

# The Visiting Lecturers' Guide to College Observations and OFSTED Inspection

**ProtocolNational**  
Leaders in FE Recruitment Process Outsourcing



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## Introduction

Most colleges are inspected regularly by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). In line with the Education and Inspection Act 2006 the common inspection framework was devised by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector and is the structure used to carry out inspections.

The common inspection framework applies to the inspection of provision funded by the Learning and Skills Council, and the funding bodies that will succeed it, and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Colleges also carry out lesson observations as part of their commitment to continuous improvement and also for the purposes of preparation of Self Assessment Reports for OFSTED.

This guide is intended to give an overview of the formal inspection processes, however the primary focus is on the observation of lessons since this is the area that has the most impact on Protocol National Visiting Lecturers.

## The Process of OFSTED Inspection

A local managing inspector will make an annual monitoring visit to the college. The visit will usually last one day, and although Subject Sector Categories will probably not be looked at directly, evidence may be required (for example) to demonstrate support for learners, quality assurance procedures, provision for specific cohorts (e.g. 14 - 16 year olds).

Full inspections usually last a week, although the number of inspectors will vary according to the size and nature of the provider. Focused monitoring and re-inspection monitoring visits will last between one and three days. Some Subject Sector Categories will be selected for direct inspection and will be graded.

College managers may also request information from Visiting Lecturers for these visits.

### The inspection will address the following questions:

- How effective and efficient are the provision and related services in meeting the full range of learners' needs and why?
- What is the provider's capacity to make and sustain improvements?

### The following Key Questions guide the inspection:

#### Outcomes for learners

1. How well do learners achieve and enjoy their learning?
2. How well do learners improve their economic and social well-being through learning and development?
3. How safe do learners feel?
4. Are learners able to make informed choices about their own health and well-being?
5. How well do learners make a positive contribution to the community?

## Quality of provision

1. How effectively do teaching, training and assessment support learning and development?
2. How effectively does the provision meet the needs and interests of users?
3. How effectively does the provider use partnerships to develop its provision to meet learners' needs?
4. How effective are the care, guidance and support learners receive in helping them to attain their learning goals?

## Leadership and Management

1. How effectively do leaders and managers raise expectations and promote ambition throughout the organisation?
2. How effectively do governors and supervisory bodies provide leadership, direction and challenge?
3. How effectively does the provider promote the safeguarding of learners?
4. How effectively does the provider actively promote equality and diversity, tackle discrimination and narrow the achievement gap?
5. How effectively does the provider engage with users to support and promote improvements?
6. How effectively does self-assessment improve the quality of the provision and outcomes for learners?
7. How efficiently and effectively does the provider use its available resources to secure value for money?

**The inspection team will gather evidence using a range of activities including:**

- Observing teaching and learning sessions within the College and where appropriate within the workplace
- Visiting work-based learners, observing training and assessment, talking to employers
- Visiting community based provision
- Evaluating data on retention, attainment and progression
- Evaluating learners' work and associated assessment outcomes and feedback (including ILPs and other progress records)
- Meeting with learners, staff, managers, governors and employers
- Evaluating the impact of key documents
- Evaluating records relating to learners with difficulties and/or disabilities

Prior to arrival at the College, each inspector will have received a range of evidence about the curriculum area they will be reporting on. This will include the College Self Assessment Report and enrolment, retention and achievement data for previous years.

Colleges will normally receive 3 weeks notice of a full inspection but they will not know in advance which lessons will be observed, so you must prepare on the assumption that any of your sessions during the inspection period could be observed.

## Preparation for OFSTED Inspection

For each session timetabled during inspection week you will need the following:

1. Scheme of Work
2. Lesson Plan
3. Records of Learner Progress (ILPs/PLPs)
4. Learning Materials
5. Course/Unit File/Rationale
6. Group Profile

If not already doing so, you should use College format documentation for Schemes of Work and Lesson Plans. When planning teaching and learning sessions it is extremely important that the content and activities will meet the needs of all learners within the group.

This may require additional support to be provided by a learning support assistant, learning materials to be differentiated (including extension activities), a variety of strategies to be employed to meet different learning styles and specialist equipment and resources to be made available.

If insufficient consideration has been given to the profile of the learners, which in most cases is diverse, the level of engagement of learners will be low and this will impact on the grade awarded. Appendix 1 lists some points to consider when planning and delivering sessions to meet the diverse needs of FE learners.

Other evidence relating to the course/curriculum area will be accessed by the inspectors outside of the teaching and learning sessions. For example:

- Course files
- Individual Learning Plans
- Minutes of Course Team Meetings
- Assessment records
- Learner questionnaires and meetings with learners
- Retention, attainment and progression data
- Samples of marked work with associated feedback
- Learner files
- Value added data and New Measures for Success
- Equal Opportunities data
- Details of staff qualifications and experience
- Job descriptions for key staff
- Self Assessment Reports for the curriculum area
- Course Review and Evaluations
- External Verifiers/Moderators Reports
- Tutorial Records
- Records of Initial Assessments
- Additional learning support availability, take-up and impact

The formal evidence is vital if the inspection outcomes are to be positive. However, it is important to consider the impression your area of work will give inspectors during their week in the curriculum area. It is worth considering the following:

- Is the learning environment stimulating?
- Are classrooms and workshops clean and tidy?
- Are there displays of learners' work within work areas and communal spaces?
- Do notice boards contain useful, current information for learners?
- Is the environment safe / are there Health and Safety considerations?

## OFSTED Observation of Lessons

The inspectors will observe sessions in a way that will minimise disruption. However, they will talk informally to learners when opportunities arise. These discussions will help them assess the degree to which learners are benefiting from the session and the level of their understanding and knowledge of the subject.

When an inspector arrives, they will need sight of the register, Scheme of Work, Lesson Plan, and any learning materials that the learners are using. The college may also require you to complete an information sheet about the group and the lesson. Learners should have their files available as inspectors may wish to look at them during the observation. The observation will last for a minimum of 30 minutes but more typically 45 to 60 minutes. Each session will be graded using a four point scale (see section 6 below). Although there will only be one grade for the lesson, this grade incorporates judgements under three aspects: teaching; learning; and the standard of work (attainment).

The definitions of teaching, learning and attainment that inspectors will be assessing are as follows:

**Teaching:**

The effective planning and delivery of a process to modify attitude, knowledge, skill or behaviour through learning experience to achieve effective performance in an activity or range of activities.

**Learning:**

The process whereby individuals acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes through experience, reflection, study or instruction and the progress made by learners during the session.

**Attainment:**

The standard of the work being produced by the learners during the lesson, judged against the standard expected of learners at that point in their course, irrespective of their starting point.

The curriculum area as a whole will be also graded on the same four point scale. The curriculum area grade will primarily reflect learners' achievements and the effectiveness of teaching, training and learning.

Inspectors will comment on attendance and punctuality as they reflect on learner motivation and the tutor's management of the group. For this reason any agreed late arrivals e.g. due to domestic responsibilities or travel problems, should be noted in the register. Lateness should be appropriately challenged, but it is equally important to settle learners into their lesson quickly, and not disrupt those who arrived on time.

## College Observations

College observations are conducted using the same Common Inspection Framework criteria as OFSTED inspections and the same grading scheme. The primary difference is that you will be given advance notice of the period of time in which your lessons will be observed by the college and the observation will be conducted by a member of college staff. Otherwise, you should prepare in the same way for a college observation as for an external inspection.

## Grading

The following grading scale is applied by both colleges and OFSTED inspectors:

**Grade 1: Outstanding**

**Grade 2: Good**

**Grade 3: Satisfactory**

**Grade 4: Inadequate**

A written summary of the outcome of college lesson observations will be provided to Protocol National and you will be provided with a copy of this.

If your lesson is observed during an OFSTED inspection the inspector may give you some informal feedback at the end of the observation but will not give a grading and you should not ask for one. The college will receive a formal written report on the inspection and the overall grading will be publicly available.

## Appendix 1: Preparing a Teaching and Learning Lesson

### At the start of your assignment

- Agree with the Course/Programme Leader the topics you are expected to cover during the period of your assignment
- Identify linkages between the topics you need to cover and those of other tutors
- Identify the aims and objectives of each component of the course/unit/element you need to deliver
- Where appropriate share information on the learning activities you have designed with the Internal Verifier
- Be familiar with the profile of the group, their previous knowledge and experience, preferred learning styles, the results of their initial assessments and subsequent support needs
- Take account of the diverse needs of the group when producing the Scheme of Work and cover a range of teaching and learning strategies (aim for changes approx. every 20mins)
- Produce lesson plans for each lesson which include timings, resources, differentiation, additional support needs

### Before each session

- Check that all the necessary learning materials and resources are available to support the session
- Check that the available equipment is working
- Check the room/workshop layout and adjust if necessary

## During the session

- Start promptly and give the session a clear beginning
- Query late arrivals and avoid accommodating their lateness by repeating information for the whole group
- Clearly state the aims and objectives of the session - ideally visually as well as orally (e.g. flipchart, whiteboard, PowerPoint)
- Recap on previous learning where possible with contributions from the group
- Deliver information in a logical sequence
- Create opportunities for learners to demonstrate their skills and knowledge
- Use questions and answers to confirm understanding - targeted to individuals as well as the whole class
- Vary the pace to suit the needs of all learners
- Demonstrate a response to individuals' preferred learning style if that information is available
- Differentiate activities as necessary
- Cover a variety of the teaching and learning strategies
- Continually check that progress is being made

### **At the end of the session**

- Summarise the content of the session
- Use questions and answers to recap and check understanding
- Provide opportunities for independent study which expand on what has been learnt
- Link this session's learning with what is to happen next
- Make brief notes on group/individual progress made within the session