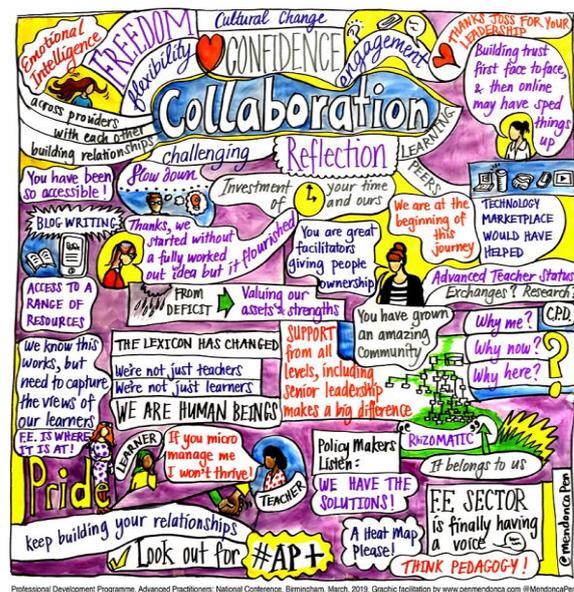


# CASE STUDY: EVALUATING THE AP ROLE IN UNDERTAKING NON- JUDGEMENTAL LESSON OBSERVATIONS

SHIPLEY COLLEGE WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  
BARNSELY COLLEGE AND MYERSCOUGH COLLEGE

'THE INTENTION IS TO CHANGE THE APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE AROUND TEACHING AND LEARNING DEVELOPMENT SO THAT ALL STAFF ARE SUPPORTED TO CONTINUOUSLY REFLECT, TRIAL AND DEVELOP THEIR PRACTICE, INNOVATE AND OPENLY EVALUATE THEIR OWN AND OTHERS'

April 2019



Graphic facilitation by [www.penmendonca.com](http://www.penmendonca.com) @MendoncaPen at Advanced Practitioner's National Conference - March 2019

OTLA 4 OUTSTANDING TEACHING LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT,  
SUPPORTED AND DELIVERED BY  
touch consulting AND CETTAcademy

## INTRODUCTION

This case study is from one of 15 collaborative projects, across a range of cross-sector partnerships, that were commissioned by the Education and Training Foundation to support Phase 4 of the Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment (OTLA) programme.

This phase was delivered by touchconsulting and CETTAcademy to evaluate the role of Advanced Practitioners (AP), as defined by [Tyler et al \(2017\)](#)<sup>1</sup>. The projects were intended to explore the [functions](#) and [values](#) of the AP role within the partnership's quality improvement priorities.

## WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

The main focus across the partnership was to evaluate the most impactful processes and support that APs provide. This involved exploring how APs can be better supported by identifying the key challenges they face and establishing solutions to make the role as effective as possible.

At Shipley College the purpose was to create a revised system which raised the profile of APs, provided high level support across the college and attracted new, quality team members. The revised role supported and developed teaching staff through a process of peer-to-peer coaching, developmental observations and professional discussions, digital badges, the use of Supported Experiments (SEs) interfaced with peer reviews and focuses on promoting the use of technology, supporting tutors in its use.

At Myerscough and Barnsley Colleges: the project provided opportunities to evaluate the AP role to further develop the culture of excellence in teaching, learning and assessment.

## WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

At Barnsley College there was a need to evaluate the model that had been in place for 6 years following discussion raised about the effectiveness and value for money of the model. The project provided opportunities to compare, contrast and evaluate the models from the perspectives of other colleges. As part of this scrutiny a key focus was working with middle managers to see how APs were utilised and managed, and the relationships between APs, managers and the strategic development of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) across the colleges.

Myerscough focused on the APs mentoring and coaching staff who carried out SEs in teaching and learning, They also focused on APs leading a culture of making TLA a focus at team meetings, rather than using such meetings just for business items.

*"The project created a Thinking Environment, based on Thinking, Learning and Collaboration as a focus for reflective practice and CPD."*

Project Lead, Shipley College

*"The implementation of clear research informed AP functionality used in a college wide approach is important to give parity and equality in TLA support, development and opportunity to all teaching staff."*

Director of Teaching and Learning, Barnsley College

*"Often the pace and challenge of college life results in talking about T&L being low in priority."*

Head of Teaching and Learning, Myerscough College

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<sup>1</sup> Tyler, E., Marvell, R., Green, M., Martin, A., Williams, J. and Huxley, C. (2017) Institute for Employment Studies (2017). Understanding the role of Advanced Practitioners, (Education and Training Foundation)

At Shipley College, clarification of purpose led to the separation of the AP role from performance management functions. APs were trained in Foundation Thinking, including the use of thinking pairs, and action learning sets, and devised a mentor/mentee contract that encouraged practitioners to become more reflective and collaborative. These were all features of an emerging model of 'Professional Classrooms' that also used a Thinking Environment (Nancy Kline) to enhance learner engagement.

Barnsley also ran online network meetings so that APs from different colleges could support each other by discussing and sharing their ideas and challenges. and This was a direct result of the recognition that APs can often feel quite isolated as a group of people and that they would benefit from understanding how the AP role is utilised in other colleges.

### WHAT HELPED THE PROJECT SUCCEED?

At Barnsley College the Director of Teaching and Learning prioritised showing how APs fed into a fresh vision of strengthened teaching and learning. Communication with Senior Leadership Team (SLT) also helped the buy in and vision for AP utilisation. Wider aspects included regular communications raising expectations of using APs, visits to curriculum areas, and prioritising AP activity in strategic meetings.

Myerscough moved from graded to ungraded lesson observations which allowed APs to be able to focus their time on helping staff to try out SEs in their curriculum areas. Regular meetings between APs, the Head of Teaching and Learning and Heads of Area were also important in securing the success of the project.

A similar dynamic emerged at Shipley College where the non-judgmental AP involvement was seen as central to the project's success through enhancing professional development. Using APs to foster peer to peer collaboration was also important.

### WHAT CHALLENGES DID THE PROJECT FACE?

Although significant momentum was established the time taken for the necessary cultural shifts to take place will extend beyond the lifetime of the project. It is likely that at least another year will be necessary for impacts to become fully embedded.

Collaboration between the colleges was sometimes difficult due to geography and time pressures. Participation in the online network meetings was sometimes difficult due to timetabling constraints and AP availability.

In addition, APs may not have had the same reach across all departments of a large college which may have compromised organisation wide strategic development.



Thinking and Learning Collaboration. Reflective practice in the classroom with Listening Pairs: learner responses when asked: 'What do you like about the session?'

*"Managers need ongoing input and support to see how they play a part of the wider picture of TLA development and how they can successfully utilise APs to maximise professional practices and momentum."*

Director of Teaching and Learning, Barnsley College

## WHAT DIFFERENCE DID THE PROJECT MAKE?

At Shipley College staff felt better equipped to take part in professional discussions through identifying their own training needs and/or continued professional development. Closer collaboration has resulted in the development of mentoring skills to support all staff and the growing. Lesson observations show that activity related to Thinking Environment is beginning to impact on learners, examples include: increased confidence in developing maths in vocational curriculum, enhanced motivation and engagement, and more frequent checks on learning. Further evidence of this impact will be collated and shared cross college following the finalisation of the end of year learner results.

It has been identified through learning walks that the use of the SE model at Myerscough gave staff more confidence in trying something different in their teaching that they think will benefit their learners. This freedom has empowered staff to take ownership of developments in TLA that meet the needs of their learners in their subjects. Staff have used video and voice recorders to give feedback to apprentices and included the apprentice in this process. This has saved time in writing feedback and ensures that the feedback is received and understood by the learner. Staff have made changes to teaching to prepare students to undertake synoptic assessments.

Midyear feedback from students at Barnsley College indicated that TLA is being discussed and recognised by students positively. Staff involved in these forums have noted that there is specific focus and understanding of learners about good quality TLA, which seems to relate to a higher profile of TLA across the college.

## WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

For further information please visit the Advanced Practitioner OTLA Projects

Padlet page here: <https://en-gb.padlet.com/joss1/collabprojects>

Or contact:

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*“Observations of lessons have shown higher levels of learner progress.”*

Vice Principal, Shipley College



APs collaborating with colleagues at the national AP training events.

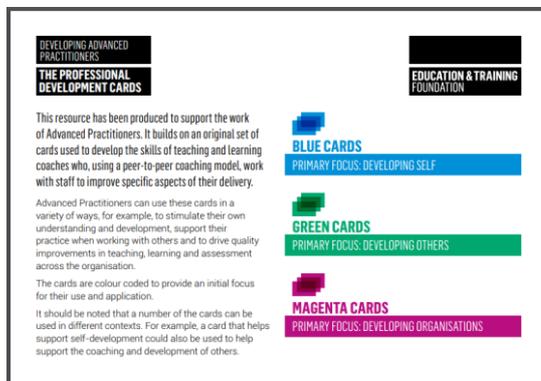
*“Leaders have trusted APs to work with their Head of Area to deliver the appropriate TLA support for each area.”*

Head of Teaching and Learning, Shipley College

## RESOURCES SUPPORTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ADVANCED PRACTITIONERS (OTLA 4) – 2018/2019

CLICK ON THE IMAGE TO ACCESS THE RESOURCE

- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Professional Development Cards



- Advanced Practitioner Toolkit – Practical AP Guides



- Advanced Practitioner Monthly Communications



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