



# **Learning and Teaching Policy**

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# Learning and Teaching Policy

## Introduction

This Policy provides a framework to support the development of the Curriculum, and within it the provision of effective learning and teaching. It details the nature and scope of the educational experiences and opportunities provided by the institution.

## College Context

A major priority has been to continue to raise the profile of the College in the local community by offering Higher National Diploma and degree courses to everyone who can benefit from these opportunities. The SSS mission is “Education for All” and creating learning environments where every student can achieve their full potential. This includes people who are already working and wish to go back to education to improve their career prospects as well as those who may have been driven away from education due to external or internal factors. We believe that higher education is the most important milestone in building a strong foundation in transition from education to work. Our students are therefore often mature learners with appropriate work/life experience as well as school leavers. We also offer business training solutions to local employers. We are working on a range of initiatives to increase the number of enrolments from Europe and the local community.

## Policy Aims

This Policy sets out the principles, aims and procedures for delivering the Curriculum. This is derived from the College strategy focused on the provision of high-quality learning and teaching. It reflects the College commitment to meet the expectations, needs and aspirations of each and every student. Our Curriculum is focused to offer a balanced range of business and health and social care focused Units, where outcomes are determined by the achievement of learning outcomes within in-course assignments and examinations.

The Policy provides a framework for both academic and administrative staff, and covers the formal and informal learning opportunities provided for students.

## What is Effective Learning and Teaching?

The College recognises that ‘Individuals learn when they acquire new (or modify existing) knowledge, behaviours, skills or values. There are many different ways to teach, all aimed at helping a student to learn. There are many ways to empower learners with the confidence to participate, critically and creatively, in the study of their subject area(s)’. SSS strives towards creating a stimulating learning environment for our students that can help to cultivate good work habits and ethics and promotes focus and motivation in life to achieve their goals. It does so through active or activity-led learning that utilises technology to enable and facilitate learning and adopts the following definition of blended learning in its teaching and learning as provided by Garrison & Kanuka (2004)<sup>1</sup>: “blended learning is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences” (p.96).

The SSS recognises the idea that effective learning must be a partnership between the College, the teaching staff, the students, and the awarding organisations. The aim is for the teaching to be inspirational and active, promoting knowledge, skills, understanding and self-awareness – as well as providing a context for students to be motivated, innovative and increasingly independent learners. They will then engage in transformational learning. ‘Transformational learning involves a process of becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others, and assessing their relevance before making an interpretation and acting on it’

The SSS is committed to provide an **inclusive learning experience**, which recognises the nationality of its students and ensures that no student is alienated. Indeed, **diversity** is something that **is celebrated as enriching the learning** process. The academic experience of students is recognised, and teaching staff work to ensure knowledge and understanding of the UK educational system. The majority of those of our students who have previously studied overseas will never have encountered coursework as an assessment vehicle. As a result they need clear guidance as to how this should be structured and how plagiarism and other unfair practices must be avoided and academic integrity maintained.

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<sup>1</sup> Garrison, D. R., & Kanuka, H. (2004). Blended learning: Uncovering its transformative potential in higher education. *Internet and Higher Education*, 7, 95–105. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2004.02.001>

## **Strategic Approaches**

The Learning and Teaching Policy contributes to the achievement of the strategic objectives of the College, and at the same time provides guidelines in establishing effective operational practices in its implementation.

### **Policy objectives and College objectives**

Curriculum planning is a strategic process that involves a review and evaluation of the current Curriculum, and within that a process to identify opportunities for enhancement. The Curriculum leaders develop a vision of the future Curriculum. This will involve an evaluation of existing strengths and weaknesses, justification for change and what needs to happen to achieve the objectives.

The critical factors include providing a qualification that meets student and sector demand, interests and needs across local, national and international markets.

- Enable students to progress to higher qualifications on the ladder of lifelong learning.
- Offers opportunities to school and College leavers, particularly those with vocational qualifications who wish to study full-time
- Offers opportunities to change careers or return to work.
- Attract employees seeking to enhance their education and skills.
- Design courses that give students a range of study options and delivery modes
- Embeds the College equality and diversity Policy

The Curriculum planning schedule maps out the journey to show how the College will identify, prioritise and organise the Curriculum.

The key activities and documents are:

- Academic Calendar;
- Course and module specifications and handbooks;

- Course planners;
- Course Timetables;
- Systems and Resources;
- Review and adapt quality and tracking systems.

### **Review staff resources and capabilities**

- Review all learning resources and develop and acquire new material;
- Communication and Course Development;
- Consultation and communication with principal teaching staff.

### **Undergraduate Higher National and Degree Courses**

Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications are designed to provide a specialist vocational programme, linked to professional body requirements. They offer a strong, sector-related emphasis on practical skills development, alongside the development of requisite knowledge and understanding.

The key progression path for Pearson BTEC HND learners is to the second or third year of a degree or honours degree programme, depending on the match of the Pearson BTEC Higher National Diploma Units to the degree programme in question.

BTEC HND qualifications are QCF level 5 qualifications. They are a minimum of 245 credits in size. We offer the Higher National Certificate as an exit award qualification for Students who wish to discontinue their studies after one year at level 4.

The second-year programme offers the students maximum flexibility. If a learner opts to take a Higher National Diploma, but later chooses to revert to the Higher National Certificate programme, then on successful completion they will receive a grade for the Higher National Certificate achievement only. The programme also allows the student to exit at any point and receive Unit certification for completed units achieved to the point of exit.

[insert information on LTU degree courses?]

## **The environment: The Learning Experience**

The College is committed to developing and enhancing the learning experience. The aims of the learning experience enhancement objectives include to:

- enhance opportunities for the personal development of each student, both within and outside the Curriculum, to support their progression into employment, further study or to enhance their potential for career progression;
- develop physical learning and virtual learning spaces to enhance the students' learning experience;
- enhance the excellence of teaching through continued professional development; enhance practice and provide new opportunities contributing to improving retention, progression and attainment of students.

## **The basis for effective learning and teaching**

The College, like other Higher Education providers, utilises the QAA guidelines on effective learning. This is that 'effective learning occurs when students are enabled to:

- engage actively in learning, and participate fully in the learning opportunities that are presented to them
- understand their learning environment, its culture and resources
- embrace the aims and expectations of their chosen programme of study
- demonstrate understanding of, and an ability to reflect upon, the ways in which their skills and knowledge are developing
- recognise and value their existing knowledge and skills, and build upon them
- make effective and responsible use of advice, guidance and feedback from formative and summative assessment that is provided during their programme of study
- avail themselves of the opportunities to acquire and develop learning skills
- understand sound academic practice and behave with integrity
- contextualise and apply their developing knowledge and skills to their wider experience and plans for the future
- work together in an informal environment as well as in formal learning sessions
- act responsibly in planning their use of the resources available to support learning, including the effective use of their own time in independent study

- give constructive feedback on their perception of the quality of their learning experience
- engage in monitoring and influencing the curriculum
- show commitment to attaining the academic standards that have been defined for their programme of study'

## **Training and ongoing support**

### **Higher-level skills**

Learners on all programmes are encouraged to develop the following skills during their programme of study:

- Cognitive skills of critical thinking, analysis and synthesis;
- Effective problem solving and decision making using appropriate quantitative and qualitative skills, including identifying, formulating and solving business problems;
- Effective communication, oral and in writing, using a range of media widely used in business or health and social care;
- Preparation and presentation of reports;
- Numeric and quantitative skills including data analysis, interpretation and extrapolation; the use of models of business and health and social care problems and phenomena;
- Effective use of communication and information technology for business and health and social care applications;
- Effective self-management in terms of time, planning and behaviour, motivation, self-starting;
- Individual initiative and enterprise;
- Developing an appropriate learning style;
- Self-awareness, openness and sensitivity to diversity in terms of people, cultures, business and management issues;



- Effective performance within a team environment including leadership, team-building;
- Influencing and project-management skills;
- Interpersonal skills of effective listening, negotiating, persuading and presentation;
- Abilities to conduct research into business and management, health and social care issues.

## **Student engagement in learning**

### **Student Feedback: Informed conversations**

Student feedback is collected through a range of quantitative and qualitative questionnaires for students to complete, as well as individual tutorials with their tutors. The feedback tools invite students to reflect on the positive aspects of their learning experience, as well as proposing recommendations for change and improvements.

Feedback on programmes is collected through the following methods.

- Induction programme feedback and evaluation;
- End of unit feedback and evaluation;
- End of course feedback and evaluation;
- Learner tutorial and review session;
- Student voice;
- Student interviews – course related and those carried out by Student academic Support Department.

### **Valuing the student contribution: Analysis of Student Feedback**

Student feedback on all programmes is collated and analysed providing a focus for discussion during the year, and used when planning for the new academic year. It is also used to monitor the quality of delivery at both mid- and end of each term, in addition to formative module reviews.

**Communicating feedback to Students** Feedback responses are fed back to Students through the College's Notice Board, via course tutors and via the Moodle.

## **Facilitating development and achievement**

### **Enrichment and Enjoyment**

The College continues to develop and organise a programme of enrichment and extracurricular activities to enhance the learning experience. The activities will vary from term to term. Activities may include:

- The Student Voice;
- Be Safe talk by our community police officer;
- Motivational speakers;
- Student discounts for sports and leisure membership;
- Student discounts for theatre visit;
- Progression and learning opportunities
- Dedicated sessions for progression opportunities.
- Discounted Web Streaming Services

### **Welfare, Information, Advice and Guidance**

The College prides itself on providing student with academic and non-academic support before, during and after their studies. The College offers educational guidance and welfare support to ensure students are 'comfortable' and able to fully focus on their academic studies during their time at College.

Welfare provision is embedded throughout the Curriculum and across the College. Advice and guidance are available on the following aspects of student life and the Recruitment and Welfare Manager can be seen by appointment:

### **Personal Support**

- Safety and security; banking;

- College and local facilities, services and events;
- Medical and dental treatment options and insurance;
- Progression opportunities; Student employment;
- Local places of worship;
- Licensing laws;
- Personal matters, including financial hardship, culture shock and homesickness.

### **Curriculum Support**

Information advice and guidance is embedded throughout the learner journey, ensuring support for the individual, from entry into learning through to completion and progression into employment or further learning.

### **The learning environment**

#### **Library**

The College has a highly specialised library. It is equipped with books, magazines and study material relevant to the courses offered. It also offers regularly updated course and self-study material, including audio material and books for examination preparation. Information material on progression and career options is available.

#### **Modern IT Facilities**

Students have access to state-of-the-art computer laboratories as well as a dedicated Internet browsing area. There are over 50 desktop computers for student use which all provide free high speed Internet access and up-to-date software required to support the Curriculum. All students also benefit from Wi-Fi hotspot zones, as well as black and white, colour and multifunction printers.

### **Course Design**

The structure and content of the BTEC/Pearson Higher National Diploma programmes are formulated by Pearson and fit QAA approved Subject Benchmarks. The Academic team at the College undertakes various activities related to the Pearson programmes. The Leeds Trinity University programmes are formulated and managed by the University in collaboration with the institution.

Course handbooks are designed with all programme details included. This includes programme structure; credit value; information about the awarding body; mandatory and optional units; key centre staff members involved in the delivery and management of resources at the College.

The Course structure is developed whereby the optional units are selected to fit perceived regional and national needs. The sequence and pattern of delivery is planned to spread Unit perceived as 'difficult' across semesters.

The Unit content is analysed and teaching material is prepared. The sequence and pattern of content and learning delivery is planned and organised. Session plans and scheme of work are designed.

Assignment briefs of all units are prepared to accommodate the relevant (Pearson or degree) assessment criteria. The developed assignment briefs are verified by an experienced staff member (internal verifier) prior to delivery.

The sequencing and pattern of delivery of units are produced on a termly and yearly basis.

Submission dates (both formative and summative) and submission procedures are planned.

## **Staff Development**

### **Recruitment**

The College supports professional standards in learning and teaching by ensuring that staff are appropriately qualified at appointment and through development opportunities that align with the College's strategic priorities. For academic posts, the College aims to appoint those holding a master's degree in a relevant area. Additionally, the College has recruited staff with doctoral degrees. Some staff members are also working towards a doctoral degree which contributes in the provision of a quality learning experience to our students.

A number of staff have industrial and/or commercial experience. This allows them to bring a greater sense of reality to their teaching in the provision of case studies and/or real life illustrative examples and facilitating a connection to the 'world of work'.

New members of staff participate in the College Induction programme. The induction programme aims to integrate new staff into the organisation. It combines online support via Moodle and face-to-face sessions. Discussion during these sessions revolve around organisational background, College strategic developmental plans, courses offered, student

background summary, learning and teaching context, including consideration of the student learning environment. New members of academic staff are assigned a mentor who is a more experienced colleague and possesses appropriate knowledge and understanding of the vision and values of the College. The mentoring process continues for the duration of their first term, during which time they are welcome to seek clarification on any issue whenever needed. It will be extended as required.

## **Continuing Professional Development**

The College enables staff to participate in a range of continuing professional development activities in order to enhance their knowledge, reflect upon and develop their practice, and contribute towards a fully inclusive institutional culture.

All the staff members at College are encouraged to take responsibility of their own continuous development. College deems it necessary for staff members to self-evaluate their strengths and areas for development and then equip themselves with necessary skills and knowledge. The purpose is not only to enrich their current capabilities but also to prepare them for potential roles and responsibilities. Skills, knowledge and behaviours acquired in this way is expected to contribute to the continued success of the organization.

There are formal and informal ways available to staff at the College to achieve the objectives. Formal ways include attending an organised training event or workshop, or working towards a formal qualification delivered by an external provider. Informal ways include peer-to-peer learning opportunities, engaging in discussions, attending meetings, being or providing mentoring etc. For details, refer to the College Continuous Development Plan. The College maintains a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) log for the teaching staff when informed about the developmental activities they have undertaken.

The performance appraisal, session observation, peer observation, internal verifications of assessments, student feedback, self-initiated requests/self-identification of developmental need etc. are part of the mechanism which identifies the developmental needs of the staff.

A number of staff members have upgraded their skills by acquiring formal (teaching) qualifications. The Institution are committed to supporting staff to gain relevant HEA Fellowship recognition where not already obtained.

## **Monitoring, review and continuous improvement**

Programme review will:

- Review of all subject programmes to ensure that they are current and valid in light of changes and development of national standards.
- Evaluate how the learning outcomes are being attained and suitability of delivery and assessment methods. Do these methods continue to be fit for purpose and effective?
- Analyse and take account of internal and external views of examiners and verifiers in programme reviews.
- Ensure student and staff views are evaluated and considered.
- Identify and disseminate good practice within and across subject areas and programmes.

All recommendations and actions are used to correct deficiencies and to improve the delivery of the programme.

The Unit/Module Review is a process that reflects on the delivery of teaching and learning of a specific unit/module. In doing this the programme team will:

### **Curriculum Course Review Process**

- Review and evaluate student achievement and assessment instruments against the unit aim and learning outcomes.
- Take account of student performance, formative feedback and observations of the teaching and assessment staff.
- Review how the Unit meets the overall programme objectives and consider if, still suitable for inclusion in future programmes.
- Identify good practice in teaching and learning and disseminate in future review meetings.

## **Teaching Observation and Peer Observation**

All teaching staff on all the programmes are observed in the classroom once in an academic year. The senior member of the academic management undertakes the observation activity, which is considered part of appraisal and is quite separate from peer observation. The observation activity is analysed, feedback is shared with the relevant lecturer in private and action plan is agreed. If the observation highlights some shortcomings, then another observation is organised for that particular lecture in the same or following term.

Through peer observation, teachers get feedback on their teaching. Teachers ask a colleague to attend one of their teaching sessions and afterwards both the observer and the observed discuss it. The peer observer can provide feedback on what went well and suggest changes that might improve the teaching session. The person observed can also ask for feedback on specific areas.

The Policy states that the aim of peer observation of teaching is to enhance teaching quality by encouraging reflection on practice. The intention here is to help maintain and improve standards by spreading good practice, encouraging exchange of views and providing opportunities for staff to learn about and discuss new or alternative teaching approaches. A further purpose of peer observation of teaching is to enhance the professional development of teaching staff through reflection, constructive feedback and participation in training associated with the process.

## **Quality Assurance**

### **Our learning and teaching strategy will consider and ensure that we:**

- Devise and review teaching and learning plans which address key issues and identify future development needs, including: teaching and learning objectives, personal development planning, systems review and development, student and staff feedback, assessment methods, inclusiveness, added value and use of ICT/learning technologies.
- Enhance the quality of teaching and learning by continuous monitoring of the provision and standards, through evaluation of staff, student and stakeholder feedback.
- Maintain the College diverse approach that values equality of opportunity in the quality of our teaching and learning.
- Develop and implement rigorous review and feedback mechanisms that support progression and track student progress, retention and achievement.
- Maintain a Curriculum that meets student, employer, local, national and international needs.
- Have adequate resources in place for students and staff to manage their workload effectively.

## **Equality of opportunities in the Curriculum**

It is our aim to offer a learning framework which promotes equal opportunities from those who have specific needs arising from race, gender, religion, disability or learning disability. Therefore, in adhering to this philosophy, we intend to make the following provisions through its course delivery,

- Learners will be made aware of the precise requirements for the qualification on entry and again during the induction programme. Registration of students does not occur until after induction, therefore Learners will not be penalised if they decide to opt out of the course.
- To support a wide range of individual needs SSS utilise a range of learning methods including blended learning approaches introduced since the Covid-19 pandemic and defined above, Open- learning approaches are also being developed..



- No upper or lower age limits will be specified for assessment and award of a qualification, other than restrictions imposed by the awarding body.
- Any learner with specific needs will be strongly encouraged to pursue Units of competence in which they have a reasonable chance of attaining the required standard. The assessment staff will support those who require assistance in obtaining appropriate learning opportunities and assistance.
- Any discriminatory or unfair behaviour displayed by learners towards other learners or staff will not be tolerated. Such behaviour may result in the learner being asked to leave the course and, if relevant their employer being informed.
- Curriculum delivery and learning materials will not discriminate against any person or group.

### **Students with Disabilities and Special Considerations**

We view disability as a sensitive issue and appreciate the many barriers which hinder the progress of disabled people. The College makes every possible effort to remove these barriers.

**Physical Disability:** The College is fully accessible for wheelchair users with assistance. While we aim to provide access to all and make all reasonable adjustments, our courses or facilities may not be suitable for everyone. In these cases we will give impartial advice about other Colleges and Learning Institutes.

**Visual and Audible Impairment:** The College aims to make all reasonable adjustments to the environment. In some cases, an application can be made to the awarding body, proposing alternative assessment methods and/or a request for specifically adapted learning resources.

**Learning Difficulties:** The most common type of learning difficulty that we encounter is dyslexia. The College will give impartial advice about external agencies and organisations, who can offer additional support to help learners be successful. In some cases, an application for adaptations and special considerations can be made to the awarding body.

## **Policy Review**

The Learning and Teaching Policy is kept under annual review by the Academic Board and the Senior Management Team. The Policy will be updated in accordance with the development plan and reviewed annually during the Learning and Teaching Policy planning phase.

# **POLICY ON PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING**

## **Aims**

To promote a culture of high-quality teaching and to provide a framework for professional self-evaluation.

To provide a framework for academic staff to reflect on their own teaching practice and make improvements as appropriate.

To enhance the quality of teaching and learning across the institution by providing a framework for the identification and sharing of good teaching practice and associated staff development needs.

## **Procedure**

The Academic Manager is responsible for the operation of the Peer Observation of Teaching Policy.

Every member of staff should normally be observed at least once every year.

The Academic Manager is responsible for pairing teaching staff with Peer Observers. The Academic Manager will consult with individual members of staff to establish who their Peer Observer might be.

Peer observation will normally involve a single Peer Observer observing one teaching session for approximately an hour.

The Peer Observer should contact the member of staff to be observed at least one week before the observation takes place to agree the arrangements for the observation.

Observees will need to discuss in advance with their Peer Observer any issues considered relevant to the observed session.

**At the time of the observation** the Peer Observer should arrive on time for the teaching session selected for observation, with the Observee. If the Peer Observer arrives too late for the teaching session, then another time and date should be agreed for a further observation to take place.

The Peer Observer should use the Observation Form which should be completed at the end of the session or as soon as possible thereafter. As soon as possible after the session, the Peer Observer should meet with the Observee to discuss the session and provide feedback.

Following completion of the Annual Peer Observation of Teaching, the Academic Manager will meet with their respective academic teams to discuss identified best practice and areas for potential staff development.

## The Observation Form

### **BEFORE THE OBSERVATION**

*This first page is to be completed by the person being observed and a copy should be given to the Observer before the scheduled teaching observation.*

Name of the person being observed (Observee):

Campus Location:

Observer's Name:

Date of Observation:

Module title:

Year of study:

Type of session (delete as appropriate):

Lecture/ Seminar/ One to one/ Workshop/ Practical/ Tutorial / Online/ Blended/

Other (please state):

Duration of session (in minutes):

What are the Learning Outcomes for the Session?

Are there any teaching aspects you would like the observer to focus and comment on?

**DURING THE OBSERVATION:** The sections below are a guide for observation feedback and can be amended as appropriate.

<b>Area of Practice</b>	<b>Observer's comments</b>
<b>1. Preparation</b> <i>Was the teaching session well prepared?</i>	

<b>2. Content</b> Were the learning outcomes of the session clearly identified?  Was the delivery clear and appropriate to the level of study?  Did the session conclude effectively?	
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<b>3. Teaching Methods</b> <i>What teaching methods were used throughout the session? Did they promote active learning?</i>  <i>Were the teaching methods used effective in helping to achieve the session learning outcomes?</i>	
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<b>4. Student Participation</b> <i>In what ways were students engaged in the session?</i>  <i>Were students encouraged to reflect on their own learning?</i>	
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<b>5. Delivery</b> <i>Was the session delivered and facilitated at an appropriate pace with adequate opportunities for student activity and questions?</i>	
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<p><b>6. Use of examples</b> <i>Was there an effective link between theory and practice with the use of examples in the session and/or opportunities for students to bring in/utilise their own examples as appropriate?</i></p>	
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<p><b>7. Assessment / Feedback</b> <i>Was there any evidence of formative assessment in the observed session?</i></p>	
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<p><b>8. Teaching environment</b></p> <p>Was the teaching environment effective in supporting student learning?</p> <p>Were learning technologies used well to facilitate learning?</p>	
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<p><b>9. Teaching Resources</b></p> <p><i>How effective were the teaching resources in supporting student learning?</i></p>	
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<p><b>10. Overall</b> <i>Was this session effective overall in promoting effective student learning?</i></p>	
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<p><b>11. Additional Information</b>  <i>Are there any further areas for comment?</i></p>	
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<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <p><i>What were the main strengths identified in the teaching session observed?</i></p>	
<p><b>Areas for Development:</b></p> <p>Were any areas identified for development?</p>	

<p><b>Observer:</b></p> <p>Main learnings or fresh ideas I took away from the observation that I will consider or try in my own teaching practice</p>	
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<p><b>We agree that this is a fair record of the observation and post observation discussion:</b></p>	
<p>Observees Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>
<p>Peer Observer's Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

**The Peer Observer should return the final version of this form to the Observee only.**