

Peer Observation of Teaching - Guidelines			
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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of the guidelines is:

- to identify a number of general principles applicable to all observations
- to promote consistency of practice

The University is committed to maintaining and enhancing the quality and standards of teaching and learning. Peer observation of teaching offers an opportunity for critical dialogue and reflection on practice between the colleague being observed (the observee) and the observer.

The guidelines provide details on the administrative arrangements for peer observations, the peer observation process itself, completion of the observation report, as well as opportunities for reflection, enhancement and sharing of good practice.

Three pro formas to support the peer observation process can be found at the end of the guidelines.

2.0 The peer observation process

2.1 The process of peer observation falls into three phases:

- Pre-observation
- Observation
- Post-observation

2.2 Pre-observation

The pre-observation meeting between the observer and observee is important as a means of setting the scene for the observation, clarifying issues and establishing a professional rapport. What follows is a list of areas to be covered at this meeting.

The observer and observee should agree/confirm:

- where the observer is to sit
- whether or not the observer's presence is to be explained to students
- how the observation is to be recorded during the session
- protocols regarding confidentiality
- the practice areas to be reviewed within the observation
- criteria to be used in evaluating the session
- the timing and structure of the feedback meeting
- the completion and status of the observation report

The observee should:

- provide the required pre-session information on the Peer Observation Form 1
- provide copies of the relevant module specification (where appropriate), handouts and other supporting material to be used in the session
- alert the observer to any supporting material located on e-learning

- confirm the session's overall purpose/aim and learning objectives
- relate the session objectives to identified module learning outcomes (where applicable)
- describe any salient features of the student group

2.3 The observation phase

The observer should:

- locate themselves in the agreed position
- be as discreet and unobtrusive as possible
- record details of the observation during the session using the agreed format
- ensure coverage of the practice areas noted on the observation report form

The observee should:

- explain the presence of the observer to students (if agreed beforehand)
- undertake their teaching as usual without further reference to the observer

2.4 Post-observation phase

The observer should:

- invite the observee to provide a reflective evaluation of the session
- seek clarification on issues as necessary
- focus on the observed behaviour
- provide feedback that is specific, constructive and supported by evidence
- highlight particular strengths
- identify areas for further development
- confirm with the observee the next stages of the process
- write the formal peer observation report and sign the report
- forward the report to the observee

The observee should:

- provide an oral, reflective evaluation of the session
- adopt a positive attitude to the feedback received
- recognise that the observation process is intended to be supportive and developmental
- record informally any personal action points or development needs that need to be followed up
- read the formal teaching observation report and record any feedback comments
- sign and forward the report to the *Head of Department*

3.0 The Peer Observation Report

The Peer Observation Report has three parts:

- **Form 1 - Planning**

Information to be completed by the observee in advance of the observation.

- **Form 2 – Observation and Feedback**

A commentary on practice areas observed, to be completed by the observer.

A summary statement on the overall features of the session, to be completed by the observer along with their signature. Feedback comments from the observee along with their signature. A copy should be sent by the observee to the Head of Department within one week of the feedback meeting.

- **Form 3 - Reflection and Enhancement**

An opportunity for the observee to reflect on the session, the feedback, to plan enhancement activities and also strategies to share good practice.

3.1 Form 1 - Planning

This page should be completed by the observee and made available for the pre-observation meeting.

The first part of Form 1 (Planning) requires basic details to be entered pertaining to the session.

Name:		Date & time of session:
Department:	Subject:	Module title:
Observer:	Session length (Hrs/Mins):	Observation length (Hrs/Mins):
Level/Year:	Mode (FT/PT):	Number of students on the register:
Type of activity:	Topic:	Number of students in attendance:

The remaining part of Form 1 has four sections and requires the observee to record:

1. Purpose and aim of the session

The overall purpose/aim of the session is:

2. Specific learning objectives (e.g. objectives linked to knowledge and understanding; subject specific skills; generic skills)

By the end of the session, students should be able to:

This section requires the observee to list the specific learning objectives of the session. These should identify what it is intended that students will be able to demonstrate as a result of the session.

It is important that learning objectives are expressed in behavioural terms, using active verbs such as:

- State
- Discuss
- Analyse
- Apply
- Evaluate
- Debate
- Construct
- Demonstrate etc.

3. Relationship of learning objectives to module learning outcomes

The learning objectives of this session support the following module learning outcomes:

This section requires a short statement addressing how the learning objectives of the session support identified module learning outcomes.

4. Areas in which you would welcome specific feedback

List any areas where you would appreciate feedback:

This section provides an opportunity for the observee to request any areas where specific feedback would be welcomed.

3.2 Form 2 – Observation and Feedback (1)

This section of the Peer Observation Report Form is to be completed by the observer following their observation of teaching. Comments are to be recorded under seven headings:

- I. Clarity of purpose/aim and learning objectives
- II. Planning and organisation
- III. Learning and teaching methods
- IV. Presentation
- V. Content
- VI. Student engagement and/or participation
- VII. Impact of accommodation and learning resources

Examples of the types of questions to be addressed under the various headings are given below. These questions should be regarded as indicative, and their applicability will depend to some extent on the subject and nature of the session being observed.

Clarity of purpose/aim and learning objectives

- Is the overall purpose/aim of the session clear?
- Are the learning objectives explicit and well-articulated?
- Is the overall purpose/aim of the session appropriate?
Are the learning objectives fit for purpose?

Planning and organisation

- Do the learning objectives support the module learning outcomes/overall programme?
- How does the session relate to previous sessions?
- Is the session planned so that it fully addresses the stated learning objectives?
- Is the session well-structured with an identifiable introduction, development and conclusion?
- Is the session well-planned in terms of time management?
- Is there a clear rationale for the choice of learning and teaching methods?
- Have appropriate supporting resources been made available to students?
- Has due consideration been given to the teaching space available?

Learning and teaching methods

- Is the purpose and structure of the session clearly outlined to students?
- Are the methods used appropriate to the objectives of the session?
- Are the methods well suited to the students' level and needs?
- Do the methods used stimulate student interest?
- Have issues of student diversity/accessibility been addressed?

Presentation

- Can the tutor be seen and heard by all the class?
- Is oral delivery clear, well-paced, and appropriate in tone and style?
- Is the session introduced effectively?
- Is it clear to students how the session relates to previous work?
- Is the material clearly structured and easy to navigate?
- Are explanations clear and coherent?
- Are key points summarised?
- Are diagrams/graphs clearly presented and labelled?
- Have accessibility issues been addressed?
- Is the session drawn to a satisfactory conclusion?

- Is there eye contact with students?
- Is body movement, posture and facial expression used appropriately?

Content

- Does the content support the achievement of learning objectives?
- Is the content appropriate for the level, abilities and needs of students?
- Is the content well-researched and up-to-date?
- Are examples of topical illustrations, analogies and references to research appropriate?

Student engagement and/or participation

- What evidence was there of student engagement with the session?
- Was student participation appropriate to the nature and purpose of the session?
- What evidence is there of the learning objectives being achieved?
- What strategies are used to gain attention, to refocus at intervals, and to ensure attention span is maintained?
- Are there opportunities for students to question and feedback?
- Was the session managed in an appropriate way?

Impact of accommodation and learning resources

- Is the teaching space effectively utilised?
- Are the learning and teaching methods employed suitable to the accommodation/size of group?
- Are selected resources (specialist equipment, visual aids, etc) appropriate for purpose?
- Are resources used effectively?
- Do resources support the content of the session?

3.3 Form 2 – Observation and Feedback (2)

This section requires the observer to produce a summary statement reflecting the overall quality of the teaching observed. It has four sections.

Summary of the overall strengths of the session

This section should identify key strengths of the session as they relate to the seven areas of practice.

Summary of key areas for improvement and development

This section should identify any areas for future enhancement activity as they relate to the seven areas of practice.

Summary of the key issues in the areas where feedback was requested

This section should identify key issues in the areas where feedback was requested by the observee.

Observees' comments: (optional)

This section invites feedback from the observee on the peer observation process. Completion of this section is not mandatory, though the report form must be signed.

3.4 Form 3 - Reflection and Enhancement

The purpose of this form is primarily developmental. The form should be completed by the observee following discussion of the observer's feedback (Form 2) with the observer.

1. What did you feel were the most important points to emerge from your discussion with the observer?
2. What changes, if any, will you make as a result of the discussion and reflection upon it?
 - a. to the particular session?
 - b. to your teaching more generally?
3. How will you address the areas for development?
4. How will you know that you have achieved improvement in the areas identified?
5. How will you share your experience and expertise with your colleagues?

Peer Observation: Form 1 – Planning Session Outline

The purpose of this form is primarily developmental. The form should be completed prior to the session and a copy provided to the observer before the session commences. In addition, a copy of the module specification and any handouts/resources that will be used during the session should also be provided.

Name:	Date & time of session:
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Department:	Subject:	Module title:
Observer:	Session length (Hrs/Mins):	Observation length (Hrs/Mins):
Level/Year:	Mode (FT/PT):	Number of students on the register:
Type of activity:	Topic:	Number of students in attendance:

Purpose and aim of the session

The overall purpose/aim of the session is:

Specific learning objectives (e.g. objectives linked to knowledge and understanding; subject specific skills; generic skills)

By the end of the session, students should be able to:

Relationship of learning objectives to module learning outcomes

The learning objectives of this session support the following module learning outcomes:

Areas in which you would welcome specific feedback

List any areas where you would appreciate feedback:

Peer Observation: Form 2 – Observation and Feedback

The purpose of this form is primarily developmental. The form should be completed by the observer during/after the session and a copy provided to the observee within one week of the observation. A signed copy must be sent by the observer to the Head of Department within one week of the feedback meeting.

1 Clarity of purpose/aim and learning objectives

2 Planning and organisation

3 Learning and teaching methods

4 Presentation

5 Content

6 Student engagement and/or participation

7 Impact of accommodation and learning resources

Summary of the overall strengths of the session.

This section should identify key strengths of the session as they relate to the seven areas of practice.

Summary of key areas for improvement and development.

This section should identify any areas for future enhancement activity as they relate to the seven areas of practice.

Summary of the key issues in the areas where feedback was requested.

This section should identify key issues in the areas where feedback was requested by the observee.

Observer's signature:	Date:

Observees' comments: (optional)	
Observees' signature:	Date:

