

LTC11D038



Learning & Teaching Committee of Senate

University Code of Practice
on
Peer Observation of Teaching

Approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee: 2 February 2011
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PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING - CODE OF PRACTICE

Introduction

This Code of Practice sets out the procedure for peer observation of teaching, which is mandatory with effect from academic year 2011-12. It is intended for Schools, Heads of School, Directors of Learning, Teaching and Quality and staff in roles which involve teaching. Schools are free to determine the frequency and details of their own peer observation of teaching schemes, subject to the minimum requirements of this Code of Practice.

This Code of Practice applies to the following categories of staff:

- ATR
- ATS (level 2 and above)
- PBL tutors
- Associate tutors (at the discretion of the Head of School)
- Staff seconded to the University, and whose role entails teaching

In addition, where an honorary postholder delivers an entire module, the Head of School concerned should normally make the teaching of that module subject to this Code of Practice.

This Code of Practice does not apply to the following categories of staff:

- ATS level 1
- Honorary lecturers (except where an entire module is delivered by an individual honorary lecturer as outlined above)
- PG students

It is acknowledged that the categories of teaching staff listed above may not encompass every type of teaching status which may arise at UEA. In the event that an individual in a teaching role does not reasonably fall into any of the listed categories then that individual and their line manager should reach mutual agreement on whether or not this Code of Practice applies to the individual concerned.

The purpose and principles of peer observation

Peer observation is intended primarily to support the personal and professional development of academic staff, and to disseminate and share instances of innovative/best practice in lecturing via Faculty LTCs. For this reason, oversight of the process lies with the Teaching Director in each School, who has the responsibility to produce a summative report on peer observations in their school to their Faculty LTQC. School Directors of Teaching may draw on instances of best practice/innovation contained in the reports to produce their summary report, though the reports will simply

highlight good practice rather than identifying individual staff members by name. The summary report produced by Teaching Directors will constitute, for audit purposes, the formal record of the peer observation process and the confirmation that it has been completed satisfactorily by relevant staff within the School concerned. Teaching Director will retain copies of reports for a maximum period of two years (the period of the observation cycle). These copies, held within the School by the Teaching Director, will then be destroyed.

However, the peer observation process (as required by QAA) is also about monitoring and enhancing standards of teaching. Heads of School have a responsibility to monitor the standard of teaching in their School and, where necessary, to put in place measures that address any concerns that may arise, including those which arise via the peer observation process. It will be the responsibility of Teaching Directors to draw to the attention of their Head of School any concerns that they may have in relation to a peer observation report. If, on the basis of a peer observation report, a Teaching Director has some concerns or feels that a colleague may benefit from some support, he/she will draw their concerns to the attention of the Head of School. The Head of School can then ensure that the appropriate supportive measures are put in place and monitored until a satisfactory level has been reached. This may involve additional peer observations and monitoring. It is expected that Heads of School would only be provided with a copy of a peer observation report in cases where the Teaching Director felt the report raised concerns about standards.

Whilst colleagues applying for promotions may, if they wish to do so, include a copy of a peer observation report relating to a session in which they were observed, the reports produced as part of the peer observation process will otherwise be confidential to the staff member being observed, the colleague doing the observation, the Director of Teaching, and the Head of School. Colleagues serving a period of probation may, if they wish to, draw on peer observation reports as evidence in completion of their Teaching Reports for Module 5 of the MA HEP, but this is entirely optional and there is no requirement for them to do so.

It is expected that Associate Deans and Faculty LTQCs will be able to share Faculty summary reports with colleagues in other Faculties to maximise the opportunities for sharing of practice and innovative approaches across the University. It is also hoped that the Faculty summary reports will facilitate a focus on the outcomes of the peer observation process in our annual UEA Learning & Teaching Day.

Peer observation of teaching is a simple and very effective way to develop learning and teaching and improve and enhance students' learning experience. There are good reasons for undertaking peer observation, in that it can be a source of new ideas as well as a means of affirming existing practice and learning from each other. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) also expects that a University that is appropriately managing academic standards and the quality of students' learning experiences will be undertaking some form of observation of teaching. Those Schools / subject areas that can demonstrate that they have peer observation procedures in place are likely to be more able to demonstrate to students, prospective students and other internal and external stakeholders that excellence in teaching is taken seriously and that there is equitable treatment of students in that observation of teaching procedures applies on an institutional basis.

Peer observation is one part of the process of evaluating learning and teaching. Other elements include student feedback, self-reflection, assessment via mechanisms such as

the postgraduate taught programme in Higher Education Practice (HEP), which is a University requirement for all academic staff, and any requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB).

It is important to be clear about the purposes of peer observation of teaching. It is **formative** – designed to develop and enhance the practice of both the observer and the observed, and its outcomes will not inform promotion procedures unless voluntarily used by the individual concerned, nor will they be used in relation to any disciplinary procedures. However, issues may arise from peer observation which may require the intervention of the School's Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality and / or the Head of School.

Characteristics and requirements of successful peer observation

Many staff, under pressure in terms of time, student numbers and competing priorities, may not immediately be receptive to the benefits of peer observation. Teaching is often professionally isolated. It is seen as a personal activity and it is difficult to separate the person from the role. Even staff who team-teach may spend most of their time focussing on structure and content rather than process. Used constructively and imaginatively, however, there are benefits from peer observation, but to be really successful peer observation needs:

- to be part of a whole School / Sector commitment;
- senior staff who both support and participate in the process. The School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality should keep an overview of the process;
- to be planned with an appropriate lead-in time. Planning for peer observation could be built into appraisal discussions if the appraisee so wishes;
- to have outcomes and a dissemination strategy (School / Sector / Faculty-wide meetings);
- to be regular – probationers must be peer-observed every year, moving to a **minimum** of once every two years after completion of the five-year probationary period (more often if appropriate);
- to be part of the University's wider strategy for developing learning and teaching as agreed by Senate and led by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

All observation of learning and teaching should be based on the following principles:

- that there are different ways of being an effective teacher;
- that teaching should be prepared with regard to the intended objectives / outcomes of a session, which itself should be prepared with regard to the intended objectives / outcomes of the module / course. In this respect, teaching is a planned activity;

- that teaching and learning styles should be capable of being explained and justified and be relevant to the session / module / course and to the intended objectives / outcomes;
- that a variety of teaching sessions should be observed over the course of an individual's career, ensuring different teaching formats are observed where applicable, eg for an individual teaching by a variety of lectures, seminars, lab work etc;
- that existing good practice should be recognised and encouraged as part of the process;
- that peer observation of learning and teaching should be 'light touch' and regarded as part of a process towards good teaching practice, which also involves evaluation by students, course review, etc;
- that it must take place regularly with respect to every teacher and should be 'signed off' by the School to the relevant Faculty, with an item on peer observation of teaching being included on each Faculty LTQC agenda once a year;
- that there should be evidence of wider inter-School / inter-Faculty dissemination for example at University Learning and Teaching days.

In this context peer observation is intended to:

- provide information from an appropriate colleague (any ATR or ATS member of faculty is eligible to act as an observer) on **selected** aspects of teaching quality;
- encourage discussion between colleagues in order to support the planning and implementation of enhancements in practice.

Stages of the process

Step One

- The staff member concerned agrees, in consultation with their Head of School / School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality / designated delegate, an appropriate colleague to be their peer observer. The observer could be a colleague from outside the staff member's subject area, School or even Faculty. The observer will usually be of similar role/ seniority to the staff member concerned.
- At this point, both the staff member and the peer observer should have access to (may be electronically) and read this Code of Practice so that they can follow the procedure.
- The staff member and peer observer should also agree on the format the written feedback will take. A variety of forms is appended (Appendix A) and Schools are strongly encouraged to use one or more of these.
- The staff member discusses with the observer which aspects of their teaching or their students' learning they would like to focus on and would particularly like to receive feedback on.

- The staff member and peer observer agree which session is to be observed (lecture, seminar, workshop, laboratory practical, research supervision). One session per cycle should be observed, with a variety of sessions being included over time.

Step Two

- The period of observation should be approximately one hour on each occasion.
- The staff member and observer agree where the observer will sit during the session.
- At the session, the staff member should explain the presence of the observer to students.

Step Three

- Feedback will take the form of a discussion between observer and staff member immediately after the observed session, followed by the observer's written feedback on the chosen form.
- All feedback should be completed as quickly as possible, with written feedback being completed and delivered preferably within the week.
- Comments on the feedback form should focus on 'points of good practice' and 'areas for development' rather than 'strengths and weaknesses'.
- Written feedback should be confidential to the observer, the staff member and his / her line manager. It must not form part of any performance review or disciplinary procedure.
- The completed form is read and signed by both the staff member and the observer.
- The form is then sent to the staff member's Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality, who reads the completed form, enters their own comments and proposals for development for the staff member if applicable, and signs and dates the form.
- The original form is then held in the School with a copy sent to the staff member.
- It is intended that only two copies of the form be retained – one by the School and one by the staff member.

The observed session

The staff member and the peer observer should have a number of areas for consideration and questions in mind when discussing and designing the process of observation and deciding what is to be the focus of the feedback. These could include:

• Planning the session:

How does the plan relate to previous sessions?

Are there clear aims and objectives?

What are the intended learning outcomes?

How does the session fit in with the overall programme for the module / course?

Are resources (IT, handouts, tasks) available at the appropriate points?

· ***Introducing the session to the students:***

Are the intended learning objectives clear?
Is it clear to the students how this session fits with previous work?
Does the introduction set the scene?
Is there a clear overview for the session?

· ***Delivering and developing the plans:***

Is the communication of ideas relevant, clear and coherent?
Is there an opportunity for students to clarify their understanding?
How is this handled?

· ***What strategies are used to gain attention, to refocus at intervals and to ensure attention is maintained?***

Are the students engaged and motivated?
Are the teaching methods appropriate to the tasks in hand?
Are there opportunities for the students to solve problems, think, question and feed back?
What modes of delivery are used? Is more than one mode used?

· ***Concluding the session***

Is the session drawn to a satisfactory conclusion (or an on-going series of conclusions)?
Is there a summary of the main ideas or a review of the point reached so far?
Does the staff member attempt to evaluate whether the intended learning outcomes have been met?
Does the conclusion look forward to the next session?

· ***The observer's perspective***

What relevance did the experience have for the observer's own practice?
What might he/she do differently?

· ***Environment***

What impact did the environment (size of room, numbers of students, heat, light, and time of day) have on the teacher and the observer and the students?

Giving feedback

Some points to bear in mind when giving feedback:

- it is generally expected that oral feedback / discussion will take place immediately after the observed session;
- the person observed should give their own evaluation first;
- when giving feedback, begin by focusing on the positive;

- any critical comments should be constructive, clear and specific rather than general;
- focus should be on the learning and teaching issues raised, not on the person;
- feedback may include suggestions but should not include advice;
- remember there are lots of ways of being a good teacher.

Dissemination

If Schools are to make the most of peer observation they need to:

- ensure that good practice is shared through regular meetings or other fora within and across Schools and Faculties, for example at a staff development, School planning/strategy event or Learning and Teaching Day;
- discuss more general learning outcomes to aid the improvement and enhancement of students' experience of learning and teaching and the expertise of the staff member;
- identify and remedy common shortcomings, ensuring that action on commonly occurring areas for development is taken at group level, as well as at individual level;
- contribute to an item on peer observation of teaching being included on each Faculty LTQC agenda once per academic year.

Dissemination should be a key part of the peer observation process.

APPENDIX A - FORMS

This form is available as a Word document at: (tba)



University of East Anglia

Learning and Teaching Committee

REPORT FORM TYPE 1 - UEA - PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

Please use this form as a guideline. Complete ALL or just SOME of the sections, according to the individual situation.

Name of staff member being observed:	Observer's name:	
School:		
A pre-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:		
Nature of activity being observed (lecture / seminar / workshop / other [if other, please identify])		
Date:	Time:	Duration:
Location:		
Course code (or codes):	and / or	
Module code (or codes):		
Description of activity (give a brief outline, mentioning how complex the activity is)		
Any significant or critical moments		
Student reaction and engagement		

Other comments	
A post-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:	
Points arising from the observation, eg good practice noted; areas for development noted:	
Staff member's signature:	Observer's signature:
Name of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality: Comments of School Director of LTQ (including proposals for development and/or common areas identified for action and dissemination, if applicable):	
Signature of School Director of LTQ:	Date:
Staff member's next observation to be carried out by the end of (month) (year) (Code of Practice sets out normal frequency but Director may request next observation sooner if it is felt necessary)	
Original → filed in School; Copy → Staff member	

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University of East Anglia
Learning and Teaching Committee

REPORT FORM TYPE 2 - UEA - PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

Please use this form as a guideline; complete all, or just some, sections, according to the individual situation.

Name of staff member being observed:		Observer's name:	
School:			
A pre-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:			
Nature of activity being observed (lecture / seminar / workshop / other [if other, please identify])			
Date:	Time:	Duration:	
Location:			
Course code (or codes):		and / or	
Module code (or codes):			
Description of activity (give a brief outline, mentioning how complex the activity is)			
Aspects of the teaching activity:		Please comment on aspects as appropriate:	
Clarity of objectives			
Planning and organisation			
Methods / approach			
Delivery and pace			
Content (eg currency, accuracy, relevance, level, use of examples,			

match to student needs) Use of learning resources	
Student reaction and engagement	
Other comments	
A post-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:	
Points arising from the observation, eg good practice / areas for development noted:	
Staff member's signature:	Observer's signature:
Name of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality: Comments of School Director of LTQ (including proposals for development and/or common areas identified for action and dissemination if applicable):	
Signature of School Director of LTQ:	Date:
Staff member's next observation to be carried out by the end of (month) (year) (Code of Practice sets out normal frequency but Director may request next observation sooner if it is felt necessary)	
Original → filed in School; Copy → Staff member	

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Learning and Teaching Committee

REPORT FORM TYPE 3 - UEA - PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

Please use this form as a guideline. Complete all or just some of the sections, according to the individual situation.

Name of staff member being observed:	Observer's name:	
School:		
A pre-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:		
Nature of activity being observed (lecture / seminar / workshop / other [if other, please identify])		
Date:	Time:	Duration:
Location:		
Course code (or codes):	and / or Module code (or codes):	
Description of activity (give a brief outline, mentioning how complex the activity is)		
Aspects of the teaching activity:	Please comment on aspects as appropriate:	
Intended outcomes stated at start?		
Planning and organisation		
Delivery and pace		
Content (eg currency, accuracy, relevance, level, use of examples)		
Other comments on teaching		
Interaction with students:	Please comment on interaction as appropriate:	
Setting the scene		
Strategies to gain / hold attention		

<p>Content matched student needs?</p> <p>Dealing with questions /challenges</p> <p>Other comments on interaction</p>	
<p>Other general comments</p>	
<p>A post-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:</p>	
<p>Points arising from the observation, eg good practice / areas for development noted:</p>	
<p>Staff member's signature:</p>	<p>Observer's signature:</p>
<p>Name of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality: Comments of School Director of LTQ (including proposals for development and/or common areas identified for action and dissemination if applicable):</p> <p>Signature of School Director of LTQ: Date:</p>	
<p>Staff member's next observation to be carried out by the end of(month) (year) (Code of Practice sets out normal frequency but Director may request the next observation sooner if it is felt necessary)</p>	
<p>Original → filed in School; Copy → Staff member</p>	

This form is available as a Word document at: (tba)



University of East Anglia

Learning and Teaching Committee

REPORT FORM TYPE 4 - UEA - PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

Please use this form as a guideline. Complete all or just some of the sections, according to the individual situation.

Name of staff member being observed:		Observer's name:	
School:			
A pre-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:			
Nature of activity being observed (lecture / seminar / workshop / other [if other, please identify])			
Date:		Time:	Duration:
Location:			
Course code (or codes):		and / or Module code (or codes):	
Description of activity (give a brief outline, mentioning how complex the activity is)			
Aspects of the teaching activity:		Please comment on aspects as appropriate:	
Intended outcomes stated at start?			
Planning and organisation			
Delivery, pace, tone, audibility			
Content (eg currency, accuracy, relevance, level, use of examples)			
Use of learning resources (eg visual aids) and of other resources (eg the teaching space, available facilities)			
Intended outcomes revisited at end?			
Other comments on teaching			
The student experience:		Please comment on student experience as appropriate:	
What students seemed to be doing during the lecture			

<p>Were students kept actively learning throughout lecture? Content matched student needs?</p> <p>How were students' questions invited and handled?</p> <p>Other comments on student experience</p>	
<p>Other general comments</p>	
<p>A post-observation discussion should be held. Points arising from that discussion:</p>	
<p>Points arising from the observation, eg good practice / areas for development noted:</p>	
<p>Staff member's signature:</p>	<p>Observer's signature:</p>
<p>Name of School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality: Comments of School Director of LTQ (including proposals for development and/or common areas identified for action and dissemination if applicable):</p> <p>Signature of School Director of LTQ: Date:</p>	
<p>Staff member's next observation to be carried out by the end of(month) (year) (Code of Practice sets out normal frequency but Director may request the next observation sooner if it is felt necessary)</p>	
<p>Original → filed in School; Copy → Staff member</p>	



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SCHOOL RESPONSE FORM TO ISSUES ARISING FROM PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

For completion by Schools

School		Academic Year	
Summary of issues prepared by		Position	
		Date	
Response prepared by		Position	
		Date	
Action Plan Reviewed by <small>(To be completed at an appropriate point after consideration by the FLTQC)</small>		Position	
		Date	
For completion by the Faculty LTQC			
School Response and Action Plan approved by		Date	



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Learning and Teaching

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Committee

FACULTY REPORT FORM FROM THE FACULTY LEARNING, TEACHING & QUALITY COMMITTEE ON PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

Faculty		
Academic Year		
Report Prepared by		
Date		
Please attach	Copies of the School responses considered by FLTQC	
<p>The Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee has reviewed the School responses to issues arising from Peer Observation of Teaching and confirms that each School has given appropriate consideration to the issues raised and has prepared an appropriate Action Plan</p>		
<p>In addition to the issues identified in the individual School responses, the Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Office wishes to draw the following general issues or themes to the attention of the Learning and Teaching Committee of Senate:</p>		

The Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee has identified the following points as being worthy of dissemination:

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The Faculty Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee is taking the following steps to disseminate the themes identified above:

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Please complete this report and return (in electronic format) to the Learning and Teaching Service by (date to be advised)

Date received by L&T Service	
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