



## **Procedure 6.10.2 Peer review procedure**

### **1 Introduction**

The Academy's process for observing teaching and learning has a developmental purpose. All members of teaching staff are observed teaching once each term.

Those whose performance is judged satisfactory or inadequate are provided with support from the Academic Head or a nominated mentor. This is to address the weaknesses identified by the observation and to prepare the member of staff to be re-observed.

Programme area summaries of key strengths and areas for development from lecture observations are feedback to programme coordinators and used as part of the Annual Programme Review process.

The Academic Head collates an annual report on lecture observations which goes to Academic and Advisory Board.

### **2 Peer observation/review**

The purposes of peer observation include:

- providing teachers with opportunities, both through observing and being observed in teaching sessions, to reflect on and observation our teaching skills with the assistance of colleagues
- identifying good practice, and needs which teachers can address, to ensure ongoing personal and professional development
- helping teachers to continue to learn from each other, towards developing shared understandings of best practices in assessment, learning and teaching
- giving continuing opportunities to observe students as they learn in colleagues' teaching sessions, and reflect on how teachers can enhance their learning in their own sessions
- allowing teachers to gain from mutually beneficial learning experiences through the processes of observing colleagues and being observed
- helping teachers to learn new skills from one another (old colleagues learn much from new staff and they in turn can teach new colleagues)
- identifying generic development needs, to feed into ongoing and future staff development activities.

### **3 Confidentiality**

Peer review is confidential between the teacher and the observer. Peer observation is not connected with formal processes of appraisal or observations of teaching and learning other than that we expect teachers to confirm that they have done it. However, teachers may well wish to use feedback from their observers as evidence of good practice in performance review.

Since the expectation at the Academy is that everyone who teaches should be observed three times a year, and should observe someone else teaching twice per year, it is natural that feedback from peer observation will be valuable evidence to put forward for performance review.

### **4 What is recorded by the Academy?**

In effect, all that is recorded is that peer review has happened, and continues to happen regularly. In general, a minimum of one session per academic year should be observed per person. The teacher's name as an observed colleague, that of their observer, and the time and place of the observation are reported to the Academic Head who will ensure that peer observation is taking place throughout the Academy, ensuring that all members of teaching staff are engaging with the process both as observers and observed, and providing evidence of this engagement to help outside agencies or professional bodies see how committed we are to maximising the benefits of sharing best practice with each other across the Academy.

### **5 Outcomes of peer review**

Several useful outcomes emerge from peer review, including:

- increased confidence of all involved, derived from feedback on being observed and good ideas picked up while observing others' teaching
- identification of good practice, so that it is more easily shared and built upon
- identification of commonly experienced problems and needs, so that these can be made the basis of staff development opportunities provided by the Academy
- the benefit of focused 'learning conversations' between observed and observers, mutually helping both parties to continue to develop professional skills relating to teaching and learning.

### **6 How does peer review work?**

There are ten steps for each observation but teachers are only involved in the first eight of these. The following guidelines are written with 'you' being the observed. Employees can easily reverse steps 1–8 when it is their turn to be the observer:

### **Step 1 - You choose your own peer reviewers**

Normally the intention is you choose a different peer reviewer for each session reviewed, to optimise the sharing of experience. In selecting reviewers, you might ask colleagues from your own subject group or similar but could also consider approaching staff from different areas of the Academy.

### **Step 2 - You decide what sort of teaching/learning is going to be observed**

All forms of teaching can be considered for review, not just lecturing. It is intended that one observation should be of a classroom-based and the other could be a further similar session, or a tutorial, a practice/work-based learning session or a review of learning materials. Ideally the first session should take place in the earlier part of the academic year and the second at a later time.

### **Step 3 - You meet to set the scene**

You arrange a brief 'pre-meeting' with your chosen observer in advance of the session to be observed, to explain its context and objectives and to agree any particular focus for the observation. For lengthy sessions you should negotiate the duration of the observation with your observer.

### **Step 4 - You plan with your observer your feedback agenda**

At the 'pre-meeting' you plan the date, time and duration of the observation, and you also plan ahead for a 'post-meeting' after the observation so you can get feedback, which should be constructive, focused, supportive and developmental. You choose with your observer a framework for the recording of appropriate observations for your session. 'Form 1' provides a possible framework for feedback but this is only one suggested format and is designed primarily for observation of a classroom-based session. You (and your observer) can adapt this for other forms of teaching as appropriate.

### **Step 5 - The observation takes place**

The observer uses the agreed agenda as a basis for recording observations and suggestions during your session, and prepares to bring this back to hand over to you at the 'post-meeting' referred to above

### **Step 6 - The two of you meet for the 'post-meeting'**

This might be immediately following the observed session. During the feedback discussion, aspects of good practice and developmental needs will be shared. It is your observer's role to assist you in the process of review and reflection with the aim of improving the quality of your teaching as well as highlighting good practice for wider dissemination. Remember you may be doing (or may already have done) exactly the same for your observer – peer review is a reciprocal process throughout;

### **Step 7 - The two of you 'seal the deal' with your joint thoughts in writing**

No-one else sees this unless you choose to show it to them, so you can be frank and direct in your own comments about the session you taught. This makes it easier to revisit the form in future action-planning;

### **Step 8 - You send in the basic data of the observation**

After the 'post-meeting', you contact the Academic Head by email, simply supplying the date, location and nature of the observation session and the name of the observer, thereby recording that the observation has taken place. You are welcome to provide any generic feedback points for dissemination more widely, and any training needs you have identified, to ensure relevant development opportunities can be provided;

## **7 Role of departmental heads**

At the end of semester 2, the reviewing managers collate a record of peer reviews completed by staff, recording simply:

- dates of observations, locations
- names of staff observing
- names of staff observed
- nature of sessions (eg. lectures, seminars, tutorials)

In addition, departmental heads are expected to compile and share a separate anonymous summary of general areas of good practice and development needs arising from the peer observations they oversee.

At the end of the academic year, heads will email a completed record of peer reviews to the CEO / Principal.

## **8 Framework for effective and meaningful peer observation**

- value feedback from colleagues; we all try to gather feedback from students and adjust methods of teaching accordingly, but feedback from colleagues can be even more useful, as they can share how they might approach any difficulties, rather than just identify the problems.
- accept observation as normal: teaching observation is much less unnerving than when visitors from outside are in the classrooms, for example when a professional body is checking up on how teaching is actually working
- it's really good practice for conferences: getting feedback on teaching helps make conference presentations all the more confident and memorable

- make use of all opportunities to be observed in staff development programmes.