



Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy (2021-2025)

Introduction and Context

The College is committed to providing all students with an outstanding HE experience which equips them for success in personal aspirations and wider contribution to the society beyond graduation.

The College recognises that our students come from a wide variety of backgrounds and we endeavour to develop curiosity, ambition and aspiration in all students, in line with the Widening participation values¹, and to prepare them for employment, enterprise or further study.

The College has developed 'Teaching Learning and Assessment (TLA) Strategy based on the globally recognised UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF)², and complies with the following QAA Advice and Guidance Themes (2018)³

- QAA Advice and Guidance Theme: Learning and Teaching (2018)
- QAA Advice and Guidance Theme: Enabling Student Achievement (2018)
- QAA Advice and Guidance Theme: Course Design and Development (2018)
- QAA Advice and Guidance Theme: Assessment (2018)
- QAA Advice and Guidance Theme: Student Engagement (2018)
- QAA Advice and Guidance Theme: Work-Based Learning (2018)

This TLA Strategy applies to all the programmes of study across the College and the priority is to equip students to derive greater intellectual satisfaction in their professional and personal lives by eliminating the attainment gaps in student success and graduate progression, which is one of the aligned subsidiary strategies, referred to, in the College's Strategic Plan (2020-2015)⁴

¹ OfS Regulatory Notice-1; Access and Participation Plan Guidance (2021).

² UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF) available at <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/teaching-and-learning/ukpsf>

³ QAA Advice and Guidance Themes (2018) available at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/advice-and-guidance#>

⁴ Strategic Plan 2020-2025; Pg. 1-7

The inclusivity principles set out in the 'Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression developed by Advance HE⁵ are embedded in this TLA Strategy to foster a culture of supportive learning environment which facilitates openness and values diversity.

(Please refer to APP Plan for further details)

Consultation Process

The TLA Strategy was developed through a cycle of consultations with staff and students across the institution.

Aims of TLA Strategy

The TLA Strategy focuses on the following aims to deliver academic excellence and offer outstanding student learning experience:

- Teaching: To provide effective and student-centred teaching that is informed by good practice and scholarship.
- Learning: To ensure that learning encourages a gradual shift from a taught to a self-learning approach, better equipping students for the world of work.
- Assessment: To have appropriate, fair and accurate assessment of learning.
- Educating: To ensure a systematic relationship among content development, teaching, learning and assessment

Operational Direction and Implementation Plan

All the Heads of the departments will provide an operational direction and drive the TLA Strategy forward through a supporting action plan to promote an outstanding student learning experience. The departments are:

1. Department of Business and Management Studies
2. Department of Health and Social Care
3. Department of Information Technology
4. Department of Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Management.

The implementation plan will have measurable outcomes which will be clearly and effectively communicated to the College community.

Implementation of TLA Strategy

In recognition of our increasingly diverse student body, all academic and professional services staff at ICON College will adopt an engaging and inclusive approach to reflect on all aspects of

⁵ Framework for Student Access, Retention, Attainment and Progression; Advance HE available at

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/Student%20access%2C%20retention%2C%20attainment%20and%20progression%20in%20higher%20education%20framework.pdf>

curriculum design, development and delivery, learning resources, learning experience, teaching and assessment practices to implement the TLA Strategy.

Teaching

Aim: To provide effective and student-centred teaching that is practice-informed and scholarly-informed.

In order to achieve this aim, the College and its academic staff, or its heads of departments, will provide:

Guidelines on Teaching Practices

The College is committed to providing evidence on the quality of teaching and building 'communities of practice' which encourage innovation and diffuse good ideas across the institution.

To achieve this:

- The academics will consider students' learning abilities and choose appropriate pedagogy to promote student learning based on specified 'Learning Outcomes' and also link them with the final approaches to assessment for each unit/module for every intake of students.
- The academics will actively ask for the students' feedback and suggestions on their chosen pedagogy and adjust the teaching methods accordingly.
- The academics have the freedom to choose their own pedagogy in consultation with the Head of the relevant department and in accordance with the syllabus for teaching their respective allocated unit(s) as long as their pedagogy ensures a full coverage of the syllabuses on time and does not disturb the teaching of other colleagues.
- The academics will amend or update teaching materials as required.

Embedding Inclusive Teaching Practices

The academics:

- are encouraged to use a wide variety of teaching styles and technologies to address different learning styles in a diverse physical/online classroom environment.
- ensure that teaching material is available in electronic form, online on ICON VLE. This practice will enable students with different requirements to customise it as appropriate e.g. changing text, size, colour and contrast.
- are encouraged to create a collaborative environment which facilitates student interaction, such as setting the ground rules for discussion, attending to seating arrangements in lectures/tutorials, anticipating and taking account of any barriers likely to be experienced by disabled students. Where possible, the academics will continue to

introduce activities early in the teaching programme to encourage learners to share their own experiences of universal problems or any specific issues related to the subject area.

Fostering Distinctive Pedagogy

- The College encourages developmental critique and sharing of best teaching practices through peer observations and CPD sessions.
(Annexure-1- Self and Peer Assessment; Annexure-2 Peer Observation Form; Annexure-3 Tutor Performance Audit Form)

Staff Development and Support

The College is committed to ensuring that all staff involved in supporting learning are provided with the training, resources, time for scholarly activities and development to ensure that their teaching practice is evidence-based and employs up-to-date learning tools and technologies. To achieve this:

- All academic staff are encouraged to engage with the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)⁶ and with Higher Education Academy (HEA) activities to seek relevant HEA recognition.
- All academic staff are encouraged to engage in research or scholarly activities and /or professional practices commensurate with teaching responsibilities. The College encourages academics to:
 - submit and publish scholarly articles in highly recommended peer review journals.
 - submit and publish practice-based research articles in the College's internal journal.
 - Share scholarly and practice-based publications within the College community.
- Measure the teaching-related key performance indicators every semester for every intake of students.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- TEF rating.
- student's overall satisfaction rate at Programme Level. (internal survey, NSS...)
- proportion of students participating in surveys (e.g. internal survey, NSS)
- number of students satisfied regarding teaching on the unit/module. (e.g. internal survey, NSS)
- proportion of students participating in Unit / Module Level feedback.
- proportion of academic staff developing their professional qualifications.
- proportion of academic staff achieving HEA fellowship.
- number of papers published in high academic journals.
- number of papers published in blind peer-reviewed journals.
- number of books published by the academics.

⁶ UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF) available at <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/teaching-and-learning/ukpsf>

Learning

Aim: To ensure intended learning that encourages gradual shift from the taught to the self-learning approach.

In order to achieve this aim, the College, its academic staff, or its heads of departments will follow:

Guidelines on Learning Objectives and Procedures

The academics will:

- use learning objectives of each unit in every Course offered by the accreditation bodies or, alternatively, determine the learning objectives of each module in every programme developed by the College.
- identify and communicate the learning objectives of each session in every unit at the Programme/Course-level, unit-level and session-level to the relevant members of academic staff and students.
- actively seek feedback and suggestions on the learning objectives of each programme and module developed by the College.
- adjust learning objectives based on the students' feedback and suggestions.

NB: Any modification to the learning objectives will follow the awarding organisation (Falmouth University, Pearson) modification processes.

Learning Support

The college will support learners to develop independent working and self-management skills. Students will be encouraged to reflect upon the outcomes of independent learning as a basis for personal development planning in relation to individual, educational and career objectives.

The academics will ensure that:

- the students are provided with one-to-one and/or one-to-small-group learning support at all the levels / years.
- the students are provided with pre and /or post-sessional support in English Language, information technology, academic writing skills and referencing by the support staff.
- the students are guided on how to search for valid and relevant academic literature or industry materials for learning and writing assignments.
- independent learning is encouraged from the second semester onwards.
- evidence of self-learning (independent learning) is expected in the second year of study, particularly in the fourth semester.
- books and journals related to each unit are available either in the library or online and are introduced to the relevant groups of students every semester.

Embedding Inclusive Learning Practices

The College is committed to strengthening the ethos around equity for every student and a member of staff, and pledge to embed equality⁷ and reject racism in all its forms to comply with the OfS Regulatory requirements⁸. The College aims to continue to provide a positive learning environment free from discrimination, harassment or victimisation by embedding inclusive learning practices.

- The academics will consider supporting students on a case-by-case basis. (e.g. prepare a checklist to ensure that learning resources uploaded on VLE are truly accessible to all students).
- The academics, in discussions about diversity, will avoid making members of minority groups feel marked out as 'different' or marginalised by efforts to give them a voice. All students will be encouraged to critically reflect on their own cultural values and biases in respect of subject knowledge and learning practices.
- The academics will guide students to avoid stereotyping on the basis of ethnic backgrounds, faith, belief, name, accent, fluency in English in classroom and online interactions.
- Measure the learning-related key performance indicators every semester for every intake of students.

Key Performance Indicators

- Student progression from Year-1 to Year-2 / Semester-1 to Semester-2.
- Number of students who have achieved distinction, merit and pass or alternatively first, 2:1, 2:2, and third class.
- Number of students who have received formative feedback on their work.
- Number of plagiarism cases.
- Number of students satisfied regarding learning on the unit/module. (e.g. internal survey, NSS).
- Number of students who have sought career advice.
- Number of students who have sought academic advice.

⁷ ICON College Equal Opportunity Statement.

⁸ OfS Regulatory Notice-1; Access and Participation Plan Guidance; 2021

Assessment

Aim: To have appropriate, fair and accurate assessment of their learning.

In order to achieve this aim, the College, its academic staff, or its heads of departments will follow:

Guidelines on Assessment Practices

The academics will ensure that:

- the assignments are based on the most updated assessment criteria for every unit provided by the accreditation bodies or an alternative assessment criterion is developed for every module delivered by the college before commencing their teaching.
 - the assessment criteria offered by the accreditation bodies that state requirement of achieving Pass, Merit, and Distinctions should be applied or alternatively the assessment criteria for the College's own developed modules should be prepared in a way that the requirements of achieving, Third, 2:2, 2:1 and First class are clearly mentioned.
 - the students' feedback and suggestions on the assessment criteria of every module developed by the College is actively sought and appropriate adjustments are made accordingly.
 - the assessors are in agreement and have a similar understanding of the assessment criteria for every unit.
 - the decision regarding the number and types of assessments are finalised before the commencement of teaching activities.
 - the employed assessment methods are covering all the learning outcomes in the unit.
 - the assessment criteria for each unit is circulated amongst relevant academics every semester prior to teaching.
 - identical assessment criteria are utilised by different academics who teach the same unit.
 - assessment methods are limited to one or two for each unit to avoid over-assessments.
 - if more than one assessment methods are used to assess a unit, then there should be no overlaps (i.e. one learning outcome should not be assessed twice in two different assessment methods).
 - the feedback on assignment brief is sought from all the academics involved in the teaching of the module and internal verifier needs to approve it before releasing it to the students.
 - random but relevant group of students read the assignment brief before it is officially released. *(This is not mandatory to evaluate the clarity of the assignment)*.
 - the assignments briefs are given to the students no later than the end of the third week of the semester *(This will apply only if the assignment is chosen as one of the assessment methods)*.
 - give a chance to the students to ask for formative assessment of their assignments or presentations before the first submission deadline.
- The individual Heads of the Department will collect midterm feedback on the formative assessments from the students as a part of quality assurance process.

Assignment Support Provision

- The tutors will continue to help students to develop necessary skills and build in confidence to tackle assignments.

Marking and Feedback Guidelines

- The students submit their assignments on a digital platform and tutors integrate formative and summative assessment processes to provide constructive and developmental feedback. The implementation of formative/summative peer and self-assessments in the modules' in computing courses which have group design and project activities are explained in the Course Handbook and are listed as follows:
 - clarify the rationale for doing peer/self-assessment; explain the expectations and the benefits of the assessment strategy and process.
 - create guidelines and rubrics with clearly defined criteria specific to the assignment aims and intended learning outcomes; and, when possible, involve students in contributing to the criteria.
 - present rubrics through learning exercises to ensure learners develop skills to apply the rubric effectively.
 - define the grading scheme and how peer and self-assessments will count towards their final grade in the course, e.g., not all teamwork activities need to be assessed, but students must be informed from the start which ones are being assessed and why.
 - debate instances of unfair or inappropriate peer assessment and how they will be dealt with.
 - listen to team feedback discussions and be prepared to give feedback on learners' feedback to each other.
- In order to foster consistency in marking of the assignments by different assessors, the heads of each department will distribute some samples of marked assignments as a reference for each unit amongst relevant academics prior to the onset of marking activities.
- The academics are required to include justifications for allocating certain mark(s) in summative assessment.
- A sample of the marked work by every assessor in every unit will be moderated or second marked by an internal verifier or another academic.
- The academics have freedom to choose the most appropriate mode (e.g. oral / written), media (e.g. VLE / hard copies), time (e.g. beginning of semester / half-way through / end of semester) and frequency (e.g. one Learning Outcome / two Learning Outcomes etc./ complete draft assignment) to provide formative feedback to students by considering their level of understanding, needs and availability of time.
- After completion of the moderation / verification process, the given mark(s) will be released and feedback on the submitted work will be communicated to the students via text, email and/or ICON VLE.

The Right to Appeal

- An academic appeal relates to the outcome of an assessment or examination, or a student's progression, and may be based on:
 - a. a procedural irregularity in the assessment process
 - b. bias or perception of bias
 - c. Exceptional Extenuating Circumstances (EEC) where, for good reason, the academic body was not made aware of a significant factor relating to the assessment of a student when it made its original decision.
- The following are not normally considered to be legitimate grounds for an academic appeal:
 - a. where a student questions the exercise of academic judgment, that is, the decision made by academic staff on the quality of the work itself or the criteria being applied to mark the work (rather than the administrative marking process)
 - b. where a student disagrees with the conclusions reached by the individual or panel which considered their EEC.
- All appeals will be subject to the Appeals and Complaints Process outlined in the QAE Manual⁹ and Student Handbook (2020-2021)¹⁰.

Embedding Inclusive Assessment Practices

The College ensures that assessment tasks provide every student with an equal opportunity¹¹ to demonstrate their achievement of learning outcomes through inclusive design wherever feasible and through individual reasonable adjustments as required on a case-by-case basis.

- The College will achieve this by making reasonable changes to the assessments. The rationale for this is that reasonable accommodations compensate for any disadvantage during the assessment process and allow the student to complete the assessment in the same manner as other students.

The examples of some reasonable adjustments might include:

- i. producing assessment papers in an enlarged print.
- ii. allowing extra time to complete the assessment.
- iii. substituting an oral presentation with a written assignment for a student with speech difficulties.

⁹ QAE Manual; Part-8: Appeals and Complaints; Pg 92-96.

¹⁰ Student Handbook; Appeals and Complaints; Pg 28-33.

¹¹ ICON College Equal Opportunity Statement.

- In designing assessments, consideration is given to all students, including those with protected characteristics. The barriers which impede access to assessments (such as biased language, inaccessibility and cultural assumptions) are avoided and/or removed.
- Measure the assessment-related key performance indicators every semester for every intake of students.

Key Performance Indicators

- Rate of consistency of the marks gained by one student in different units.
- Rate of similarity of the second marker or moderator with the first marker.
- Number of complaints from students regarding their marks.
- Number of the units/ modules which considered students' ideas in their assessment criteria.
- The nature of the distribution of marks such as normal distribution.

Educating

Aim: To ensure systematic relationship among content development, teaching, learning and assessment.

In order to achieve this aim, the College, its academic staff, or its heads of departments will:

- Continue to deliver the Courses offered by the accreditation bodies or alternatively develop new programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The relevant Heads of the individual Departments or Programme Director will review and update the contents of each developed programme annually. The provided or developed 'Learning Objectives' for each programme/Course (by the accreditation bodies) and units are the prime indicators of the required syllabus or teaching contents in that programme/Course and units.
- The Head of individual departments will conduct mid-term evaluation of teaching and learning practices based on the 'Learning Objectives' and the syllabus to develop a shared culture of excellence in teaching, learning and assessment practices.
- The Heads of the individual departments will conduct an annual review of the programmes offered by the College and seek feedback from current and prospective students. The data collected will be analysed by them to develop an increased understanding of the ways to enhance teaching practices.
- The College encourages and will continue to evolve approaches to teaching, learning and assessment practices by incorporating a wider use of technology which include practices such as e-learning, blended learning, flexible learning and the use of web-materials to supplement class-room based learning.

- The College provides financial support to help students with additional costs and those who have challenging domestic circumstances as they come from diverse backgrounds. These arrangements reflect the complex help that a diverse student population particularly from socio-economic underrepresented groups needs to facilitate their progress into further education/ highly skilled employment.
- The College monitors attendance of the students to identify any potential well-being issues and provide them with the necessary support and confidence they need to succeed in life.
- The College will promote student's employability through integration of work-related experience, wherever relevant in all programmes. For example, health and social care students are being supported to use the Professional Learning and Development portfolio (PLAD) as a tool for developing their practice-based skills and experience.
- The College will continue to encourage students to foster close relationships with the College alumni and learn from their success.
- Measure the education-related key performance indicators every semester for every intake of students.

Key Performance Indicators

- The extent to which the teaching is done based on the intended syllabus/content to achieve the 'Learning Objectives'.
- The extent to which teaching would lead to student learning (based on the student survey).
- The extent to which assessment is based on what is covered in the teaching.
- The number of courses which considered the students' ideas to develop contents.
- The number of courses developed by the college.
- The number of students who sought financial support.
- The number of students identified with well-being issues and were provided necessary support.
- The number of disabled students who sought support related to teaching, learning and assessment activities.
- At least 450 hours of work experience or placement in health and social care settings, which must be completed before the end of the 2-year HND programme.
- The number of students entering further education
- The number of students embarking on a new career within six months of graduation.
- The number of students on College alumni register.
- Graduate Outcomes Survey

Our Commitment towards Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy

1. To continue to recruit, develop, value and reward well-qualified professional and academic staff.
2. To continue to develop mechanisms to support student-staff partnerships across all programmes.
3. To continue to update and invest in learning environments, systems and technologies to support both students and staff.
4. To continue to provide high quality student support and services.
5. To continue to support all students to access and understand the value of work-based learning

Monitoring and Evaluation of TLA Strategy

The Vice- Principal (Academic) and Quality Assurance and Implementation Manager will monitor the implementation of the TLA Strategy. The judgements will be based on the data and information provided in the action plans generated by the Heads of the Departments and the effectiveness of the strategy will be gauged against the achievement of the stated KPIs.

The strategy is subject to oversight by the Academic Board and will be reviewed annually.

Annexures:

Annexure-1: Self and Peer Assessment
Annexure-2: Peer Observation Form (Confidential)
Annexure-3: Periodic Tutor Performance Audit

ANNEXURE-1

Self and Peer assessment

Peer and self-assessment are effective devices for enhancing the learners' learning experience, improving team performance, helping them develop teamwork skills, and adjusting team grades for individual performance.

Research shows that when learners are actively involved in their own learning and assessment they are motivated to engage with course material more deeply and become more effective learners. When students assess their own and others' work they develop a better understanding of the relationship between the assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes, and their capacity to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' learning and skill development.

Peer assessment is particularly important for assessing teamwork process because the only people who really know what happened in the team communication and shared learning experience are the members themselves. Peer assessment can be formative or summative.

Formative assessment can improve learning and help individuals amend what the group might identify as problems they are experiencing at that stage.

The College will implement Peer and Self-assessment in computing course in the modules' which have group design and project activities as explained in the Course Handbook.

Points to consider when implementing Peer and Self-Assessment into a module

It is important to define and clarify the main points to the learners when the Peer and Self-assessment are applied in any module in the course as explained below;

- clarify the rationale for doing peer/self-assessment; explain the expectations; the benefits and the assessment strategy and process
- create guidelines and rubrics with clearly defined criteria specific to the assignment aims and intended learning outcomes; and, when possible, involve students in contributing to the criteria
- present rubrics through learning exercises to ensure learners develop skills to apply the rubric effectively
- define the grading scheme and how peer and self-assessments will count toward their final grade in the course, e.g., not all teamwork activities need to be assessed, but students must be informed from the start which ones are being assessed and why
- debate instances of unfair or inappropriate peer assessment and how they will be dealt with
- listen to team feedback discussions and be prepared to give feedback on learners' feedback to each other.

Peer Assessment Method

A variety of peer assessment methods are reported in the literature. What a learner claims to have contributed to the group and its final product can be verified with a peer assessment in which members rate or rank (or both) the contributions of others. A formative peer assessment early in the process can help members redress what the group might identify as problems they are experiencing at this stage.

For summative assessment, typically learners will rate their peers numerically on specified criteria. Each group will be given a marking criterion that they will use to assess their peers. Each learner will be rated by all other peers in the group. The group mark from peer marking will be calculated by averaging the marks submitted by every learner present on the delivery and discussion of the topic by the group. The learner's final individual mark consists of a combination of the average peer rating plus the instructor's mark will form the final grade. If any peer mark is significantly different from the other peers' marks, the tutor and the group members will meet to discuss the discrepancy and to obtain consensus.

Formative oral feedback will be provided to each group at the end of their presentation. Individual mark and written feedback will be provided to each learner after all the presentations for the semester have been carried out.

Problems can arise if learners feel that they are being marked subjectively by their peers, for example if one person falls out with the group but still does their part of the overall work. In order to avoid such problems, clear guidelines must be followed so that there is no ambiguity about how they are being assessed. Since these guidelines were developed in discussion with the students then they gain a better understanding of what is required of them and what makes effective group work.

Peer and self-assessment forms will be developed for use by each learner to evaluate and grade Peer work in the group.

ANNEXURE-2

Peer Observation Form (Confidential)

Name of tutor observing		Name of tutor observed	
Date		Unit code and name	
Time		Type of session observed	

PART I - Prior to the observation – to be sent to the observer

To be completed by the tutor to be observed and to be passed to the observer electronically before the session to be observed.

Date, time and online location of class	xx/xx/2020
Topic of the session	
Aims & learning outcomes of the session	
Areas in which the observed tutor would particularly value suggestions	
Class and class material access	

**PART II - Peer Observation Form – suggested review areas
(To be completed by the observer during/after the session.)**

Feedback / Feedforward			
1. Structure of session			
• Did the class begin on time?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
• Did the introduction set the scene?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
• Were there clear aims and learning outcomes?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
• Was it clear to the students how this session fits with previous work?	Yes	No	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

2. Teaching style:		
	Strength/good practice points:	Suggestions/development areas
Communication of ideas relevant, clear and coherent		
Start time (on time?)		
Opportunities for students to clarify their understanding		
Teaching tools used		
Student engagement		

Other comments where applicable:

3. Learning resources:		
	Strength/good practice points:	Suggestions/development areas
Resources used		
Supporting materials: clear, recent, engaging		
Type of teaching methods employed and relevance to the profile of the group/size		

Other comments where applicable:

4. Concluding the session observed:

	Strength/good practice points:	Suggestions/development areas
Tutor's ability to draw learning conclusions		
Presence of a summary and reference to the expected learning outcomes		
Delivery skills such as time management, listening skills, presentation skills, enthusiasm.		
References given to encourage further research by the students.		
Homework mentioned or link with next week's session?		

5. Other observations specifically linked to the areas indicated by the observed tutor:

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Observed tutor's comments:

(General observations about the session, what worked well in the session, what would I do differently next time, comments for the observer when an area was identified in advance for feedback – did I find it helpful?)

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Agreed actions:

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**Signature of
tutor observing**

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**Signature of
tutor observed:**

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Date:

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ANNEXURE-3

Periodic Tutor Performance Audit								
Department:		Session:		Tutor:		Month:		
Tutor	Unit(s)	Punctuality	Class Management	Teaching Effectiveness	Student Motivation	Formative Assessment	Tutorials: Assignments/Skills	Action Needed

Tutor Signature and Date:

Head/Deputy Head of Department Signature and Date