

Developing the Observer Lens

January 2026

LXPSkills
LXPTalent



Today we will ...

- Recognise the main features of effective teaching and training practice.
- Focus attention on what learners are doing and achieving, not just on the trainer or teacher.
- Record clear, factual evidence of what they see and hear

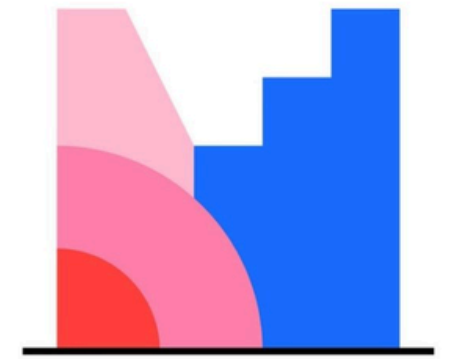


Who am I?

Hollie Barnes-Lomax

- Lover of creating spaces and resources for **all** teachers and students/apprentices to collaborate, learn & thrive!
- Teaching and Learning Excellence Manager at FE college
- Teacher Training lecturer (L3 AET/L5 DiT/PGCE)
- Deputy Chair for SFEC Committee at English Association
- Education Quality and Standards board member for ETF

Let's get started...



Mentimeter

Finish this sentence

Observations are...

Let's get started...



Finish this sentence in the chat

Observations are...

Typical Viewpoints

Observations are....



Stressful
Judgemental
Box-ticking
Subjective
High-stakes
Tick box
Nerve-wracking
Unfair
About Ofsted
Something to survive



Developmental
Supportive
A chance to improve
Reflective
About learners
Coaching
Growth
Understanding what works

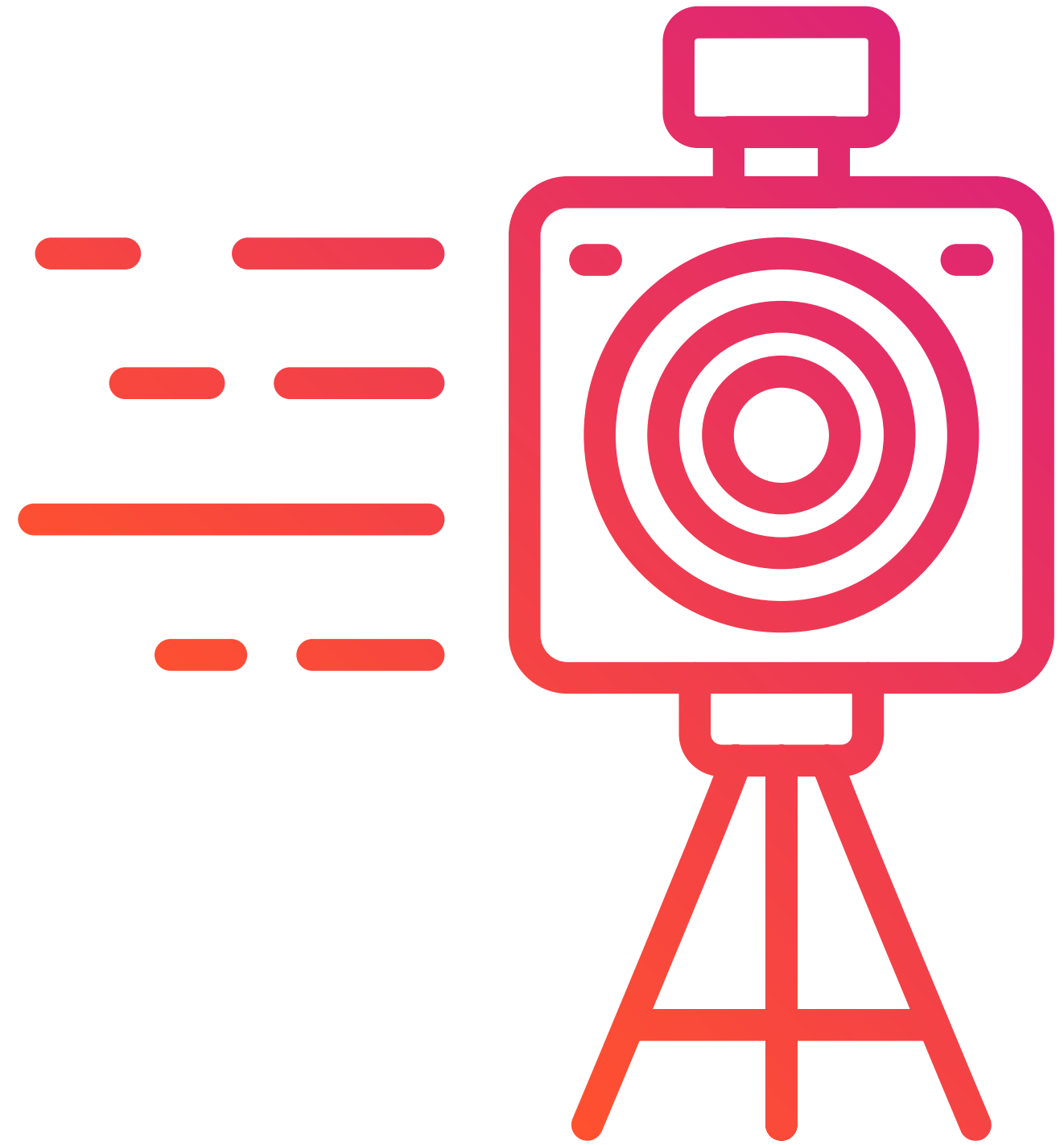
When the observer lens loses focus

- Attention stays on the teacher instead of the learning
- Interpretation creeps in before evidence
- General impressions replace what actually happened



The Speed Camera

Good observation
processes can't be based
on performance alone.



The main features of effective teaching and training

Over to you...



**What does good Teaching, Learning
and Assessment look like to you?**

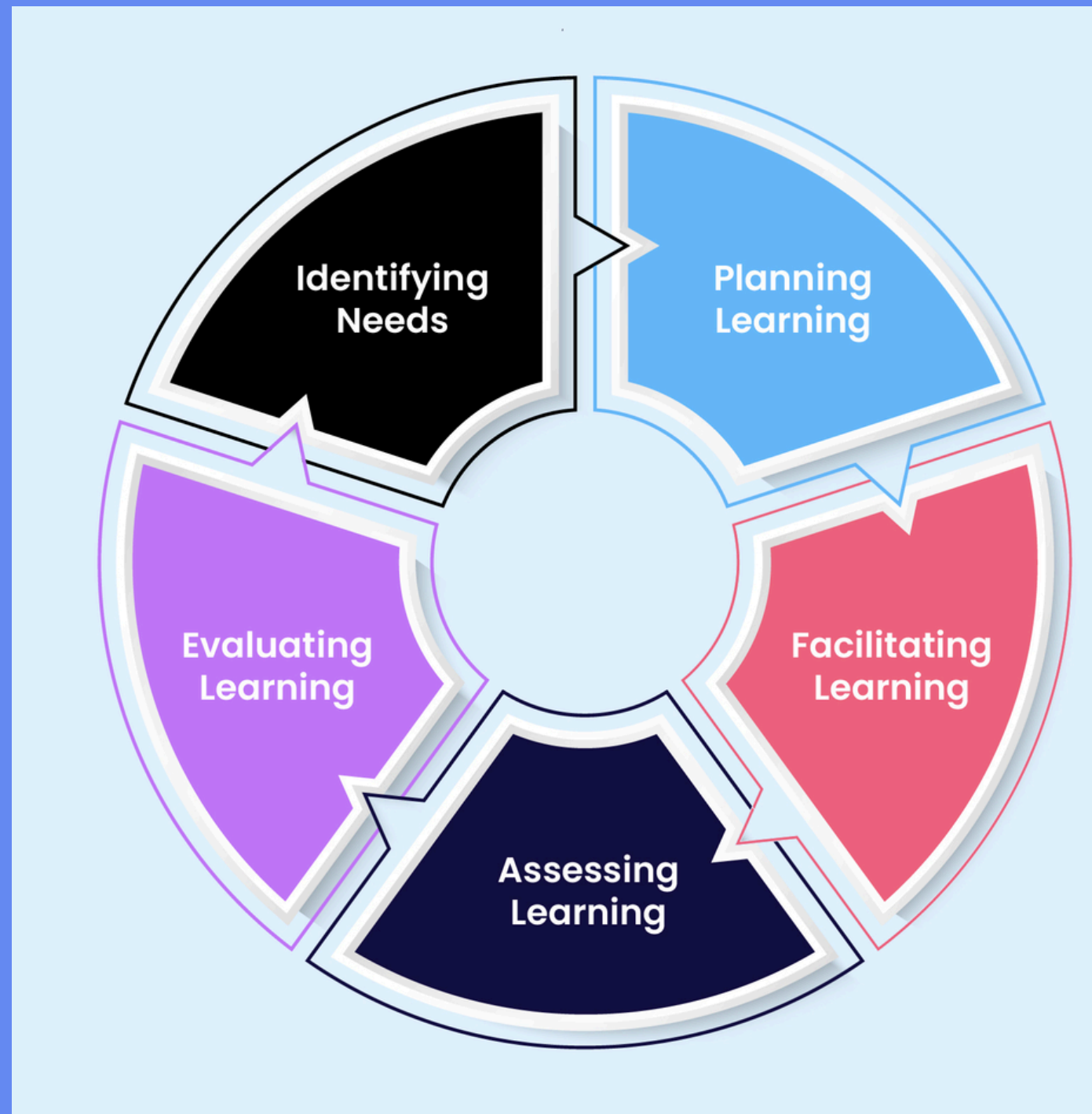
Pop an answer in the chat.

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“Effective teaching practice in further education is **fundamentally a learner-centred process that facilitates learners’ basic psychological needs, resulting in a range of holistic learning outcomes.**”

Smothers, N., Cropley, et.al (2022)

Teaching, Learning and Assessment



Teaching and learning Cycle (Taken from CTC Training, 2025)

- **Curriculum made learnable:** Teaching helps learners understand, practise and apply the knowledge and skills they need for that subject and level.
- **Learners thinking and doing:** Learners are actively working with ideas, skills or problems, not just listening or copying.
- **Assessment shaping the lesson:** Teachers check understanding, spot misconceptions and adapt what happens next.
- **Feedback driving improvement:** Learners use guidance to correct, refine or improve their work or performance.
- **Progress over the session:** Learners can do more, know more, or do it better by the end than they could at the start.

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Good TLA **looks different in each curriculum** because learning is different work in different subjects.



Learner Focused

What do you notice?



When you think about a lesson you've observed recently, what stands out first?

Often it's things like:

- How confident the teacher was
- How calm the room felt
- Whether the PowerPoint was clear
- Whether learners behaved
- But none of those tell us if learning happened.

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What matters most is:

- What learners were doing
- What learners were saying
- What learners were understanding
- What learners were getting better at

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Good observation is not about watching teaching.
It is about seeing learning.

Over to you...

You are observing a session:

The learners are

- sitting in neat rows.
- very quiet.
- behaving
- not asking questions
- writing down learning.
- listening

What are your initial thoughts about this session?

Pop an answer in the chat.



Recording of Learning



NEVER
STOP
LEARNING

What evidence would actually prove learning?

- Learners explaining ideas in their own words
- Learners answering questions that show understanding
- Learners applying the content to a task or example
- Work being produced, changed or improve
- Mistakes being spotted and corrected

Not: silence, stillness
or slide progression

Opinion vs evidence

Opinion	Evidence/Facts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “The learners were confused.”• “The activity worked well.”• “Good engagement.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Three learners asked for the instructions again.”• “Two learners changed their answer after feedback.”• “Five learners completed the task independently.”

Evidence continued...

Which of these can you actually prove?

- “The class was confused.”
- “The activity went well.”
- “Learners didn’t understand.”

Better evidence sounds like:

- “Five learners asked for the instructions to be repeated.”
- “Three learners changed their answer after feedback.”
- “Two learners could not explain the key term.”





From Evidence to Impact

Health & Social Care

- Learners/Apprentices use correct professional terminology in case-study discussion

Business Administration

- Learners rewrite an email using a more appropriate tone

Engineering

- Learners adjust measurements after testing a component

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“If done in the right way, **lesson observation can develop teaching practice** in a way that feels supportive while also performing a role as a quality assurance mechanism.”

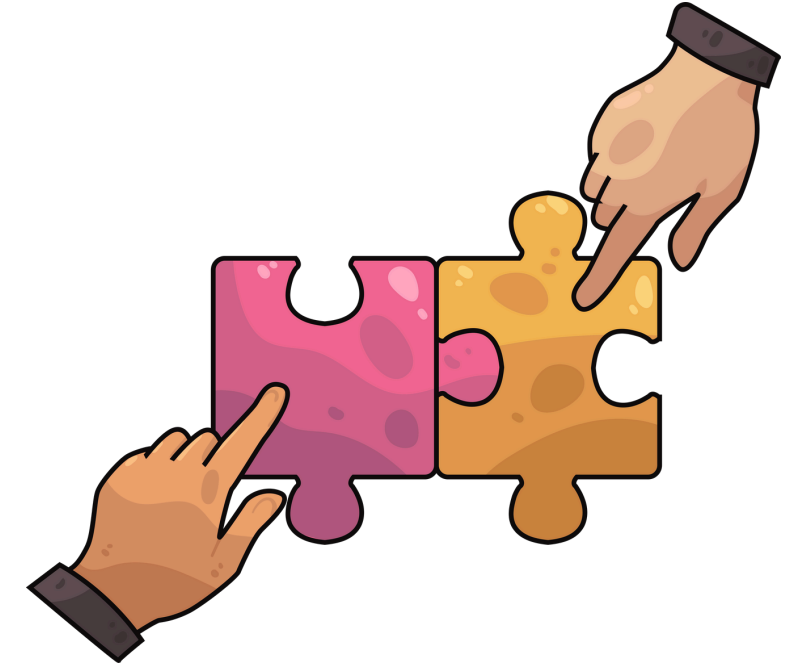
(Association of Colleges blog on FE observation,
2023)

Key Takeaways

- Look at learners, not just the teacher
- Record what you see and hear, not what you think
- Judge impact, not performance



Final Thoughts....



Observe with humility

We are observing a moment, not defining a teacher.

Pause and Reflect

What will you look for first in your next observation?

Pop an answer in the chat

**Thank you for your
time**

Stay in touch

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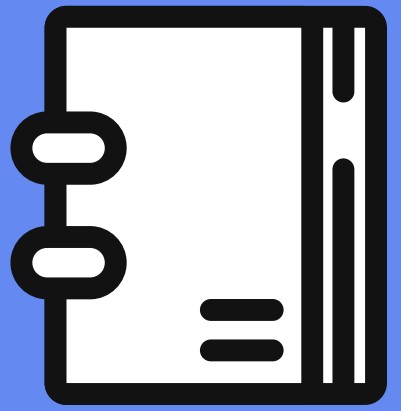


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<https://lxpskills.co.uk>

References and Further Reading



CTC Courses (n.d.) What is the teaching cycle? [Image]. Available at: <https://ctccourses.org/help-advice/what-is-the-teaching-cycle/> (Accessed: 1 January 2026)].

Morris, C. (2023) Can lesson observation be a tool for improvement rather than just accountability? Association of Colleges. Available at: <https://www.aoc.co.uk> (Accessed: 1 January 2026)]

Smothers, N., Cropley, B., Hanton, S., McKay, A. and Williams, T. (2022) '(Re)Conceptualising effective teaching in further education: an exploratory study', *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 46(5), pp. 620–635. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0309877X.2021.1986622>