research and scholarly interests (up to 40 key words)
- Public output from research and scholarly activity (See Appendix 2)

**Research supervision**

- provide details of students and
  - supervisory role (for example, Director of Studies; Second Supervisor; Adviser)
  - thesis title
  - date of award (if completed)

**Teaching**

- details of main areas of teaching interest (up to 40 key words)
- modules taught in previous year
- Pedagogic interests
  - details of main areas of pedagogic interest (Including assessment; teaching methods; and open learning techniques)
  - indication of how these interests are being pursued (for example, staff development; research initiatives;
  - membership of organisations) outputs (for example, open learning package with details)

**Membership of University committee(s) and task group(s)**

- details of membership of University Committees or Task Groups (during the last five years)
  - name of Committee or Task Group
  - dates
  - any specific role (for example, chair; convenor; chair of sub-committee)

**Administrative roles**

- list of administrative roles during last five years
  - title of role (for example, Set Leader for X; Assessment Tutor for Y)



– dates

### **Relevant external activities**

- Professional Body Committees or roles ) In all cases indicate name of
- Government Committees or roles ) Committee, dates of
- Learned Society Committees or roles ) membership and other
- Universities (UK), HEFCE and similar Committees or roles ) special role (for example
- School/College/University Governance Committee ) Chair)
- other committees or roles )

### **Media experience**

- television ) in all cases, indicate
- radio ) experience, details of
- film/video ) experiences of publicity (with
- productions/exhibitions ) dates; venues)and any other
- journalism ) relevant details

### **Consultancy**

in all cases, indicate in all cases, indicate consultancy activity

- dates
- authorised title of report (may be withheld)
- client (may be withheld)
- values of consultancy

### **Industrial links**

- details of links
  - nature of links (consultancy/advisory)
  - link arrangements
  - dates

### **External examining experience**

- for each taught course give
  - name of course
  - institution
  - dates
  - role (for example, External Examiner; Chief External Examiner)
- for research degree(s) and/or higher degree (s) give
  - award
  - institution
  - dates
  - role (for example, External Examiner; Internal Examiner)

### **Research grants and awards**

- list of research grants and awards including travel
  - grant awarded to (cite c-workers)
  - grant body
  - dates and period of award (for example, 1991-94)
  - value



### **Overseas links**

- teaching related links (for example, ERASMUS; LINGUA) and/or (2) research links
  - link institution
  - nature of link (for example, (1) ICE; JEP; exchange; pedagogic research and/or (2) joint grant; joint research project
  - name of link person
  
- please specify any other overseas links

### **Any other relevant information**

- Please provide any other relevant information always indicating who or what was involved and dates.

## Appendix 2

### Standardised listing of details of public output from research and scholarly activity

Details of the public output from research and scholarly activity should be provided in full under the following headings and format.

- Authored books: author(s); year of publication; title of book; publisher; place of publication; number of pages.
- Books edited by the candidate: editor(s); year of publication; title of book; publisher; place of publication; number of pages.
- Articles and chapters in edited books: author(s) (of article); year of publication; title of article; (in) title of book; (edited by) editor(s); publisher; place of publication; first and last pages.
- Refereed articles in Academic Journals: author(s); year of publication; title of article; journal; volume (and number if appropriate); first and last pages.
- Other refereed articles: (for example, articles in professional journals and popular but serious journals where refereed): author(s); year of publication; title of article; title of publication; volume or equivalent; first and last pages.
- Non-refereed articles: author(s) year of publication; title of article; title of publication; volume or equivalent; first and last pages.
- Refereed and published conference proceedings\* (that is, published papers arising from conferences which have been refereed): author(s); year of publication; title of article; title of conference proceedings; volume (if appropriate) first and last pages; conference organisers and/or publishers; place of publication; venue of conference
- Other refereed and/or non-published conference contributions\*: author(s); year of publication; title of presentation or abstract; conference organisers; venue of conference.
- Exhibitions: exhibitor(s) (that is, sole or group); title of exhibition; venue; dates; title(s) and/or number of exhibited works; details of any published critique of the exhibition.
- Review articles (excluding book reviews): author(s); year of publication; title of review; (published in) title of publication; edited by (if appropriate); refereed or not; publisher; place of publication; first and last pages.

- Books reviews: author of book review; title of book reviewed; author of book; review published in (name of publication); year, volume and number (or exact date) of publication; first and last pages.
- Official reports (for example, consultancy reports; report of chaired external committees); author(s); year of publication; title of report; report commissioned by whom; first and last pages.
- Departmental working papers and University series: author(s); year of publication; title of article; working paper/series title (if any); publisher; first and last pages.
- Other forms of public output: (for example, production; direction; choreography) musical works; works of art; computer programmes): provide details including details of any published critique of the work.
- Editorships (that is, journal editor or series editor not edited books above): details of journal or series edited; year(s) of editorship; publisher; place of publication.

\* conferences include learned societies; professional bodies; seminars; symposia; and similar activities.

**Appendix 16****University Teaching Fellowship and Senior Teaching Fellowship Awards****Guidance for Applicants****1. The aims and purpose of the Teaching Fellowship scheme**

The scheme aims to recognise and reward outstanding performance in teaching and supporting learning, and to progress this work by creating a community of practice whereby following appointment, Teaching Fellows will lead and innovate learning and teaching practice across the University.

The principles of the scheme are that:

- Teaching Fellowships are awarded on the basis of outstanding practice in teaching and/or supporting learning
- Selection is made against clear criteria
- Teaching Fellowships are rewarded by access to funds for professional development
- Teaching Fellows will continue with their normal duties, but following their award will also contribute to the development of good teaching and learning support practices and the promotion of the UK Professional Standards for Learning and Teaching within their School/Service and across the University.

**2. The role and responsibilities of the Fellow**

There are two levels of fellowship: **Teaching Fellow** and **Senior Teaching Fellow**, recognising different levels of experience and expertise.

These awards are made in recognition of past and current expertise and excellence. They also denote the holder as someone who, in addition to continuing their teaching role, will contribute to the further enhancement of learning and teaching within the University.

Fellowships therefore carry both rewards and responsibilities.

Successful applicants will be entitled to use the title '**Teaching Fellow** or '**Senior Teaching Fellow**', as appropriate, while employed at Middlesex University.

The award of a Teaching Fellowship or a Senior Teaching Fellowship also entitles the holder to a **Learning Account**, £1000 p.a. for 3 years, or the duration of fixed term employment, to be used for personal development activity of their choice.

Teaching Fellows and Senior Teaching Fellows will be eligible to be considered as a possible University nominee for a National Teaching Fellowship, the University Fellowship scheme will be the principal source of University nominees for the NTFS. The selection of the University NTFS nominees will be undertaken at the annual University Teaching Fellowships panel.

These reward elements will be subject to Fellows remaining in good standing and the submission of a brief end of year report detailing their contribution to the development of the learning and teaching community Teaching Fellows will continue to spend the majority of their work time engaged in teaching or the support of learning.

The **responsibilities of Teaching Fellows** will include:

- Participation in learning and teaching projects and initiatives, as a school or University representative, where such roles are identified or initiated by the Dean/Head of Service
- Work closely with Deputy Deans, Heads of Service and Learning and Teaching Strategy Leaders, for example, as part of relevant committees, advisory groups, project teams and working groups
- Play a major role in encouraging the spread of good practice and embedding of the UK Professional Standards Framework both in their School/Service and across the University
- Be ambassadors of good practice for the University and their School/Service and/or subject in institutional and national arenas
- Act as mentors for applicants for future Fellowship Awards
- Form a cross-institutional team, facilitated by CLTE, which helps to support the development and implementation of good practice in teaching and supporting learning
- Contribute individually to appropriate professional development activities organised by their School/Service and by CLTE

The responsibilities of a Teaching Fellowship will normally occupy approximately 0.05 of their work (equating to approximately 1 day per month for full-time staff)

Senior Teaching Fellows will continue to spend the majority of their work time engaged in teaching or the support of learning.

In addition, in negotiation with their Deputy Dean/Head of Service and the Head of Learning and Teaching, they will:

- undertake the same roles/responsibilities as Teaching Fellows, detailed above
- be ambassadors of good practice for Middlesex in national and international arenas
- lead a particular innovation, investigation or research in pedagogy, of value to the University

The responsibilities of a Senior Teaching Fellow are expected to occupy approximately 0.1 of their work duties (equating to approximately 2 days per month for full-time staff)

### 3. Eligibility for Fellowship

Staff are eligible to apply for a Teaching Fellowship if they have been employed in a School or academic support service of the University (including International Campuses) for over one year on a contract of at least 0.2fte, in a position in which they have been able to claim a distinct and positive impact on students' learning.

They may be permanently employed in an academic, technician, support or administrative role, as long as they are able to provide evidence of impacting positively on the learning of students. Staff on fixed term contracts who are able to demonstrate the criteria are eligible to apply.

### 4. The process in outline

The process begins with a call for expressions of interest. (Annex B)

Staff self-nominate and must identify themselves to their School Learning and Teaching Strategy Leader or Head of service.

All nominees will be invited to join a workshop to explore the application process and role of Middlesex Teaching Fellowships. Attendance at one of the workshops is an essential pre-requisite for application

Nominees will be allocated a mentor from the existing Fellows who they will be expected to work with as part of the application process



Each nominee must discuss their application and obtain a letter in support of their application from their Dean or Head of Service.

Applicants are asked to submit claim for Fellowship of 5000 words, addressing the Teaching Fellowship criteria (Annex A) accompanied by a relevant CV (in the University template), and a statement in support of their application from their Dean or Head of Service.

Candidates must submit their application to the Head of Learning and Teaching, CLTE, by the deadline date (Annex 3)

Initially applications will be reviewed by the University ELTA (Enhancing Learning, Teaching and Assessment) Team panel comprising the University Learning and Teaching Strategy Leaders, and Learning Support representatives.

This Panel decides which candidates to recommend to the University Fellowships Panel.

Fellowships are awarded by the University Fellowship Panel.

The University Fellowship Panel membership will be:

- DV-C Academic (Chair)
- Director of Learning & Teaching and Deputy Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching Enhancement
- Head of Learning and Teaching
- Two Deputy Deans
- Two Teaching Fellows (University or National)
- External Adviser

## 5. The submission

The criteria for **Teaching Fellowship** require applicants to articulate their claim for excellence in a 5000 word statement. The statement should take the form of a reflective account and detail evidence in support of their claim, their impact on teaching and the support of learning and consider their personal development and learning achieved.

Claims and evidence for three aspects of excellence are sought that reflects a balanced contribution to each of the following areas

- Individual excellence
- Raising the profile of excellence
- Developing excellence

The criteria for **Senior Teaching Fellowships** are designed to recognise further development in the three aspects of excellence. They reflect the expectation that a Senior Teaching Fellow has sustained and developed their recognised practice since being

awarded a Fellowship. Candidates will be expected in particular to show a wider and deeper impact on raising the profile of excellence and developing their own engagement with scholarship and research in teaching and learning.

(Please see Annex A for details of criteria for both Teaching Fellows and Senior Teaching Fellows)

The nature and quality of evidence supplied by candidates is crucial. Most applicants will have records and sources of evidence on which to draw, and the main task for the applicant will be writing the submission, and organising the examples of evidence so that the links with the criteria and the claim are clear. It is important that claims are evidenced by appropriate student feedback, peer review, external examiners, professional bodies, internal and external learning and teaching data sets and other relevant sources.

Each applicant has the opportunity to consult a mentor, who can advise on effective presentation.

### **Submission for the award of Teaching Fellowship**

Applicants should supply the following as 3 separate word documents:

- Brief Curriculum Vitae (maximum 3 pages) within the University template using relevant headings, particularly focusing on aspects of the applicant's experience which are clearly related to teaching and learning support.
- Claim for University Teaching Fellowship: a statement of how the individual demonstrates excellence in each of the three award criteria, and citing evidence to support the claim. In the case of teaching staff, this should incorporate reflection upon evidence from at least 2 recent teaching observations. The claim must be 5000 words maximum including references, text only and presented in Arial 11pt, double spaced. No appendices will be accepted. Applications exceeding 5000 words will not be considered.
- Statement of support from the Dean or Head of Service, which is to be sent directly to the Head of Learning and Teaching, CLTE.

### **Submission for the award of Senior Teaching Fellowship**

Applicants should supply the following as separate word documents:

- Brief Curriculum Vitae (maximum 3 pages) within the University template using relevant headings, particularly focusing on aspects of the applicants' experience which are clearly related to teaching and learning support.
- Claim for University Senior Teaching Fellowship: a statement of how the individual demonstrates excellence in each of the three award criteria, and citing evidence to support the claim. In the case of teaching staff, this should incorporate reflection upon evidence from at least 2 recent teaching observations. In particular evidence for Senior Fellowship should show increased scholarship, influence and professional recognition which are clearly related to teaching and learning support. The claim must be 5000 words maximum including references, text only, and presented in Arial 11pt, double spaced.) No appendices will be accepted. Applications exceeding 5000 words will not be considered.
- Reflective Summary : Detailing the applicant's reflection upon their professional development and contribution as a University Teaching Fellow (max 1000 words).

- Dissemination Summary: a list of contributions to national or international events or publications, focused on the enhancement of the teaching, as assessment and the support of learning.
- Statement of support from their Dean or Head of Service, which is to be sent directly to the Head of Learning and Teaching, CLTE.

NB. In line with NTFS procedures, submissions which exceed the stated length, or do not adhere to the type specification will be rejected by panels.

## Annex A – Criteria for University Teaching Fellowship Awards

### Criteria for Teaching Fellow

#### Individual excellence

1. Evidence of promoting and enhancing the student learning experience.

#### Raising the profile of excellence

2. Evidence of supporting colleagues and influencing support for student learning in (and if appropriate beyond) your institution, through demonstrating impact and engagement beyond your immediate academic or professional role.

#### Developing excellence

3. Commitment to your ongoing professional development with regard to teaching and learning (and/or learning support).

### Criteria for Senior Teaching Fellow

The criteria for Senior Teaching Fellowship reflect the expectation that a Senior Teaching Fellow can demonstrate sustained excellence over time, continued professional learning and development, and increased influence and professional recognition for teaching.

#### Individual excellence

- 1 Evidence of maintaining and building on the enhancement of student learning experience which was recognised in the award of a Teaching Fellowship.

#### Raising the profile of excellence

2. Evidence of continued supporting of colleagues and influencing support for student learning in and beyond the institution, through demonstrating impact and engagement beyond your immediate academic or professional role.

#### Developing excellence

3. Sustained commitment to your ongoing professional development with regard to teaching and learning (and/or learning support).

**Annex B – Teaching Fellowship Expression of Interest**

Name:

Current Role:

School / Service:

Department:

I have discussed this application and my intention to apply with .....

(eg; DoP, HoD, Line manager, Head of Service).....

Learning and Teaching Strategy Leader/ Head of Service:

Workshop Date:

I will be attending the following workshop:

Tues 25 Sept 12-2 Hendon

Thurs 27 Sept 12-2 Hendon

Mon 15 Oct 12-2 Hendon

Weds 17 Oct 10-12 Hendon

Email Address:

To be submitted to LTSL/Head of Service by in line with Annex C: Teaching Fellowship Calendar

Annex C – Teaching Fellowship Calendar			
Month	Teaching Fellowship Processes	Responsibility	Deadline
July to Sept 2012	<b>Teaching Fellow Mentor Workshops</b> <b>Tues 4 Sept 12-2</b> <b>Mon 10 Sept 1-3</b> <b>Weds 19 Sept 10-12</b>  <b>Publish by TF circulation list</b>	HoLT	Publish by 27 July 2012
Sept 2012 to  -Oct 2012	<b>First intranet announcement inviting staff to express interest in applying and linking to guidelines including –</b>  <b>Publication of workshop dates:</b> <b>Tues 25 Sept 12-2 Hendon</b> <b>Thurs 27 Sept 12-2 Hendon</b> <b>Mon 15 Oct 12-2 Hendon</b> <b>Weds 17 Oct 10-12 Hendon</b>  <b>Second intranet announcement</b> <b>Prospective applicants, attend a workshop, identify themselves to, register interest and discuss application with their School Learning and Teaching Strategy Leader/ Head of Service.</b>	HoLT   LTSLs to circulate in schools & HoLT to services	Onto Intranet w/c  10 Sept 2012 for 2 weeks         8 Oct 2012 for 2 weeks  2Nov 2011
Nov 2012	Deadline by which prospective candidates confirm to Learning and Teaching Strategy Leader/Head of Service their intention to apply	Applicants	9 Nov 2011
	Mentors allocated.	HoLT/LTSLs	16Nov 2012
Feb 2013	Final deadline for applicants to submit applications to Head of Learning and Teaching, CLTE	Applicants	1 March 2013

Mar 2013	Statements in support of Applicant to the Head of Learning and Teaching	Deans/Heads of Service	8 March 2013
Mar 2013	Initial panel meet to review applications and recommend applicants to the University Teaching Fellowship Awards panel	ELTA Team	Weds 20 March 2013
Mar 2013	Head of Learning and Teaching co-ordinates feedback for unsuccessful applicants to present to the University TF Panel	HoLT	25 March 2013
April 2013	University Teaching Fellowship Awards Panel meets	DVC/HoLT	Tues 16 April 2013
April 2013	Feedback to all applicants	DVC/HoLT	20 April 2013

## Appendix 17

### February 2013

Agenda for the School of Science and Technology **Validation** of the Bachelor of Science Computer Science (BSc CS) programme.

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#### To the Participants

This validation event will take on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at the Middlesex University Hendon Campus, Room C212, College Building, The Burroughs, London, NW4 4BT.

Relevant papers and agenda are enclosed.

If you have any queries concerning this event, please contact me on 44 (0) 20 8411 5011 or by e-mail [s.wellstead@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:s.wellstead@mdx.ac.uk). Additionally if members have special dietary requirements, please let me know as soon as possible so that catering arrangements can be made.

Sue Wellstead

Quality Enhancement Manger (Officer for this event), School of Science and Technology

Tel: 00 44 (0) 20 8411 5011

Email: [s.wellstead@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:s.wellstead@mdx.ac.uk)



1.	<b>Panel Chair:</b>	<b>Dr Heather Clay</b> – Deputy Dean Business School, Middlesex University
	<b>University Representative:</b>	<b>Carole Davis</b> – Principal Lecturer & Programme Leader MA Higher Education, Educational Development Unit, Centre for Learning and Teaching Enhancement
	<b>External Assessor:</b>	<b>Prof Peter Smith</b> – Emeritus Professor of Computing, University of Sunderland
	<b>External Assessor:</b>	<b>Raymond Farmer</b> – Associate Dean, Faculty of Engineering and Computing, Coventry University
	<b>Officer:</b>	<b>Sue Wellstead</b> – Quality Enhancement Manager, School of Science and Technology, Middlesex University
2.	<b>Senior Staff:</b>	<p><b>Prof Martin Loomes</b> – Dean, School of Science and Technology</p> <p><b>Prof Balbir Barn</b> – Deputy Dean, School of Science and Technology</p> <p><b>Prof Tony Clarke</b> – Head of Department, Computer Science</p>
3.	<b>Programme Team:</b>	<p><b><i>First Year Academic Team:</i></b>  Tony Clark  Ed Currie  Bob Fields  Florian Kammuller  Martin Loomes  Rui Loureiro  Franco Raimondi</p> <p><b><i>Second Year Academic Team:</i></b>  Web Applications and Databases: Ralph Moseley  Software Development: Franco Raimondi  Software Development Projects: Ed Currie  Distributed Systems and Networking: Florian Kammuller</p> <p><b><i>Final Year Academic Team:</i></b>  AI: Chris Huyck  Social, Professional and Ethical Issues in Information Systems: Penny Duquenoy  Final Year Project: Chris Sadler  Graphics and Visualisation: Peter Passmore  Novel Interaction Technologies: Bob Fields  Open Source Software: Jaap Boender  Quantum Information processing: Rajagopal Nagarajan  Social Network Analysis and Visual analytics: Ian Mitchell  User Centred Design: Bob Fields</p>
4.	<b>Support Staff:</b>	<b>Barry Harte</b> – School Technical Manager



	or a response to any recommendations.
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**Documentation**

Paper 0	Agenda
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**Book 1**

Paper 1	Officer Paper on the Context of the Event
Paper 2	Overview Document describing the operation of the proposed programme
Paper 3	Programme Handbook
Paper 4	QAA Subject Benchmarks, Qualification Framework PSRB
Paper 5	Curriculum Design – Academic Policy Statement APS18 <a href="http://www.mdx.ac.uk/Assets/APS18%20%20Curriculum%20Design%20-%20Approved%20Nov2011.pdf">http://www.mdx.ac.uk/Assets/APS18%20%20Curriculum%20Design%20-%20Approved%20Nov2011.pdf</a>
Paper 6	Draft text of the proposed programmes' marketing material
Paper 7	Staff Handbook
Paper 8	Evaluation of a Validation Questionnaire

**Book 2 – to be circulated to panel members only**

Paper 9	Programme Staff CVs
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**Book 3 – to be circulated to internal panel members only**

Paper 10	Academic Programme Planning Application (APPG) Form and APPG Minute of approval for the proposal
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**Additionally for External Panel Members**

- Link to Middlesex University Regulations  
<http://www.mdx.ac.uk/aboutus/strategy/regulations/index.aspx>
- MU Validation/Review Report Template
- MU Validation, Review and modifications
- MU Roles and Responsibilities of Panel Members
- MU Diversity in relation to Validation and Review
- Expenses Claim form

Sue Wellstead  
Officer for this event

## BSc Computer Science

# Programme Overview

Author:

Tony Clark  
Ed Currie  
Bob Fields  
Florian Kammüller  
Martin Loomes  
Rui Loureiro  
Ralph Moseley  
Franco Raimond

January 25, 2013

## 1 Background

Middlesex has been running a number of undergraduate programmes under the 'Computing' benchmark for many years. Prior to 2005 these were based on three campus, geographically dispersed across north London, with three distinct groups of staff delivering a modular curriculum, and the added complication of a number of partnerships around the world. In 2005 the University brought the three groups together on the Hendon campus for the first time. In 2007 the University introduced a new learning framework for all of its provision, requiring major restructuring of all of our programmes, a highly complex task due to the numerous global partnerships. The School took the decision at that stage to focus attention on restructuring existing provision, rather than making radical changes to content or approach, retaining the three academic groups as three separate departments working collaboratively to support this provision within the School of Computing.

In 2010 the University took the strategic decision to develop STEM areas explicitly, culminating in the creation of the new School of Science and Technology in 2012, the bringing together on one campus all elements of the School, and the creation of new laboratory facilities to support future developments as well as existing provision. The School took the opportunity this offered to create a Department of Computer Science (bringing together the two previous departments of Business Information Systems and Computing and Multimedia Technology) together with a Department of Computer and Communications Engineering, and to carry out a radical re-appraisal of its programmes offered under the Computing benchmark. Although this document pertains to the proposed Computer Science BSc, we will briefly outline the thinking that led to the total suite of programmes, as this explains some of the decision taken, and important principles underpinning the curriculum design.

## 2 Motivation for Change

The previous suite of programmes was modular, with considerable sharing of modules. This approach was efficient (in cost terms), offered flexibility to students, was well-suited to variants being made available for partnerships and supported a standard approach of specialism developing towards the final year. It delivered year-on-year improvements against virtually every indicator used internally and externally (satisfaction, progression, achievement, sustainability, etc). In spite of this, there were several problems inherent in the approach, which led us to believe that moving from the satisfactory levels we have achieved to our aspirational levels of excellence may be difficult. In particular:

1. First year modules were necessarily general across a broad range of programmes, leading to some students feeling that they were not being extended in the specialist area they were interested in.
2. Achieving satisfactory progression levels required learning outcomes that were suitable for all students on modules. In particular, where a particular programme might benefit from specialist foundational material, this was often left until later years.
3. Pedagogy was largely determined within modules, making it difficult to achieve a culture and ethos suitable for particular programme areas.
4. Students were largely left to synthesise material across modules in unsupported ways (as the first year was not entirely common, so no assumptions could be made about what else was being studied concurrently).

5. Continuous development of the curriculum was difficult, as changes could only be made if it was appropriate for, and accepted by, all programmes, and groups of students, including those at partner institutions. This has become a significant problem as the Department has made the move towards a research-intensive environment (approx. 70% of the staff are now deemed at a level appropriate for entry to the REF). Feeding research into teaching at all levels in a systematic way was inhibited as change was so complex. This was particularly limiting for Computer Science, as we will explain below.

### 3 New Programmes

In 2011, we decided to embark on a total rethink of our provision, designed to simplify our offering, reducing the number of variants that had evolved over the years, and developing programmes that were distinct in content, ethos, approach, pedagogy and style. This was a major undertaking, and we allowed two years for the development, so that we could explore options, develop staff and facilities, prototype technologies etc. The outcome was a new offering comprising:

**Business Information Systems** focused on the needs of organisations, using vocabulary, concepts and technology currently found in such settings, and a curriculum structure mapping to ways that organisations develop architectures for information systems.

**Information Technology** focused on typical technical infrastructure currently found in large organisations.

**Computer Forensics** a specialist programme focussed on the analysis of Computing artefacts for tackling cybercrime etc.

#### **Computer and Network Engineering**

**Computer Science** described in organized as a small suite of engineering-based programmes. detail in this document.

Specific pedagogic distinctions were made between these developments. In particular:

1. Students on BIS and IT degrees have expectations that degree content will have surface similarity to things encountered in business. They expect to be motivated from the outset by illustrations of how things are applied in this world.
2. 'Theory' is essential to students on all programmes, but the ways this is articulated and packaged may vary considerably. For BIS and IT programmes, it is sensible to use theory to explain technology and its use in organisations - the coherence, integrity and motivation is embedded in this environment. For Computer Science, however, we have taken the decision that students need to be exposed to a small, but coherent and explicit. core of theory from the outset, and become confident and fluent in its use throughout their studies.
3. The benchmark statement makes explicit that Computing is problem-driven. This is obvious in the BIS and IT developments (as the problems provide the organisational settings concerned). For Computer Science, we have adopted the view that students should be taught through a problem-driven curriculum, in the sense that teaching order should be informed by disciplinary conventions, but students should be engaged in problem-solving that draws things together throughout.

4. All developments should encourage thick placement opportunities. This means that students must be prepared for serious employment by the end of level 5. For the CS programme, this has led to a curriculum where all of the learning outcomes have been covered by this stage, with final year options concentrating on broadening the range of expertise, and the final year project pulling many skills together.
5. One of the challenges facing Computing programmes is the rapid pace of change of technology and application areas. Moreover, as the School has built its research activity considerably in recent years, our capability to teach at the forefront of these developments has increased, and continues to do so. For a programme development that could be expected to last for ten years, this poses a particular problem for final year options, where the range of areas covered can, and should, be reviewed constantly. For the CS degree, our solution to this is to design a curriculum where all final year options contribute to the same three programme learning outcomes, allowing for a constantly-changing set of options without any changes to the fundamental nature of the programme.

## 4 Computer Science First Year

We have taken a novel approach to the design of the Computer Science First Year that aims to provide a challenging and stimulating introduction to the subject. This section describes the motivation and organization of our approach.

### 4.1 Assessment

Progression and retention rates, and also overall achievement, for our Computing programmes have all improved consistently throughout the past six years. We believe, however, that we are approaching a natural plateau reflecting the limitations of the modular structure discussed above. A particular challenge is to overcome the problem sometimes noted that students tend to focus on assessed work, and fail to concentrate on developing the required knowledge and skills to provide firm foundations for their studies - a natural tendency is to over-assess, which seldom motivates the weaker students, but may reduce motivation for better students by constraining them to repetitive tasks. A second issue we want to address is the need to monitor individual students throughout the first year, to ensure that all students are being supported properly in meeting their potential. The problem-driven approach enables more flexibility, but also has the potential to for individuals to become lost in complexity. To tackle these issues, we have adopted a profiling approach for the first year. This has required a matrix approach to assessment that requires some clarification.

1. Modules exist primarily as receptacles for assessment. Each module pulls together coherent elements around the theme of the module. Passing or failing a module is thus indicative of success or failure in a broad area. The usual modular rules for the institution can apply.
2. Each module gives rise to a large number of Student Observable Behaviours (SOBs). These are typically things that can be noted in a practical setting (e.g. can a student type in a simple function and execute it, can a student capture a simple system property in a finite state machine, etc). All SOBs are rated as one of three levels: threshold, typical, excellent. To pass a module, a student must demonstrate ALL of the threshold SOBs.
3. SOBs may be demonstrated in very flexible ways, and will be ticked off by any member of staff involved in delivering the first year, thus 'modules' are not tied to staffing or delivery. Once a student has been ticked off for a particular SOB, there is no need to assess it again.



4. Software has been developed to keep track of SOB's, enabling students to see their progress against expectations, against the cohort, and against particular aspects of the year. This software will enable staff to adapt teaching to particular needs.
5. There will be multiple opportunities to demonstrate each SOB. Most of these will be embedded in practical work, problem classes or projects, but it is possible to organise specific sessions for individuals or groups who are falling behind the anticipated schedule.
6. The advanced SOB's will be challenging and relate to open-ended tasks so as to motivate those students who race ahead. A student can 'pass' the year before the end.

## 4.2 Organization

The content and structure of the first year is developed holistically. It is described under modules simply for convenience, but to understand the way the year will work, a few additional comments are necessary.

- There will be very few lectures (typically two per week). These will be used primarily to 'road-map' the curriculum, facilitate cohort cohesion and enable administrative functions to be simplified. These will typically be topic based, but will not relate to specify modules.
- Students will spend most of their time in practical/seminar/workshop sessions (the distinction between these is not very meaningful in CS) with a group size of less than 20. These will mainly be scheduled in specialist laboratory facilities.
- There will be a pre-defined set of projects. Whilst we have not specified the number, to enable flexibility, the current intention is to have 4 projects. These are designed to focus on the theory, knowledge and skills around cognate areas. Not everything will be captured under a project, but everything will be presented as related within each project block. The projects have been chosen to take a particular route through underlying theory. They build upon each other, but are not specifically linked. Projects will be undertaken in groups, but all SOB's will be individual (although some will relate to group-working skills). Projects will be open-ended design tasks leading to development of physical systems.
- There will be a coherent set of technologies and notations introduced, to ensure that the clutter is minimised for students, so that theoretical concerns are simplified rather than obscured. A single programming language will be used throughout as the primary vehicle for all 4 projects and for illustrating concepts, thus providing every opportunity for students to become confident in their programming skills. This language has been chosen primarily for its utility for teaching, not because of its widespread use in industry.

## 5 Second and Final Years

The second year is more conventional, with modules being graded as they lead to Honours classification. There is, however, a substantial project element continued into the second year. Students will also be introduced to approaches and technologies that are used in industry in preparation for placement opportunities.

The final year, as noted above, contains a traditional project alongside three optional modules designed specifically to broaden students' knowledge, skills and experience.

## *National Context*

It is important to understand the national context within which these developments are taking place. For several years there has been an emerging debate nationally about the nature of 'Computer Science'. This culminated in 2011 with the publication of the Royal Society report into CS in schools and has resulted in widespread publicity regarding the differences between CS and ITC, and has been instrumental in our desire to separate CS from IT and IS provision.

There has always been a claimed skills shortage in the area of ITC generally, but also a paradoxical seeming weakness in employability amongst graduates in this area. This has led many to suggest that current programmes do not meet the needs of industry. The actual picture is far more complex, as figures adjusted for ethnicity suggest a rather different explanation. The debate on the nature of CS has, however, led many key industrialists to observe that the tendency of broad Computing programmes to move away from the technical basis of the discipline, towards more business focused programmes with an emphasis on soft skills, is leading to a lack of suitable graduates to take the CS agenda forward.

Thus it seems there are two conflicting pressures on ICT programmes: a focus on the immediate needs of industry with embedded soft-skills (where 'industry' is understood to be extremely broadly defined for ICT graduates, involving any sector where IT is used) and the need to preserve the UK capability in Computer Science, with an emphasis on programming with its technical and theoretical foundations.

The School's decision to separate these two routes in fundamental ways as outlined above ensures that we can maintain quality of provision in both approaches, rather than accepting compromised resulting from attempting to address both approaches in a single modular structure.

## 6 Validation

The proposed BSc Computer Science is a significant change to the related programmes in this area that have been offered by the School. The rationale for these changes has been described in earlier sections. This section briefly describes why we believe that the new offering is valid.

**Year 1** This is a radical departure from the existing programmes. We believe that this addresses a lack of integration and coverage in CS topics in our current module structure that will support student learning by integrating teaching, assessment and continuous feedback. Evidence from other engineering programmes at Middlesex that use lab-based teaching, such as product design, suggest that students engage with this style of teaching. This approach is also supported by Computer Science related subjects at other institutions such as Lancaster, Reading and UCL each of which use lab-based teaching in the first or second year.

**Year 2** The proposed second year has been modified to make it consistent with the second year at many other institutions. Most CS programmes use the second year to introduce group work through a Software Engineering group project.

**Year 3** The proposed third year has been changed to offer specialist options and an individual project. This is consistent with CS programmes at other institutions and reflect the strategic direction of Middlesex which is to integrate research and teaching.

We recently acquired BCS accreditation for Computer Science and, although the new programme will require a complete cohort to graduate before we can reapply, we see no reason why the new programme would not be successful in seeking

validation as it is consistent with programmes at other institutions who have been successful in this regard.

**Appendix 18**

Centre for Teaching and Learning

October 15, 2012

Carole L. Davis

11 Eatingon Road

London E10 6EA

UK

Dear Ms. Davis:

Thank you for your contributions to the CTL 2011-2012 workshop series, which included your efforts in:

- 1. Peer Observation and Professional Practice in the UK**  
Tuesday, May 8, 2012, 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

Carole L. Davis

Your professional work reflects your leadership role in the University of Windsor community, and your strong commitment to the evolution of the teaching and learning culture on our campus. While the faculty, instructors, staff, and graduate students who take part in these sessions derive the most benefit, students from across campus, as well as your colleagues, ultimately share in the opportunities and outcomes of educational development. I appreciate your willingness to be part of this stimulating network, and look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Erika Kustra

Director, Teaching and Learning Development

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