

Introduction

Faculties/Directorates are responsible for determining the most appropriate method for implementing the scheme in their area to meet the objectives of peer observation. These are:

- to share and disseminate good classroom practice among colleagues
- to address any staff developmental needs
- to improve the student learning experience.

Peer observation is essentially a developmental activity allowing all staff to learn from observing others as well as from being observed. It is the Dean's/ Director's responsibility to ensure that:

- at a minimum each individual lecturer will be observed by, and observe, a colleague in the Faculty/Directorate each year
- information on development needs and good practice to be shared, arising from the observation and subsequent discussion, is forwarded for action (see 4 below).

Organisation within the Faculty or Directorate

Colleagues form pairs or groups of three for the purposes of peer observation and inform the Programme Leader and /or Dean and/or FLTC Chair of decision. This arrangement provides scope for more imaginative implementation of the scheme – for instance, it is possible to utilise trios or teams of observers rather than pairs and therefore widen and enrich the scope of the discussion about teaching.

- The flow chart attached suggests a way forward.
- Observations should be recorded on the Peer Observation Form. The form remains the property of the observee
- Following the observations the observers should hold a meeting which agrees on items of good practice and any development needs. This part, which confirms the observation has taken place should be photocopied and sent to the relevant colleagues for action.
- **Observation is no longer a formal element of the appraisal process** although it may continue to form part of the appraisal discussion. This may be as a result of a Faculty decision or it may be where examples of excellent practice can inform the discussion, for example where staff have won awards for teaching excellence.

THE OBSERVATION PROCESS

- 1 Pre-observation discussion
- 2 The observation
- 3 Feedback discussion
- 4 Making wider use of the observation

It is necessary to follow each part of this process to meet the objectives of the peer observation scheme:

- 1 Pre Observation meeting/ phone discussion/ email discussion – to cover**
 - Time and place
 - Status and history of the group
 - Context of class
 - Aims / learning outcomes
 - Areas of concern / specific focus

Ground rules for confidentiality and feedback

The observee should complete the first part of the Peer Observation Form and give it to the observer

2 The Observation

The observer should:

- arrive before the session,
- be introduced if presence is noticeable,
- be unobtrusive,
- have a clear view of teacher and students,
- focus on teaching and learning processes,
- continuously check the interaction between teachers and students,
- be mainly concerned with gathering evidence for later interpretation

What should the observer look for? The form is completed during this phase, or notes made for completion later The example below is for a one hour session and is for guidance only. Longer sessions can be observed by agreement. Observees/observers need to agree what will be most useful. For three hour sessions it is sometimes best to observe the first 30/45 minutes and then return for the last 20/30 minutes for the conclusion/consolidation of learning.

Peer observers should be aware that students with disabilities or special educational needs may not be immediately obvious to the observer. Such information should normally be provided before the start of the session.

First 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Room layout, equipment, heat, light, ventilation◆ Interaction before formal teaching starts◆ Opening comments – context / framework◆ Audibility and visibility◆ Establishing working atmosphere◆ Dealing with latecomers
After 15-20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Level of students' concentration◆ Extent and pattern of student involvement◆ Student understanding, as evidenced by involvement
After 40-45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Variety in teaching techniques◆ Sense of structure, purpose, direction◆ Quantity and academic level of information◆ Opportunity fully to understand material◆ Use of appropriate range of AV aids◆ Space for student initiative?◆ Responses to student comments and questions
Closing 5 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Concluding comments / summary◆ Link with future work and wider study◆ Objectives likely to be achieved?◆ Handling of unanticipated needs◆ Appropriateness of activities

- 3 Giving Feedback** – This should be given as soon as possible after the observation and should take the form of a discussion. **The final section of the form needs to be completed now.**

A Elicit the observees viewpoint

- Did it go as you intended?
- What were the strong points?
- What were the less strong points?
- What would you do differently?

B Observer's feedback

- Consolidate what is being done well
- Extend what is done well but might be done better
- Enhance what is satisfactory and might be better
- Remove anything ineffective
- Change / innovate

4 Making wider use of the observation

This will vary between Faculties and Directorates, but is key for the improvement of practice. (See suggested process on attached flowchart). Please note the **whole form** does not need to be sent to the Head of Department. The minimum requirement is that the **observee should photocopy and send the final section "Future Developments", signed by the observer, and any other relevant information to the Head of Department** so that

- there is a record of the observation taking place
- developmental needs can be addressed
- good practice can be shared.
- any generic issues for the Faculty/Directorate/Department can be followed up.

Heads of Department will then forward information on to relevant colleagues e.g. information on good practice for programme leaders to include in the Journal and information on developmental needs to, for example, subject leaders, heads of Department/School, Faculty Learning and Teaching Chairs and the Academic Professional Development (APD).