ACTION TUTORING

infinite potential

Quality report
August 2023

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Contents

Summary

Quality Assurance processes at Action Tutoring continue to grow in scope and depth, thanks to the addition of face-to-face (F2F) observations and the year-long implementation of spot checks. Together with the already established formal quality assurance observation of online tutors, this means that Action Tutoring now has three robust systems for observing tutors and gathering data on their efficacy. The increase in the number of key performance indicators we have been able to set this year shows how the scope and impact of Quality Assurance actions has grown since the previous Quality Report.

As we move forward into the 2023-24 academic year, we anticipate the growth of the Quality Team. This growth will make it possible to expand the number of face-to-face observations which can take place during the year as well as to increase the awareness and presence of quality assurance procedures across the organisation .

Improved data collection from our three forms of tutor observation now makes it possible to make evidence-led decisions about training opportunities for tutors. We can use quality assurance data to support decisions made in other areas of curriculum and training, for example, in the tutor guidance in workbooks, and in the enhancement of our existing asynchronous training modules.

We continue to grow our aspirations by considering how enhanced quality assurance can have a positive impact on other areas of Action Tutoring's operations. We are establishing links with external teacher training providers to explore how we might attract and retain volunteers interested in careers in teaching. We are in the early stages of developing a set of Action Tutoring Standards which can be shared externally and used to communicate our high expectations for tutors.

Quality assurance at Action Tutoring

Action Tutoring is committed to ensuring that our volunteer tutors provide high-impact, effective tutoring sessions. Action Tutoring's vision is a world in which no child's life chances are limited by their socio-economic background.

To achieve this vision, it is crucial that our tutors have the subject knowledge, communication and interaction skills, and teaching strategies to support our pupils to make the best progress.

Monitoring and improving quality throughout the tutor journey

To achieve the best outcomes for pupils and the best experience for our tutors, Action Tutoring has put in place quality assurance processes at every stage of the tutor journey.

Recruitment and screening process

Our high expectations for tutor quality are shared with our volunteers right from the beginning of their journey with us. All applicants are required to meet a set of quality indicators including certain academic qualification criteria before they are accepted as Action Tutoring tutors. We require our tutors to have obtained (or be working towards) a university degree and have a minimum of a B grade at A Level in the subject they wish to tutor, or a related subject. In their application, applicants will need to outline their motivation for volunteering as a tutor, their relevant skills, and experience working with young people.

Our Engagement team screens all applications, assessing whether an applicant possesses the right qualifications and skills to be invited to our initial tutor training. Applicants that do not meet the academic qualification criteria, but who are able to demonstrate relevant experience and skills, will be invited to a video interview with the Engagement team.

All accepted applicants are required to attend a rigorous initial tutor training session lasting around two hours, which our Training and Quality team has designed and is responsible for delivering. The Training and Quality team consists of a group of staff members, all of whom have teaching or training backgrounds.

The initial tutor training covers:

1. who we are, what we do and why we exist
2. our expectations
3. working with young people
4. safeguarding.
5. our resources
6. next steps
7. DBS checks.

Volunteer engagement is monitored by the Training and Quality team during the initial tutor training, and volunteers complete a feedback form at the end of the training. In addition to initial tutor training, online tutors must complete a compulsory e-learning module which has been designed in-house by our Training and Quality team. This module ensures that the tutors have the knowledge and skills to be able to tutor effectively in the virtual classroom.

The compulsory training for online tutors covers:

1. safeguarding in an online context
2. our digital resources (session templates)
3. using the virtual classroom effectively.

Ongoing learning and development while tutoring

We are committed to our tutors' continuous development. All of our tutors receive 24-hour access to our e-learning platform, Looop, once they have attended an initial tutor training.

Through our e-learning platform, we provide ongoing training to our tutor pool to ensure that they continue to grow their skills and expertise. The platform hosts e-learning training modules created by our Training and Quality team with the support of curriculum consultants. The modules are designed to improve our tutors' understanding of education theory, teaching strategies and their subject knowledge. Our e-learning platform also hosts live webinars, which are delivered by our expert Online Programmes staff team and the Quality and Training team.

There are two main ways in which Action Tutoring monitors the standard of sessions once a tutor is enrolled on a programme: ensuring tutors use high quality resources and observing sessions.

Ongoing development of high-quality resources

Action Tutoring stands out from other organisations in that we provide all of our tutors with the resources for their sessions. Our resources are created by specialist curriculum consultants and are aligned with national curriculum age-related expectations. The resources are reviewed annually and designed to prepare pupils for their SATs and GCSE exams. Our tutors are required to use our resources for at least 75% of their session time, and can use pre-approved, supplementary resources from elsewhere for the remaining 25% of sessions if they wish. This balance ensures that our tutors are covering relevant, expertly-created resources in sessions, while also providing support tailored to their pupils' unique learning needs.

Ongoing monitoring of session quality

Our programme coordinators are on hand to provide support for every tutoring session that takes place. Programme coordinators are the point of contact between the school and the tutors on that programme. They ensure that feedback on pupil progress is passed on to both groups to ensure quality of learning outcomes. An essential element of their role involves monitoring pupil engagement and learning outcomes within sessions. Based on what programme coordinators see during the course of a session, they may make suggestions of strategies that individual tutors can use to improve their impact and embed pupil learning.

Formal quality assurance observations

In instances where a programme coordinator has concerns about a tutor's quality or impact, they will contact the Training and Quality team. The Training and Quality team will then organise a formal quality assurance (QA) observation of this tutor. They record the reason for this observation under the following categories of concern:

- pupil engagement
- subject knowledge
- English proficiency
- learning outcomes
- balance of the session
- use of technology
- not using Action Tutoring resources
- concerns during initial tutor training

- pupil feedback
- school staff feedback
- safeguarding.

A formal QA observation will also be conducted for the following reasons:

- the tutor has requested an observation;
- a spot check observation has indicated a concern which needs to be explored in greater detail.

Formal QA observations of online sessions are run exclusively by the Training and Quality Coordinators or the Curriculum, Training and Quality Manager. The tutor will be alerted that they have been selected for an observation at least 48 hours in advance of the session. The session is reviewed against four key areas of competence:

1. interactions with pupils
2. learning outcomes
3. balance of session
4. use of technology.

To evaluate how impactful the session was and how the tutor could improve, a competencies framework is used by the Training and Quality team during the observation. The checklist is used to complete the QA tutor observation framework. (see appendix).

Feedback is emailed to the tutor with the offer of a follow-up phone call to discuss the feedback verbally.

Spot check observations of new online tutors

Spot check observations last 15 minutes, and are designed to gather data on the quality of newly appointed tutors and to identify trends in order to inform the development of our training resources.

In order to pass the spot check, tutors need to display 10 out of 20 quality indicators on the spot check framework (see appendix). If they score fewer than 10, or score 1 or 0 in one particular competency (despite scoring more than 10 overall), then they have not passed the spot check and are moved to a formal QA observation.

Face to face (F2F) observations of tutors

Face to face observations of tutors take place during in-person programmes in schools. A member of the Quality team visits a school whilst a programme is taking place, and selects two tutors at random. An observation of their session is conducted and feedback is communicated to the tutors and programme coordinator via email.

Unsuitable tutors

Once a tutor's application is accepted, there are two points in their journey when Action Tutoring may decide they aren't suitable to continue as a tutor. The first of these is during the initial tutor training session, when engagement and understanding of content is monitored. The second is after training, when a tutor may be selected at random for observation in a session, or their programme coordinator may flag them for observation.
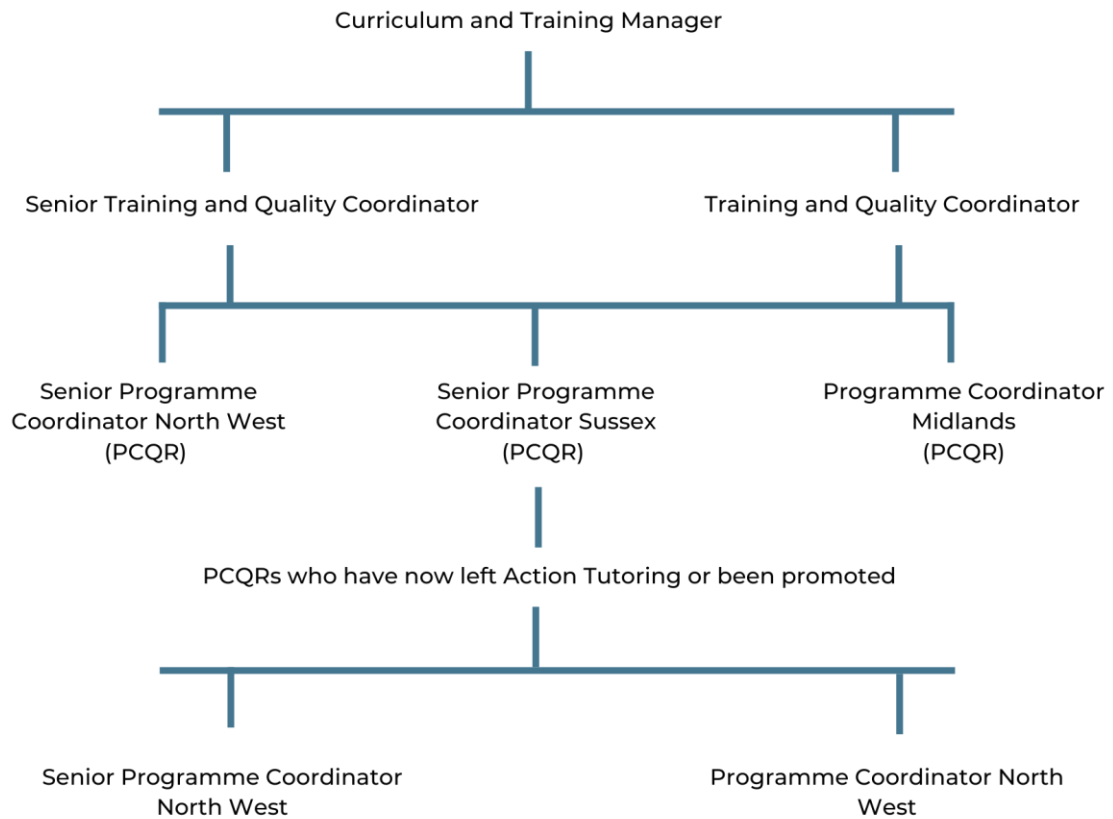
After a formal quality assurance observation, the observer may have concerns about the tutor's suitability. In these instances, detailed feedback is provided to the tutor and any support needed to improve is outlined before a second observation is arranged. If the concerns persist, a third observation may be arranged. If, after three observations, the tutor is unable to make the necessary improvements and implement the feedback, the volunteering offer is rescinded. The tutor is removed from the programme and is unable to sign up to further tutoring sessions. In very rare circumstances, a tutor may be deemed unsuitable from the first observation. This decision would be made by the Curriculum, Training and Quality Manager.

Recruitment of the Quality team

As part of the commitment to enhancing our quality assurance procedures, an additional responsibility opportunity was offered to eligible programme coordinators in Spring 2021. The purpose of this role was to provide scale for observing face-to-face tutoring and online sessions, and to help to shape the ongoing strategy for quality assurance, including the development of a face-to-face tutoring observation protocol.

The eligibility requirements were that the programme coordinator had successfully passed their probation period, and held a PGCE or equivalent teaching qualification. The application required a letter explaining suitability for the role, followed by a written observation task submitted to the Curriculum and Training Manager.

Structure of the Quality team AY 22-23


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                    Curriculum and Training Manager

    Senior Training and Quality Coordinator        Training and Quality Coordinator

    Senior Programme          Senior Programme          Programme Coordinator
    Coordinator North West    Coordinator Sussex             Midlands
        (PCQR)                    (PCQR)                      (PCQR)

            PCQRs who have now left Action Tutoring or been promoted

    Senior Programme Coordinator              Programme Coordinator North
            North West                                  West
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Formal quality assurance observations

During the 2022-23 academic year, **3%** of active tutors were flagged for a formal QA observation, resulting in **59** formal quality assurance observations being carried out. Nine of these formal QA observations resulted in the tutor being made unsuitable for tutoring. This represents 0.05% of the active tutor community, and 15% of flagged tutors.

Where tutors required a second or third formal observation to support them in their development, this was provided by the Training and Quality team, resulting in 86 formal observations conducted over the course of the academic year.

With only 0.5% of tutors being made unsuitable within the academic year, we can conclude that screening processes are adequately developed to ensure only high quality tutors make it on to programmes.

Spot check observations

Spot check observations of tutors take place alongside the observation of tutors who have been flagged. A testing phase for spot check observations took place from April to July 2022, with the Training and Quality team plus five programme coordinators and managers testing the framework and process. Spot checks have been conducted on a larger scale in the 2022–23 academic year. These spot checks were carried out by a trained team of programme coordinators with quality responsibilities (PCQRs), alongside the Training and Quality team.

142 spot checks were completed between October and December. When mitigating factors such as half-term and winter breaks, and late programme starts are considered, this is broadly in line with our target of 80 spot checks a month.

512 spot checks were completed by the end of the 2022-23 academic year, meaning that **41%** of all new tutors were spot checked by the quality team.

89% of spot checked tutors passed their spot check. 11% were therefore flagged for a formal QA observation. Of these, only one tutor was asked not to continue tutoring.

29% of spot checked tutors scored 16 or more out of 20 indicating an excellent level of tutoring.

All spot check data is now stored directly in our database, meaning spot check outcomes can be assessed by criteria. This will allow the Training and Quality team to make decisions about tutor support using evidence from spot checks. For example, the requirement to be 'patient and positive' with pupils was met by 94% of post checked tutors. In contrast, the requirement to 'use a range of strategies to assess understanding' was met by 31% of tutors.

Face-to-face (F2F) quality observations

The aims of the F2F observations are to gain insight into programmes, and to create opportunities for tutors to receive support, praise, and development. There is also an emphasis on collaboration with programme coordinators in both the preparation for the observation, and the delivery of feedback to tutors.

A pilot version of a F2F observation protocol took place between January and June 2023. During this pilot, all PCQRs and members of the Training and Quality team conducted at least one visit to an in-person programme, with the purpose of observing and providing detailed feedback to two tutors. Prior to the visit, the programme coordinator and all tutors were informed that a member of the team would be visiting. After the visit, detailed feedback was provided to observed tutors via email.

16 tutors were observed as part of the F2F observation pilot. Of these observations, one tutor was considered in need of further support. F2F observations will continue into the AY 23-24 with the purpose of gathering data on the efficacy of in-person tutoring, and to provide additional support to those who tutor on programmes in person.

Data capture

All observations are now stored in our database to allow for greater communication between the Training and Quality team and Programme team. For spot checks, scores are entered directly into the database allowing for efficient analysis of outcomes. A dashboard has also been created to assist with this analysis. Formal QA observations and F2F observation data are recorded in a written framework.

The capture of different types of observation data has created a firm base of evidence on which to base the development of tutor training. For example, the training module on 'Strategies for tutoring English' included guidance for tutors on areas which have consistently been seen as weaker during observations. These included the skill of questioning, and strategies for reading longer texts with pupils.

Looking forward to academic year 23 – 24

Recruitment of Quality Team

From October 2023, a member of the Quality team does not need to be a PC. Any member of staff with teaching qualifications is now eligible to apply to join the Quality team. We anticipate that this will result in a full team cohort of seven members. There is also the opportunity to harness the expertise of qualified educators across the organisation. As a result of this change, we plan to use the title Staff Member with Quality Responsibilities (SMQR) to describe these team members.

Key Performance Indicators

Formal QA observations

- The current system will be retained, with up to three formal QA observations being conducted each week where needed. This includes second and third observations of tutors in line with our policy.
  - Target: all allocated and flagged tutors to be observed by the end of the year. We estimate this to be approximately 60 - 100 flagged tutors.

Spot checks

- Members of the Quality team will be required to conduct up to 16 spot checks of newer tutors each per month. It should be noted that other quality responsibilities, such as mentoring educational placement students or conducting F2F observations, will reduce the capacity for spot checks, so we will expect a lower number completed than this year.
  - Target: 250 spot checks by the end of AY 23-24. This would represent 15% of new tutors.

- Spot check data is now stored on our database and broken down by individual skill. Therefore, decisions about training provision for newer tutors can be informed by this information.
  - All new training proposals for newer tutors will make reference to spot check data to support decisions.

F2F Observations

- Each member of the Quality team will be required to conduct three F2F observations visits over the course of the AY. Each visit will result in at least two tutors being formally observed, with feedback recorded on Salesforce.
  - Target: a minimum of 30 tutors will receive a F2F observation and feedback.
  - The Curriculum and Quality Manager (maternity cover) will lead on a decision about whether more than two tutors can be observed in a single visit.
  - The Training Manager (maternity cover) will refer to data obtained from F2F observations to inform the design and content of tutor training opportunities.

GBS placement students

- The Quality team is offering support for up to 30 students on placement from the Global Banking School which will include:
  - 3 observations of online sessions, with feedback given using the framework provided by DBS.

- ○ Mentoring advice and support in the form of emailed feedback.

Data analysis

In order to inform improvements to initial tutor training and ongoing tutor development on our online learning platform, data captured from spot checks and QA observations will be explored throughout the year. The 23-24 training project plan contains explicit references to these data review points, and an integral part of training development or enhancement is a thorough review of the existing data on tutor performance and areas for development. The responsibility for this lies with the Training Manager (maternity cover), in consultation with the Curriculum and Quality Manager (maternity cover) and our two new Curriculum Leads for maths and English.

There will also be collaboration with the Engagement team on how we might use QA data to enhance our recruitment processes.