

CASE STUDY: THE MANCHESTER COLLEGE

MEGAN EDWARDS – OCTOBER 2017





Background

The Manchester College (TMC) is the largest Further Education College in the UK and the number one provider of 16-19 and adult education in Greater Manchester. TMC has multiple campuses across Greater Manchester. The college has approximately 16,000 students and provides a wide range of post-16 education, including 16 to 19 study programmes, adult learning and provision for learners with high level needs. TMC is additionally part of the Learning Training and Employment (LTE) Group and offers apprenticeships and distance learning. It also delivers education, training and employability services to prisons and young offender institutions as part of Novus, a stand-alone organisation within the LTE group.

Understanding the role of advanced practitioners

At the Manchester College advanced practitioner-type staff are called Teaching and Learning Coaches (TLCs), Information Learning Technology (ILT) Champions and Learning Technologists. The TLC role was established in 2012, and was initially introduced and deployed to improve observation grades and areas of inconsistent practice. Areas of inconsistent practice were identified by Quality Managers through internal quality reviews¹ and graded observations. The TLC role began when a member of staff was identified as requiring support to improve their professional practice and staff were allocated to TLCs based on caseload.

This year TMC has moved away from graded observations toward a non-graded, developmental and supportive procedure called Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The Quality Managers have extended the TLC offering to the entire teaching staff population, including new starters and newly qualified teachers. This change has broadened the role from purely coaching staff that have received a grade 3 or grade 4 lesson observation, to include '*coaching for all*'. This shift has enabled the college to adopt a more developmental and supportive approach for all staff, not just those requiring improvement.



The focus now is about sharing the good practice and supporting colleagues – that's it in a nutshell.

Senior Manager

I think it's about making the staff feel valued and actually showing them what they can do as opposed to what they can't.

Teaching and Learning Coach

It's a supportive person and it's not a judgemental person, and it is there as a development tool and not a negative, although I know that some people perceived it as a negative.

Tutor

¹ Internal quality reviews follow the Ofsted framework.

Previously the line management of the position was split between curriculum departments and the quality team. However, this year the TLCs have been fully integrated into the quality team and are centrally line managed by two Quality Managers. This move to a more centralised system has had a positive impact on the perceived benefits of the role.



They feel that they have a sense of belonging and really they do shape the way that we're developing coaching, the way that we're developing our approach to teaching, learning and assessment, because we appreciate that they're still in the classroom, they're still practitioners.

Senior Manager

I think the flipside is there's more autonomy over the role, so you can do things that you want to, and suggest ideas - which is great. That is really good.

Teaching and Learning Coach

The Manchester College has 15 TLCs drawn from a number of different curriculum areas. TLCs are appointed on a two-year fixed-term secondment, with extension by reapplication at the two-year point, and work cross-college.

TLCs receive a timetable remittance of 60 per cent and an uplifted salary; they are active teachers for two days a week and TLCs for the remaining three. The management team feel it is important for TLCs to remain active teachers as this keeps them current and connected with the prevailing teaching context.



The coachees or the staff in those areas are more receptive to the Teaching and Learning Coaches, because they still [teach]... the perception could be "oh well you still understand, you're still a teacher yourselves".

Senior Manager

You need to be in there, you need to know what's going on.

Teaching and Learning Coach

In addition to the TLCs, TMC has eight Heads of Department Quality who sit within curriculum departments and focus specifically on TLA within each of the eight curriculum areas, three learning technologists and a team of 10 ILT champions. The ILT champions work within each curriculum department to promote the innovative use of technology to support teaching, learning and assessment.

Activities

Previously, the TLCs' formal role began following a tutor's graded observation. If the observation feedback highlighted areas for improvement, a coach would be assigned to deliver a coaching programme which would be eight to twelve weeks in duration. During this time the coach would deliver coaching activities, for example, sharing teaching strategies and approaches, providing resources and materials, supporting with paperwork and providing techniques to embed maths and English. The coach would also undertake three ungraded, developmental observations. When the TLC was satisfied with the tutor's improvement they would be signed off from the coaching programme and a final graded observation would be arranged with a Quality Manager.



My coach has given me a lot of ideas for starter activities that I can put out on the desk when they're coming in. They can be actually working on them. Quite a lot of maths activities that they can just do when they're waiting.

Tutor

Informal coaching and self-referral had also increased in recent years. A tutor could self-refer to a TLC if they had identified an area for professional development. This might include a general chat or a more focused session to support the development of their teaching practice.



And some staff just need a refresh, or a bit of a boost. They've exhausted the ideas they've got, or they've forgotten some of the ways and strategies that they can teach. So informal coaching attachments have just really taken off and it's changing that perception of coaching as you've got a three or a four, to actually "I am engaged with coaching because I really want to develop my own practice". The success of that has been down to the coaches and we try and capture it by surveys at the end.

Senior Manager

In response to the success of informal coaching attachments and feedback from staff about what would make coaching better, for example:



To get rid of the graded observations and ensure everyone has coaching at least once every two years, so that it is seen as positive and not punitive.

Keep this up for all members of staff not just staff that are struggling.

Tutor

TMC has recently moved to a coaching model which emphasises '*coaching for all*'. All teaching staff are now linked to a coach, and formal and informal coaching attachments have been replaced with a more personalised and fluid coaching model which focuses on five aspects:

- The planning of teaching, learning and assessment to meet the needs of learners.
- The delivery and management of teaching, learning and assessment to maximise learning and progress.
- The promotion and development of learners' wider skills.
- The quality of assessment and feedback.
- The monitoring and promotion of learners' progress, including target setting.

Importantly, there is no minimum or maximum prescribed amount of time for a coach to work with an individual or group of teachers, and the ETLA works to an annual cycle which incorporates a two-phase approach. This includes a lesson visit that captures key points for development and records agreed ways of securing improvements, and provision of periodic developmental feedback.

In addition to one-to-one coaching, TLCs are responsible for:

- Developing and distributing teaching, learning and assessment resources and materials.
- Performing learning walks – focusing on different themes, such as employability or differentiation.
- Facilitating Teaching and Learning Sets – this is an opportunity for staff within a department to get together and discuss a theme chosen by the tutors.
- Holding teaching surgeries – this is an opportunity for any teacher to drop-in and ask questions.
- Developing and delivering Continuing Professional Development, training sessions and workshops throughout the academic year, including at the annual Teaching and Learning Conference.
- Facilitating group projects or supported experiments.
- Supporting the induction of teachers new to the college.



I've found in the past when I've worked at other colleges that... conferences have been rather boring, whereas ours are very interactive. The coaches run workshops and it's always something interesting, and you come out feeling as though you've done something.

Tutor

Capability

The college supports the continuing professional development of TLCs. When the role was first introduced all TLCs undertook a Level 5 coaching and mentoring qualification, and the college intends to support new TLCs to undertake an equivalent qualification. Quality Managers believe that this provides a good foundation and knowledge which can be built upon in the role.

Additionally, TLCs are encouraged to drive their own CPD and to identify any courses or activities they feel would benefit their professional development. Whilst TMC looks to support the coaches in further academic qualifications from both a financial and time allowance perspective, it notes that there has to be an appropriate balance of CPD for their teaching, learning and assessment role and for their subject specialism. Every coach receives mandatory training, such as data protection and safeguarding.

TLCs have a formal fortnightly meeting where they come together to share best practice and to support one another. They also hold their own teaching and learning sets, use social media to share ideas as a group, and have informal meetings on a much smaller scale to discuss any problems or potential issues. Additionally, Quality Managers request that TLCs work collaboratively on projects, for example, creating training materials for the annual Teaching and Learning Conference.

Outcomes

Measuring the impact of the TLC role has become more of a priority in recent years, and TMC has started collecting robust quantitative and qualitative data. Quality Managers expect all coaches to complete a termly report, which documents the coaching activities they have undertaken, along with any feedback from staff and managers, to be presented to the college leadership team.

Additionally, the new ETLA process will be continuously reviewed with the input of teachers, HoDs Quality, the TLCs and the Quality Team, as it is a holistic process rather than a process with a designated end date.

Formal and informal feedback is gathered from staff and is generally very positive. In the last staff survey, 98 per cent of tutors who had been through formal or informal coaching were satisfied with their experience, felt it had a positive impact on their professional practice and would recommend it to others. Previously, observation grades were also tracked so the Senior Management Team could observe improvement across time. Generally, tutors were more confident following a coaching programme and improved their observation grade.

TMC feels that feedback mechanisms have highlighted both the benefits of the TLC role and have been instrumental in informing plans to move forward with the more developmental approach.



I think without the feedback mechanisms we've put in place this year I don't think we'd have been in a position to suggest giving everyone a coach. We'd still be in that [situation] where coaching means you've received a grade 3 or grade 4 in an observation.

Quality Manager

Additionally, tutors who have been assigned a coach have seen a positive impact on their teaching and learner outcomes.



[I] think [coaching] impacts English and maths more with our learners – mainly because I use directions and online glossaries and things, checking for statistics and using graphs - people don't just want an essay, they like to do different things for assessment. It's helped me change some of my assessment methods for my learners. If I've got a learner who doesn't like typing, it's right, "how can I get her or him to deliver that criteria without having to write". In the assessment part it's really good.

Tutor

The outcome of it was excellent. So, after going in with that, sort of, very closed mind, "I don't want this, because I think I'm great", I thought, "well, you're not as great as you thought you were". And, it made me realise that we do need to keep up with the trends, look at what the learners are looking for and not stay in the old mindset really. So it was a really good experience.

Tutor

The TLCs feel that there are many personal benefits associated with taking on the role, such as: CPD, access to training courses, and opportunities to work in different areas of the group, for example, in prisons. The TLCs also get a lot of personal satisfaction from the role due to the positive impact they have on tutors.



When you get an email from a manager who says, “thank you for the work you did with... I just wanted to give you the great news that they have a grade 2, and not only that, here’s what they said about you in the feedback”. For me, there’s nothing better than that.

Teaching and Learning Coach

It’s an indescribable feeling when you’re working with somebody and they start to make progress.

Teaching and Learning Coach

Shared learning



Top tips for other providers

- Clearly define the purpose and responsibilities of the role – create robust job descriptions and clearly communicate the purpose and remit to all staff.
- Ensure the role is non-threatening to teaching staff – the role should be designed to support and develop staff not to monitor their performance.
- Gain senior management buy-in – the support and backing of senior management is essential for success.