

CASE STUDY: NEW COLLEGE STAMFORD

ERICA CONSTERDINE – OCTOBER 2017





Background

New College Stamford is a Further Education institution based in South Lincolnshire, rated 'good' (2) by Ofsted in 2017. The College was established in 1895 as Stamford Technical College, but has since expanded as a General Further Education College. The college has 3,588 students and offers vocational education, part-time adult courses, apprenticeships, A-level programmes, Higher Education and access to university.

Understanding the role of advanced practitioners

At New College Stamford advanced practitioner-type staff are called Teaching and Learning Coaches (TLCs). The purpose of the role is to provide mentoring, coaching and guidance to staff in a flexible, reflective and tailored way to encourage ownership of their own approach to teaching, learning and assessment, and continuous professional development.



At New College Stamford our aim is to maximise potential through outstanding teaching, learning and training. At the forefront of this is our commitment to support and develop our staff to deliver an outstanding experience to our students, thus creating a culture which involves open and honest professional dialogue, supporting individuals to reflect upon their own practice.

Senior Manager

Previously the college had seven TLCs, however, they found this approach was disjointed and made collective working difficult. As a result, the college formalised, consolidated and strengthened the TLC role by employing two permanent members of staff. These staff report to the Director of Quality and have a timetable remittance of 10 hours each. They do not receive a salary uplift.

To maintain consistency, TLCs are managed centrally in terms of their TLC role but departmentally in terms of their teaching role. Although TLCs in some colleges work in particular areas on account of their vocational backgrounds, TLCs at New College Stamford work across the college and their focus is on improving professional practice in teaching, learning and assessment, rather than on the vocational subject itself.



It's all down to experience isn't it, and just experience. Going into other people's lessons and seeing good sessions and seeing engaged learning... and being able to share that.

Teaching and Learning Coach

Teaching as a skill is such a broad thing anyway and it's up to you to turn it into your specialism.

Teacher

Critically, the college does not undertake graded observations and places specific emphasis on the importance of TLCs continuing to teach. The college believes that because they are practitioners themselves this gives TLCs credibility with the teaching staff they support.



Teaching and learning Coaches have a high degree of credibility across the college and this can be attributed to their role as a teacher, their commitment to continual professional development and excellent skills in building trusting professional relationships with staff across the College.

Senior Manager

Activities

There are two key aspects of the TLC role:

- **Improving Practice:** TLCs work with staff who need support to meet college standards on a one-to-one basis. They identify specific areas which require improvement, and work with individuals to develop personalised and constructive action plans with targets so teachers can maximise their potential. A TLC usually spends three months working with an individual member of staff. This is followed up with monthly meetings to review progress. Teachers are also encouraged to approach TLCs to develop their own skills and identify areas for improvement. Two teachers self-referred in the last academic year.
- **Working with New Staff:** As part of the college's initial induction (Teacher Toolkit), every new member of staff meets with a TLC. Regardless of the teacher's experience, they are assigned a TLC and together they identify developmental needs for the first six months of their employment.



The TLCs sole focus is to support individual teachers with their practice so that they are providing high quality teaching, learning and assessment experiences for our students.

Senior Manager



Activities undertaken by TLCs include:

- Developmental observations, learning walks and walkthroughs as part of the Curriculum Area Review Process.
- Facilitating peer observations (encouraging staff to watch good practice and model behaviours).
- Providing personalised action plans and targets for teachers to inform their learning strategy (including advising on lesson planning, seating plans and plenaries).
- Signposting or providing access to resources to support teaching, learning and assessment.

- Informal discussions to support teachers to self-identify professional development needs.
- Delivering bespoke Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions e.g. behaviour management, British Values, and questioning techniques.
- Planning and running cross-college CPD days.
- Contributing to probation reviews and performance management systems.
- Identifying best practice both internally and externally.

Capability

TLCs have regular observations and training. They work with a range of external organisations and regional networks, such as the Association of Colleges, a range of other Colleges, and the Teaching Alliance for Peterborough – a network judged to be outstanding. This allows for peer learning, networking and linking with other advanced practitioners to share best practice. Additionally, TLCs receive support for their personal development, for example they recently undertook a one-day coaching course. The college is encouraging the TLCs to undertake further coaching qualifications.

Outcomes

Many outcomes that the college has identified are qualitative. On the whole, staff members report that TLCs have been very positive; for example, nine staff members rated their TLC 10/10 on helpfulness in their reflective observation record. Tutors view TLCs as credible, approachable and trusted, and have also indicated that TLCs have helped them to achieve their goals and broaden the scope of their teaching methods. Furthermore, a number of tutors commented that TLCs motivate them to raise their standards and to strive for an 'outstanding' (1) Ofsted rating.

The Senior Management Team feel that the TLC role has led to a much more standardised approach to lesson planning and writing aims and objectives, particularly for new starters. A senior manager reflected that the culture associated with the TLC role has been embedded in the college, which has brought positive gains, such as improvements in terms of practice in the classroom, and a shift in behaviour and attitudes towards accountability and self-development. Similarly, a TLC commented that the change from graded observations to developmental observations has further embedded a culture of self-improvement:



The advantages are more self-benefits really in terms of making a difference, trying to help with cultural change and wanting staff to develop themselves. I think that's really important rather than sticking a number on them.

Teaching and Learning Coach

Whilst not directly causal to the establishment of the TLC role, there are some quantitative markers which demonstrate improvements in the college as well. The college received an overall 'good' (2) rating from Ofsted in February 2017 after receiving a 'requires improvement' (3) grading in March 2015. The report acknowledged that TLCs deliver useful individual support and aid teachers in successfully improving their performance.



Teaching and Learning Coaches plan and deliver useful individual support. Staff training events focus appropriately on those weaknesses that are more widespread. As a result, staff have high regard for the support available, and are mostly successful in improving their performance.

Ofsted, 2017

Although not a direct result of appointing TLCs, senior management feel that the quantitative improvements in the college overall are partly due to the establishment of the TLC role. For example, improved retention (93 per cent) and improved attendance levels (from 87 per cent 2015/16 to 90 per cent 2016/17). Similarly, the staff survey shows a marked improvement, from 88 to 99 per cent for positivity about the college's commitment to continuous improvement, and from 69 to 87 per cent for respondents feeling confident about the future of the organisation.

Shared learning

The college believes that a TLC will be most effective if they are a skilled individual who is able to build meaningful and trusting relationships with tutors quickly.



Make teaching learning and assessment the most important priority in your organisation

Senior Manager



Top tips for other providers

- Get the procedures right: Review the advanced practitioner programme, procedures and policies, ensure they function effectively and flexibly, and don't be afraid to adapt them if they are not fit for purpose.
- Tailor action plans: Advanced practitioners should arrange an initial interview with a tutor to identify their specific needs and fully gauge their skill set in order to tailor action plans.
- Continuity: Assign the same advanced practitioner for the duration of the mentoring relationship to ensure continuity.
- Build rapport and trust: Create an open, honest, empathetic, reflective and trusting environment.
- Personality matters: Skilled advanced practitioners are those with excellent soft and transferable skills, who are credible and skilled teachers in the first instance.