

CASE STUDY: HAVERING COLLEGE

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Background

Havering College is a general Further Education College in London, rated 'good' (2) by Ofsted in 2016. In 2016/17 the College had 7,500 learners, including 2,300 aged 16-19, 550 HE learners and 700 work-based learning. The college has three campuses, each accommodating different departments. Courses on offer include arts, IT, accountancy and sport. In addition, they have a Foundation Learning Department.

Understanding the role of advanced practitioners

The college has had advanced practitioner-type roles for a number of years and has recently moved from the advanced practitioner role to the new role of Quality Practitioner (QP). The college feels that the new title better describes what QPs do and moves away from the suggestion of QPs being subject specialists. This emphasis on quality has been driven by the arrival of a new Vice Principal in 2014, and has increased staff understanding and awareness of the college's expectations regarding teaching quality and standards.



It is a positive thing, because the ethos is changing, slowly. If you look where we are now compared to April 2014, the standards are better and our observation process is far more robust. We had 80 observers back in 2014, so you get no consistency, whereas we have 24 observers at the moment. It means a huge amount of work for that core team, but we are getting better judgements.

Senior Manager

The aim of the QP role is to support learners to get the best teaching they can receive by sharing good practice that has been identified in the college.



Identifying good practice, sharing good practice, supporting colleagues to develop and improve their practice.

Senior Manager

The role is understood by the QP team and by those that they support:



I see my role as supportive and to help people realise where they are doing well already and to highlight it and pull it out a bit more.

Quality Practitioner

The QP has got a high standard of teaching skills and is able to impart those to colleagues to improve the quality of the college. They bring their experience and their own teaching skills to bear, to assist us to improve.

Tutor

There are currently six QPs at the college who are managed by the Lead Quality Practitioner when

undertaking their QP role. The team is managed by the Head of Learning and Development and meets regularly to receive messages cascaded from the senior team (Head of Learning and Development and the Lead QP), update their action plans, support each other and share ideas about what works.

The post is a one-year fixed-term appointment which runs from August to July to ensure that QPs are in post and ready to start the academic year. The Senior Management Team believe that an annually renewable post is beneficial because new QPs bring fresh ideas and the team will always comprise the best staff available for the role. The positions are internally advertised to all staff and tutors may be encouraged to apply.



We will always pick the best six candidates and if that means we lose one of the existing ones, then we lose one of the existing ones. New blood is good.

Senior Manager

Currently, two of the QPs are Programme Managers¹ and four are from curriculum areas. The senior team hope to address specific needs through these appointments, such as supporting a particular department or sharing good practice from other areas.



The role

The QPs are active teachers that receive four hours remission per week from their teaching role; they receive a £2,000 salary uplift per annum. Through learning walks and observations QPs see the best and worst teaching practice cross-college. In turn, they embed good ideas into their own teaching practice.



We are the bearers and sharers of good practice. We are the only people who on a regular basis go into classrooms other than our own.

Quality Practitioner



QPs have particular specialisms related to their subject area or an area of expertise, for example, maths, English, Equality and Diversity, IT, collaborative learning, and stretch and challenge. QPs are matched to a mentee by the senior team based on their particular specialism. This ensures a good fit – the QP has the qualities and experience the mentee needs to develop.



There is a lot of experience and flex to be able to look at what the needs are to put the right person in the right place so the payoff is much better.

Senior Manager

¹ A Programme Manager is a manager that covers more than one curriculum area.

Activities

The QPs are responsible for a number of different activities, this includes:

- **Learning Walks:** These are conducted from September onwards, and can also form part of the mentoring support delivered by QPs throughout the year. Learning walks are brief classroom visits (10 minutes) focussed on a particular theme and can include checks of paperwork and speaking with students. New staff receive a learning walk within the first two weeks. Learning walks help the quality team to identify good practice that they can share across the college.
- **Formal Observations:** The formal observation timetable starts in October and runs through to December. New staff, those departments that have received Red or Amber RAG ratings in audits, and staff that have previously been mentored are prioritised. Formal observations are conducted by trained staff, using the Common Inspection Framework (CIF) as a base. Staff are graded from 1 (Outstanding) to 4 (Inadequate). In addition, new teaching staff are formally observed three times in their first year of teaching at the college. Following the observation, the observer creates an action plan that provides appropriate feedback. These action plans are moderated to ensure consistency and they form the basis of a mentoring relationship with a QP.
- **Mentoring support:** Staff that receive a Grade 3 formal observation receive support from a different member of the QP team to their formal observer. This maintains independence from the observation and enables the mentoring relationship to be safe and supportive. Mentoring support is an eight-week process, which includes a number of one-to-one meetings, friendly observations and feedback, identification of peer support and sharing of resources. Staff that receive a Grade 4 formal observation are mentored by one of the senior team as they have more time available to support the mentee. In addition to the mentoring support provided by the QP, the quality team hope that the mentee's department will also facilitate, for example, by checking that the mentee is prepared for their QP meetings. Only staff that are graded a 3 or a 4 receive mentoring support.



Mentoring and supporting colleagues is the most important and instrumental role in quality practice.

Senior Manager

- **Friendly observations:** The QP can conduct friendly observations of their mentee's lessons. This provides additional feedback for the mentee and clarifies any identified actions. The QP does not grade or use the CIF when observing these lessons. Training is not required to conduct these observations.
- **Staff development:** There are three compulsory development days per year where the quality team deliver training sessions on either their QP specialism or a priority theme. Sessions have included stretch and challenge, differentiation, embedding, and information about revisions to the management information system. QPs also deliver workshops that are personalised to departments. This can include contextualising a college-wide initiative with examples that are tailored and department specific. For example, an experimental learning training session was delivered at a staff development day and then tailored, by request, to a department so they could understand how to implement it and be supported to come up with new ideas.
- **Auditing:** The QPs also check department paperwork and assign a RAG rating that is used to prioritise earlier observations. Later in the academic year when most observations have been completed and mentoring support has been given, support with internal auditing will

recommence. The two QPs who are Programme Managers are experienced at providing Internal Verifying (IV) support and can support other Programme Managers with aspects specific to the Programme Manager role.

Capability

Each QP has an individual action plan which ensures that each member of the team understands their role and their tasks, and the senior team can distribute work equally. These action plans also allow the team to demonstrate value for money to wider college management structures.

One aspect of professional development for the QPs is observation training. QPs are expected to conduct formal observations and undertake one day of formal training when they are new to the role. This is supplemented by a half day with an existing observer to ensure standardisation and includes dual observations with a member of the senior team. All observations are moderated using the CIF as a basis for grade decisions.

Other professional development includes attendance at conferences related to the QPs' specialism, observing teaching practice cross-college and implementing this within their own professional practice. The QP team would like to undertake a formal coaching and mentoring qualification, but have insufficient funding available. This would help QPs to sway colleagues who are not engaged with the quality process and provide recognition for those doing the role.

Outcomes

The overall aim of the quality team is to improve student attainment by improving teaching practice.



It's not just about our colleagues, it's about the learner, if our colleagues are not delivering a good lesson, the learning's not good clearly.

Senior Manager

There is a constant drive to improve practice across the college to achieve an 'outstanding' (1) rating at Ofsted inspection. Last year the college was rated 'good' (2). While some departments are very good '*shining stars*', others need to improve their practice. At the beginning of the year 2016/17 teaching was graded by the quality team as 85 per cent good or better. This increased to 97 per cent following mentoring support provided by the QP team, and is the main quantitative measure the college use to report on impact. The college also report attendance and grades for curriculum areas, but recognise that there are many factors other than quality of teaching that can impact on these outcomes. Other systems and activities have been put in place to improve attendance and identify risks to attainment at earlier stages, for example, revamping the use of the management information tool.

The college is also changing English and maths delivery to improve attainment and student feedback. In 2015/16 the QP team worked with this department on behaviour management, active learning and grade profiles but did not see an immediate impact in achievement. They continued to focus on this area in 2016/17 and teaching is now graded at 100 per cent good or better.



I learned a lot from my experience and I feel that my teaching practice is bettering. Being able to provide a snapshot is one thing but seeing an improvement through the weeks and months of your teaching is a very different experience. It's not just about meeting the needs of that snapshot of an observation, it's about seeing a general step-change in the way you view your teaching and in the way you carry it out.

Tutor

Shared learning



Top tips for other providers

- Design individual action plans for advanced practitioner roles. This holds them accountable, and ensures they are more organised and efficient in the four hours remission they have for the role per week.
- Recognise and praise those in advanced practitioner roles. Make sure they are given sufficient time for CPD and development and are fully supported by the senior team.
- Advanced practitioners do not have to be Grade 1 practitioners. Individuals who consistently achieve a Grade 2 can be really effective mentors.
- Start the formal observation timetable early in the year. This helps the advanced practitioner team to understand and tackle potential issues quickly and efficiently, and ensures that learners have the best experience.