

CASE STUDY: MYERSCOUGH COLLEGE

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Background

Myerscough College is a land-based Further and Higher Education college in the North West of England, rated Good (2) by Ofsted in 2017. The land-based college was established in 1896 as the Lancashire College of Agriculture, although it has since expanded its provision to include disciplines such as Sport and Foundation Learning. The college has around 5,000 students from Entry Level to PhD.

Understanding the role of advanced practitioners

Myerscough College uses Advanced Teaching Practitioners (ATPs) to lead on the development of high quality teaching, learning and assessment within curriculum areas, by cascading good practice and new innovations in the sector. The team is led by the Head of Teaching and Learning and ATPs provide a critical link between organisational strategy and teaching staff.



It's about improving teaching and learning within your department and across college, and support, it's a very supportive role.

Advanced Teaching Practitioner

Critically, ATPs are not part of management and do not undertake graded observations in their own curriculum areas. This promotes a culture of peer support and coaching to improve professional practice without judgement, and ensures that tutors feel able to talk about their challenges. ATPs share and model outstanding teaching practice, spend time with tutors, understand their needs, and build on their confidence and practice in a supportive and constructive way.



When I was new to teaching and had just joined, my ATP gave me so much help on so many different things... she was great.

Tutor

ATPs have been in place since 2012. There are now 11 in post: one dedicated role in each of Myerscough College's 10 curriculum areas (including English and Maths) and an additional post for the development of cross-college initiatives. Tutors feel that having an ATP who is a member of the same department makes it easier to talk to them and access support.

ATPs receive an uplifted salary equivalent to a senior lecturer and an average timetable remittance of between 30 and 40 per cent. The remittance depends on the size and geographical distribution of their area.



The skills and attributes of a good Advanced Teaching Professional

The role requires a very complex combination of **high-performing teaching skills** and personal attributes. Teaching and learning abilities have to be excellent to facilitate good role modelling and leading on good practice, but ATPs also need to have outstanding **interpersonal skills**, be **positive**, **forward-focussed**, **supportive** and **able to put their colleagues at ease**.

Activities

Each term, ATPs lead a **programme of CPD sessions** within their curriculum area (including a specific English and Maths programme). To ensure these are as useful as possible, needs are identified via analysis of previous teaching performance, using institutional priorities identified by the TLA Strategy Group, using Ofsted and external examiner feedback, and using survey data, focus groups, observations and input from Heads of Department and tutors. This has been effective as departments receive bespoke training, which is proactive and fit for purpose. These sessions may be short 10-minute 'bite-sized' training or can last up to an hour. ATPs feel that training is best received when it is scheduled earlier in the teaching day and when sessions are tailored to meet the preferences of individual curriculum areas. For example, some teams learn best when they are working collaboratively to improve and share practice, others prefer an element of competition. ATPs accommodate different staff approaches effectively as they know their curriculum staff well and are able to adapt their teaching methods to get the best out of their team.

ATPs are also heavily involved in institutional Professional Development days where the campus is closed to learners. There is an annual Teaching and Learning Fair, in which ATPs lead specific sessions throughout the day, based on their interests and strengths. All teaching staff are free to select the different sessions they would like to attend.

ATPs also deliver **bespoke one-to-one support** for all tutors who would like it. Tutors generally feel comfortable to request this as needed because they trust that it is a confidential space to receive tailored support to develop their practice. This can take a range of formats:

- Receiving developmental observations or observing ATPs in practice.
- Reviewing lesson plans prior to formal observations to ensure they meet the Professional Standards.
- Quick, informal chats or email correspondence to review a particular approach or resource.
- Signposting to evidence, research or new resources.
- Sharing previous experiences, bad experiences and challenging moments, including feedback sessions to *'thrash out concerns or challenges'*.
- Emotional support around challenges in practice.
- Comprehensive support for Grade 4 and Grade 3 teaching staff.

Capability

ATPs are encouraged to share their learning with each other at weekly meetings and by observing each other's work in practice, as well as by working across the institution. For example, they have worked closely with the e-learning team to explore embedding technology in teaching and learning.

ATPs self-assess their performance against the Professional Standards (as do all teaching staff) and have autonomy over their own development in which they are encouraged to develop and strengthen the skills needed for the role. They are encouraged to attend external development opportunities, where their timetable allows, such as conferences, seminars or visits to other providers. They then cascade that good practice to the staff within the institution. In addition, three days are set aside in the calendar for specific group professional development, for example, a recent session focussed on coaching. The ATP development days focus heavily on TLA improvement progress, sharing good practice, and reflection on the challenges faced, as well as action planning for further improvement.

Outcomes



We've just had our Ofsted again, they're very impressed with the high quality delivery of teaching and learning, and the way students are being challenged in the classroom. They were really happy with what they saw in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion... and each one of these has been a key theme of staff development over the past few years. [The improvement is] absolutely helped by ATPs.

Senior Manager

Here they've got a teaching style that helps me understand more.

It's more interesting... [ATP] has always got more ways of getting across the information that he wants to give to you, which helps me a lot because when it comes to writing your exams and your assignments, you remember it a lot more and you understand it.

Learner



Benefits of Advanced Teaching Professionals at Myerscough College

- Student results have improved. Last year, student retention increased and success went up across every level in Further Education provision.
- Graded observations have improved significantly. There are now very few Grade 3 and 4 observations and the proportion of observations assessed as Grade 1 has '*shot through the roof*'.
- Teaching and learning practice has been given an elevated focus. Lessons could be didactic and are now involved, practical, technological, varied and exciting. Learners think this '*gets them thinking*'.
- There is better use of assessment for learning. Students think there is less risk of anyone '*falling behind*' and they value the formative nature of assessment.
- Student feedback on quality of teaching and learning is consistently high; typically, over 95 per cent are satisfied on all Learner Voice questions.
- Tutors have improved self-belief as professionals and are more confident in their ability to try new approaches. There is now a new organisational culture that truly champions teaching and learning.
- Tutors are better equipped to receive developmental feedback and put this into practice.
- Staff sickness and turnover is low. Senior management believe that staff feel supported and valued due to the role of ATPs.
- Students are exhibiting signs of better engagement, self-esteem, self-efficacy, confidence and interpersonal skills.

Shared learning

Over the past few years, in response to financial pressures facing the sector, college management has seen other providers cutting back ATPs or their benefits, or removing the roles completely. However, Myerscough College believes that there are clear benefits associated with the role and it is an essential investment.



Top tips for other providers

- Institutions need a clear vision of the role, which must be tightly specified and consistently communicated.



You need to know what your overarching ATP strategy is for teaching and learning... that bottom up bit of what do teachers want to get out of it, but that top down bit of what do you want from strategy... you've got to find that vision to give you that drive.

Senior Manager



- Advanced practitioner roles need to have an emphasis on supporting and developing teaching staff, rather than performance management.
- Putting tutors' experiences and feelings first helps them to grow in confidence when working with advanced practitioners to develop their practice.
- Confidentiality is key: tutors need to feel they can turn to advanced practitioners and openly discuss the challenges or concerns that they have.
- Tutors welcome short, practical and focused TLA sessions that provide them with a range of exciting, new and usable resources and techniques.
- Developmental observations, discussing lesson plans and having personal conversations are also highly useful advanced practitioner techniques to help staff develop in their practice.