



QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project 2023-24

Enhancing Learning and Teaching Quality through Collaborative Observation (ELTQCO)

Birmingham City University
Loughborough University
University of Wolverhampton

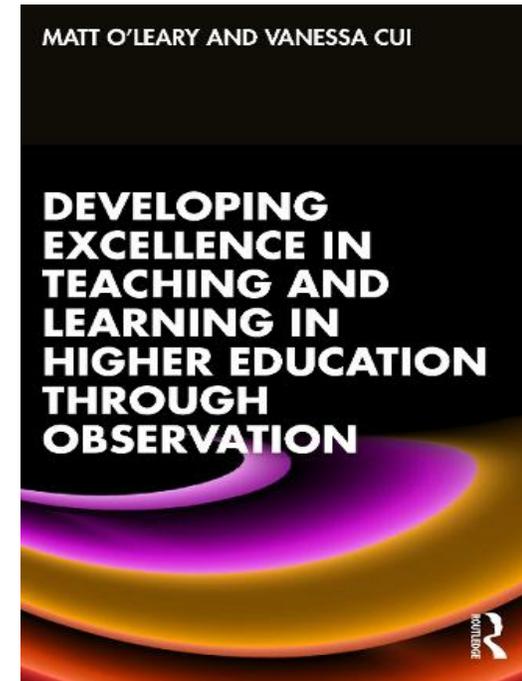
QAA project launch webinar: 5th July 2024

QAA Collaborative Enhancement Project 2023-24

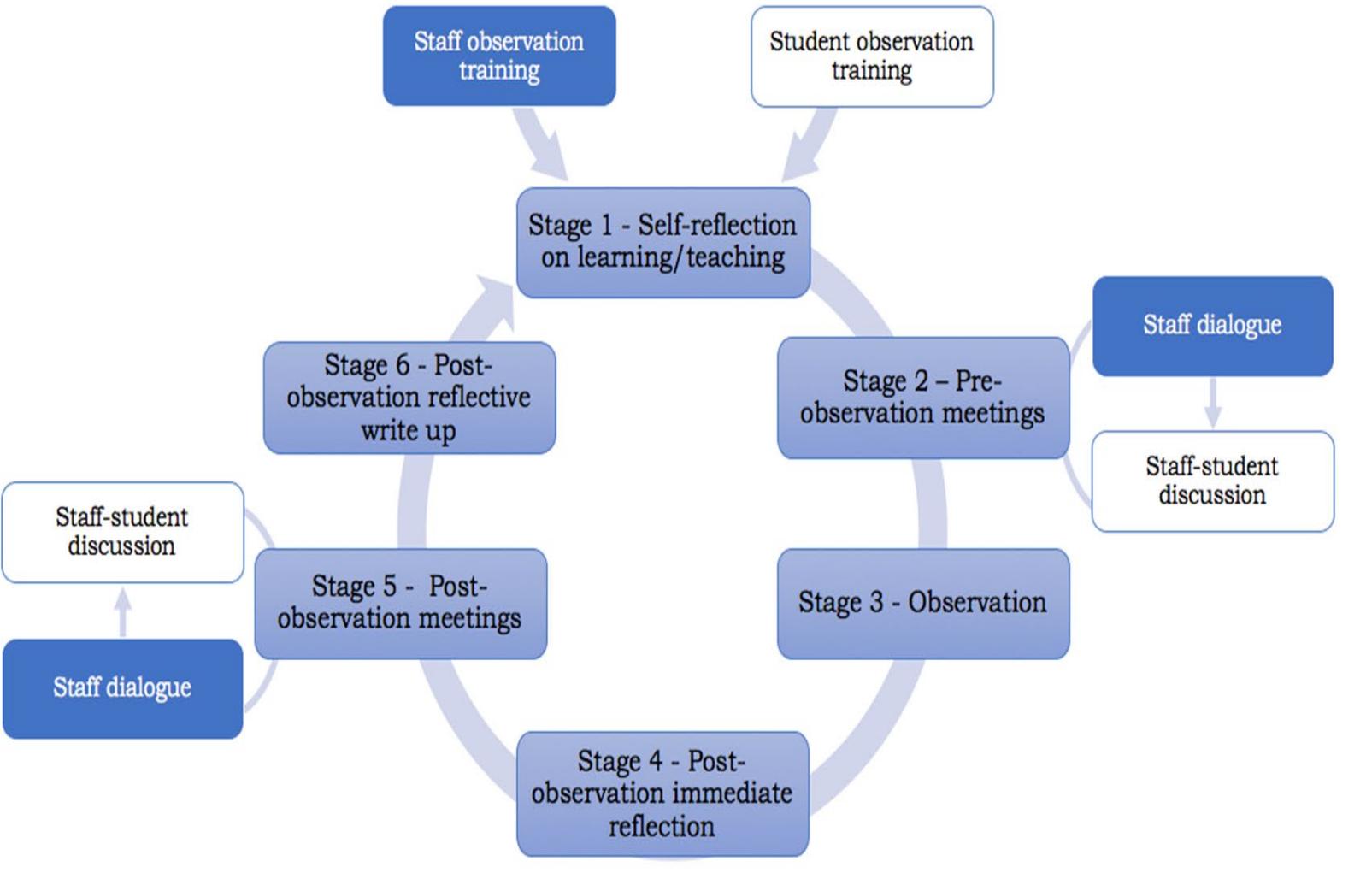
Enhancing Learning and Teaching Quality through Collaborative Observation (ELTQCO)

Project aims

- Implement & evaluate an innovative, established cycle of collaborative observation (CoCO), across 3 universities with diverse groups of students & teaching staff from varied disciplines, co-observing & co-reflecting on the quality of their learning & teaching
- Deliver a structured training programme to provide students & staff with conceptual & practical tools to promote authentic collaboration & inquiry into the quality of their learning & teaching through their engagement with CoCO
- Increase student engagement in shaping their learning experiences by empowering them to become directly involved in informing & improving the quality of learning & teaching on their course
- To share the findings across our institutions & the QAA membership



3 Key Principles of our Cycle of Collaborative Observation (CoCO)



1. Reconceptualising observation from a performative exercise to a *collaborative practice*
2. Reconceptualising observation from a method of summative assessment of teaching performance to *reflective inquiry*
3. Reconceptualising students' identity from 'consumers' and 'evaluators' of their learning experience to *co-researchers* and *co-producers* of pedagogic knowledge

Cycle of Collaborative Observation (CoCO)

O'Leary & Cui 2023, 2020



Project Context at BCU

- 3 case studies on the theme of student engagement
- 6 staff & 6 students from 3 different subject areas:
- Diagnostic radiography
- Paramedic science
- Public Health

- **Diagnostic radiography:** Alistair Bardwell & Holly Pickford (staff), **Nikki Godridge** & Simran Gohil (students)
- **Paramedic science:** Mark Sibbald & Samuel Davies (staff), Hannah Bennett & **Rebecca Wright** (students)
- **Public Health:** Nasrin Soltani & Natalie Quinn-Walker (staff), Saimun Farhana & Zeinab Tahersima (students)
- **Project lead:** Prof. Matt O'Leary



Staff perspectives on being observed: impact on their practice

Working with the students has **allowed me to be more open in my approach** – I'm not afraid to ask students what might/might not work for them

The project has **benefitted my preparation skills** and highlighted some key areas of session design and academic resources

Given me **confidence in my teaching abilities**

Working closely with my colleague & students, has **taught me invaluable skills** (listening, engaging & collaborating); **these have helped me grow as a practitioner.**

This reliable insight has allowed direct learning and development of myself in this process, that is **more relatable to than other anonymised generic feedback forms** such as the NSS and Module Evaluations

Staff perspectives on collaborating with students through observation

This project has allowed me **to learn from my colleagues, but also the student cohort** and put myself in their shoes

Very rare to get the opportunity to be able to observe colleagues with students. **A new lens!**

Being able to actually work with students and **to ask them what worked and what didn't and why is absolutely brilliant** because it kind of stops you having that feeling of, well, did it go well or are they all just waiting for the module valuation to tell me it was rubbish?

Students gaining an understanding of teaching approaches and methodologies, which has created **a mutual respect between the two of us.**

Student perspectives on collaborating with staff through observation (Nikki)

It gave us the insight into **exactly how much goes into making the lectures** or how much it takes to plan a lecture that has to be somewhat engaging.

Feeling **privileged to be able to be part of it**. And potentially support both lecturers and students in the future with their study and what works best for people really.

It almost like **humanised the lecturers**. I mean not that we don't ever think that you guys aren't very human or approachable, but it **broke down that segregation** of students and lecturers.

Really kind of highlighted for me **how important it can be to work together**.

Student perspectives on collaborating with staff through observation (Becca)

It's been good to find out what's been going on behind the scenes of the lectures, so **finding out a bit more about the planning and the thinking** that's behind the learning objectives and the tasks we do during the lectures.

it's been nice to get to **know the lecturers** a little bit better as well.

And observing the lecturers, we've also **managed to raise quite a few points** where they might not have seen it **from the students' perspective** as much

It was good to have a bit more of a student opinion going in and **having some influence over the lectures.**

I have **felt a little bit more open to go up to them** and have a conversation about various things

Case studies on theme of assessment and feedback

Student participants:

Case Study 1 Psychology (UG), Chloe Daniel, Clare Lewis and Shana Ryan;
Computer Science (UG): Seth Johnson and Liam Roberts

Case Study 2 Sports Management (PG): Albi Al-Muhammed, Ziqian Pang,
Johnny Tang and Muhibatu Yahuzah; Human Biology (UG): Cassandra Marillier
and Holly Read

Case Study 3: Stephanie Gou (Doctoral Researcher in Design and Creative Arts)

Staff participants: Will Carey (Case Study 3), Dr Laura Jenkins (1), Dr Susana
Monserrat-Revilla (2), John Warren (2) and Dr Yanning Yang (1)

Project Lead (and Staff participant): Dr Victoria Wright (3)

6 staff, 2 Doctoral Researchers, and 11 students from 3
different Schools and Organisational Development's Enhanced
Academic Practice.



Case Study 1

Introduction from Clare

I found it **daunting** to begin with as I always felt a **divide between the lecturer and the student**, and I had never observed anyone before. But the **previous meetings** with Laura helped me know exactly what to look for and I knew **anything I wrote about would be considered and not penalised**.

Clare

I have become more comfortable with **lecturers** and since taking part I have provided written feedback without any prompts which I believe has improved my sense of identity when interacting with lecturers.

(Shana) Through this experience I learnt that my perspective as a student was valued. And that maybe I should complete the module feedback...

Lecturers are actually people and I now engage more with them to help gain an identity in their eyes (Clare)



Case Study 1

Introduction from Chloe

Since recognising the significance of my feedback and the welcoming attitude of staff towards it, I've actively engaged in various opportunities.

My involvement in these endeavours has been fuelled by both my newfound understanding of the value of feedback and my enhanced passion for contributing to it. **As a result, I've felt more enthusiastic and confident in pursuing these roles, drawing upon my experiences in this project.**



Case Study 1

Introduction from Laura

Students were really professional and constructive in their feedback.

(Laura, staff)

Interactive activities still provide students with assessments.

Assessments don't always need to be Multiple Choice Question activities as we can provide students with informal feedback in lectures. As staff, we need to highlight clearly when we give feedback to students in lectures and this study has helped me to understand that. **(Laura, staff: on impact)**

Being observed by 3 students was not as terrifying as I thought as everyone was equal during the study. (Laura)



Case Study 1

Introduction from Yanning

A strong staff-student collaborative relationship
(Yanning, staff)

Shared perspectives on action planning for implementation next time
(Yanning, staff)

Observing a colleague from a different discipline showed best practice in one subject can benefit another and how flexible the collaborative observation model can be
(Yanning, staff)

This non-combative and slightly informal atmosphere made me feel more confident in giving feedback. This step has also made me more critical in general, and I've been able to use that within my course. **(Liam on the post observation feedback meeting)**



Case Study 2

Part of the reason I got involved was the opportunity to **build that relationship.**
(Cassandra, student)

I'd never considered the process of teaching before and now I see that lecturers have specific objectives that they are working towards
(Cassandra, student)

Dialogic feedback (different from module and staff student committee) **(John, staff)**

Simple and effective actions suggested **(John, staff)**

"Opportunity to build relationships between staff and students", Cassandra; "works both ways", John
(cohort of about 350)



Case Study 2

Introduction from Susana

Teaching to a big group of students (more than 150) of mainly international students on research methods, with very different levels of previous knowledge
((Susana, staff))

After I received their feedback After I received their feedback, it was clear to me that I should always offer 2 kinds of tasks to do (one for beginners and one for advanced) **(Susana, staff)**

A different and constructive kind of interaction with students, very fruitful. **(Susana, staff)**

New perspectives never shared before. A way of empowering students as collaborators **(Susana, staff)**

All the students who participated in this project were international and they were very happy to have more direct contact with the teachers.



Case Study 2

Introduction from Muhibatu

The project was helpful as it **guided me in building my confidence level by asking questions during lecture hours**

(Muhibatu, student)

Through this project I've been able to get close to some of my **module leaders.**

At first I thought it is not possible to have a one- on-one interaction with them due to the power dynamics from where I was coming from.

(Muhibatu, student)

It made me realise how module leaders value our feedback as learners and how it facilitates their teaching in a more contextual manner, Muhibatu



Case Study 3

Introduction from Stephanie

Reflections on my teaching style and enhancements
(Stephanie, DR)

(Stephanie, DR) Collecting all online attendees feedback via Padlet

(Stephanie, DR) Intention to quickly ask for student feedback on a new strategy or activity.

(Stephanie, DR) This project, supported by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), offered a **distinctive chance for me to actively explore learning and teaching practices**. It provided an opportunity for **interdisciplinary reflection**.

Stephanie (DR) on her experience: 'co-operative, collaborative, and enabled co-creation'



Case Study 3

Introduction from Will

Seeing inside and behind another colleague's process

Will (staff)

Will (staff) Culturally aware practices

Will (staff) Reciprocity of the experience

Will (staff) Engaging through online chat – new ways to acknowledge many voices



Project Context at the University of Wolverhampton

4 case studies on the theme of **engagement and inclusivity**

4 staff, 4 students from the Business School; 3 different disciplines

Case Study 1 - Marketing

Students: Marketing (UG): Thea Mills, William Talbot (involved in 2 cycles)

Staff: Hajrija Dergic

Case Study 2 - HR

Students: HR (UG): Izbar Hamid

Staff: Janet Cash

Case Study 3 - Hospitality

Students: Hospitality (UG): Maggie Rayner

Staff: Abby Pearce

Case Study 4 – Marketing

Students: Marketing (UG): Thea Mills, William Talbot (involved in 2 cycles)

Staff: Dr Imran Khan

Project Lead: Dr Jenni Jones



Case Study 3: Abby Pearce

Being observed: impact on my practice (short-term)

Felt pressure as being observed by a student but it was a positive experience

Nice to get positive feedback from students

Received really helpful ideas for improvement; good to debate with students about their opinions e.g. about assessment improvements

Reflection in action is not perceived negatively by students, if my lesson requires me to do this, I should not view this as a failure

To consider carefully whether every learning and teaching activity needs intricate planning, or whether more room for creative diversion is more appropriate

To encourage peer group discussions and feedback about how the lesson went more often

Case Study 3: Abby Pearce

Being observed: impact on my practice (long-term)

- More reflective seminar activities that scaffold confidence in classroom based discussions
- When seeking feedback, ask students to focus more specifically on teaching practice e.g. type of activity in a class
- Consider offering choices of activities where appropriate rather than prescribing activities
- Encouraging peer discussions when asking for feedback

Case Study 3: Maggie Rayner

Observing: impact on me

Could see the learning and teaching involved more clearly, as not interacting in it; noticed the scaffolding of the learning more clearly

Nice to be involved in the planning/preparation that teachers do before the session and see the application in the lesson

Able to see why teachers sometimes change the activities they have planned

Can see more now how teaching can be challenging

Good to chat to the lecturer about their approach to engagement e.g. how to involve quieter ones and share own views about this too

Nice to have the opportunity to share ideas with the lecturer – felt they listened

Can see more now from other student's perspectives e.g. international students

Case Study 3: Maggie Rayner

Being observed and being the Research Assistant: impact on my thinking (long-term)

- I still want to be a teacher! 😊
- It was interesting to see different people's perspectives from the project with a similar pattern coming in from both students and lecturers wanting to see this put into place alongside or in replace of mid module feedback schemes
- It was a great experience as I had always been more of the interviewee rather than the interviewer – gained new interviewer skills
- I got to make connections with other students and lecturers I would not have met without this project
- I've received key feedback from peers on my interviewing skills which I can take forward within my management degree
- Overall, a very good experience and **a full circle moment** within the project for me



Project findings across the case studies

- **Creating and nurturing a more peer-based pedagogical relationship**

- Student perspective – being treated as ‘equals’ by their tutors & made to feel that their voices were ‘being taken seriously’ and their views were ‘genuinely valued = core ingredients in building effective pedagogical relationships.
- Staff perspective – engaging in 'meaningful dialogic interaction' with students through the group discussions included throughout CoCO was a 'unique learning opportunity' to learn 'real evidence' to inform and enhance their practice.

- **Developing meaningful pedagogical relationships between students and staff**

To develop pedagogical relationships between students and staff takes time and requires deliberative facilitation and scaffolding to nurture this development. CoCO provides a structured framework with discursive spaces e.g. pre-observation meetings (Stage 2), which are fundamental to establish and nurture these collaborative relationships.

- **Developing and enhancing student confidence**

Many of our participating students talked about how their self-confidence had improved as a result of feeling trusted and empowered when interacting and collaborating with academic staff.



Project findings across the case studies

- **Reconceptualising observation as a collaborative practice**

Staff participants found the model of CoCO a refreshing change from their previous experiences of observation. Shifting the focus on to observing student engagement in the sessions promoted greater student participation in the pre- and post-session discussions.

- **Observation as a cumulative method of inquiry**

Observation as a method of inquiry is best suited for long-term, qualitative work as the detailed observation notes and collaborative sense making are built over time rather than isolated, episodic events. Using it as part of a student-staff pedagogy collaboration means the observations themselves need multiple occasions to generate meaningful data to support discussions between participants.

- **Meaningful student feedback**

Staff participants described CoCO as an 'authentic' collaboration with their students, in contrast to the 'disembodied feedback' that they receive from module and/or end of course student evaluations and peer observations.

- **Authentic staff-student collaborations**

Staff and students coming together to reflect on and discuss their respective experiences of teaching and learning is a natural, authentic approach to creating meaningful and sustainable collaborations between staff and students.



Project outputs & next steps

- Project blogs which share emerging findings (access via project website QR code)
- A practical step-by-step guide and accompanying resources to support the training, preparation and implementation of the cycle of collaborative observation (CoCO) as a quality enhancement tool for students & staff
- Digital case studies providing insights into the learning and teaching experiences and practices of students and staff
- Podcast in which project participants discuss the rewards of CoCO
- Academic journal outputs



Project website QR code





Please share your reflections on the collaborative observation model in our padlet:

<https://padlet.com/vwright31/qaa-collaborative-enhancement-project-eltqco-c4reyzw1hr476mpx>



Thank you

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