Guidance on Peer Development of Teaching

1. What is Peer Development of Teaching (PDT)?

1.1 A flexible means to promote development and sharing of best practice in education within Schools and the University.

1.2 An ongoing process to ensure continuous enhancement of the undergraduate, PGT, and PGR learning experience across the University.

1.3 An encouragement to staff involved in teaching to develop their learning and teaching practice through dialogue with colleagues and reflective practice.

1.4 A means to enhance trust and positive working relations between staff engaged in teaching

1.5 A formal mechanism by which excellence and achievements in educational practice can be recorded, recognised, and feed into Schools' strategic developments in learning and teaching.

1.6 A recognition that Schools already have in place an effective and robust set of quality assurance mechanisms (e.g., module evaluations, external examiner reports, student outcome measures) that ensure that sufficient data concerning staff competence are already available.

2. What PDT is not

2.1 It is not limited to, but can include direct observation of lectures or other teaching and learning activities.

2.2 It is not a mechanism for quality assurance or a mechanism for providing additional support for staff who have had development needs and/or performance management issues identified.

2.3 It is not a judgemental process, carried out for evaluative purposes, or connected with staff appraisal or probationary requirements.

2.4 It does not include probationary staff who are currently engaged in Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP).

3. What can PDT include?

3.1 Any aspect of teaching practice, including, but not limited to:

- Development and/or implementation of specific teaching techniques (e.g., active-learning, group work, use of online resources);

- Incorporation of new educational technologies or materials, including e-learning resources;

- Module or programme design;

- Tutorial or pastoral support, link tutoring, or mentoring students;

- Marking and feedback of assessments or choice of particular teaching strategies;

- Management of tutorial or large group seminar group teaching;

- Use of group assessment activities;

- Use of online resources to manage learning groups and discussions;

- Provision of formative self-assessment opportunities;

- Provision of feedback to students on their work;

- Undergraduate or postgraduate research supervision;

- Promotion and management of reflective learning (e.g., PDP);

- Team teaching.

4. How should PDT be carried out?

4.1 A wide range of methods should be acceptable across participating individuals, so long as methods employed are suitable for the subject matter of PDT.

4.2 These might range from single, direct, observations of lectures or seminars to ongoing cooperative feedback on module or programme development.

4.3 Staff should choose a colleague or colleagues with whom they can work effectively and who contribute positively to PDT.

4.4 Reviewers might, for example, be selected on one or more of the following bases:

4.4.1 Specifically relevant professional or subject expertise.

4.4.2 Ability to provide a new or valued perspectives or insights on a particular issue.

4.4.3 Familiarity with the unit or programme to be reviewed.

4.5 Staff may wish to:

4.5.1 Work with a single reviewer or with a small group of colleagues with whom they can engage in single instance or ongoing collaborative review (e.g., discussion of unit design, development of active-learning techniques or e-learning resources). Such collaborative review is already common practice in units involving team-teaching.

4.5.2 Receive targeted advice from a peer or mentor on specific instances of teaching-related activity.

4.6 Each, any, or all of these instances of peer review should be acceptable as meeting the School's requirement for engagement in peer review.

5. What strategies can I use?

5.1 Make notes directly on to the observation form; or

5.2 Take notes using a time frame either at: key points or every 10 minutes. Then, check student behaviour (appeared interested, note-taking, discussing issue, restless etc) at these points and couple with content of session at the time. From notes complete the form which can provide a focus for the feedback session later;

5.3 Sit at the back so you can see all students.

6. What should I observe?

6.1 There are no universal criteria for evaluating teaching – every review is context-specific. Consider aspects of the content and the learning environment created.

7. Delivering the Content

- Did the lecturer recap on previous session?

- Did the lecturer introduce clear learning outcomes for the session?

- Were essential points emphasised?

- Where applicable, were the examples used inclusive, reflecting the diversity of human culture and experience?

- Was the delivery too fast, too slow or just right in your view?

- Was the material too much, too little, just right in your view?

- Was the material about right for the level of the students?

- Were questions used to stimulate thought?

- Were teaching aids clear (visually and conceptually?

- Did lecturer summarise key points?

8. Students and their Engagement in the Session

8.1 Did students appear engaged in the session (attentive, restless?);

8.2 What activities did students mainly perform (note-taking, group work, large group interactions, quizzes etc);

8.3 If there was a small group, were small group techniques used to engage students?

8.4 In small group activities, did interactions occur between student and lecturer only, or did they include student-student interactions?

8.5 Did the lecturer have good facilitation skills, good questioning skills, encourage group discussion?

8.6 Did the lecturer create a positive and inclusive atmosphere inviting classroom participation?

8.7 Was the lecturer respectful of students?

8.8 Did the lecturer show awareness of methods to increase student engagement (especially for small group work - i.e. 20 or under)?

9. Resources

9.1 How were the handouts?

9.2 Is there a website for the module?

9.3 Any other resources for the module?

9.4 How was the teaching room?

9.5 Did the equipment work?

9.6 Did the lecturer feel unsure of the equipment in the LT and if so why?

10. Anything else about the room?

10.1 Were resources available in alternative formats if required?

11. How should I debrief and give feedback?

11.1 Be descriptive rather than judgmental;

11.2 Be supportive and constructive;

11.3 Encourage discussion as this promotes a reflective dialogue e.g. consider learning outcomes, did the session meet those outcomes, were there other ways to give/expand on this session/would the observed like to develop some aspect of his/her teaching?;

11.4 Reflect on what you observed in the session (this is why a time log is quite good);

11.5 Be specific rather than general – what did you like, what did you feel could be further developed?

11.6 Don't say this type of statement 'You didn't do xxx', better to say: 'It seemed to me that' or 'I felt that' xxxx;

11.7 Respect confidentiality.

12. What do I get out of this?

12.1 You get ideas on how to teach (or not) in a particular way.

12.2 The observation process itself is dissemination of teaching practice within the School.

12.3 If you observe, for example, within a subject area or a year, then pool ideas with respective convenors on delivery for a unit or a particular level within a programme.

13. Suggested Reading

Crutchley, D., Nield, K., & Jordan, F. (2005). Educational Developments, 6, 1-4
This paper firstly discusses problems Moving on from Peer Observation of Teaching: a collaborative development utilising the principle associated with standard peer-observation of peer-support schemes in practice and secondly describes, as a means of overcoming these problems, the development and implementation of a "peer-support" scheme, not dissimilar in feel to the working group's ideas for "peer development". It is also usefully describes the actual pragmatics of implementation of evaluation (methods, timelines, etc.).

Gosling, D. (2005). Peer observation of teaching. SEDA Paper 118. London: Staff and Educational Development Association
This is a classic reference on peer observation that provides detailed exposition of three types of observation scheme "evaluative", "developmental", and "collaborative".

Lomas, L., & Nicholls, G. (2005). Enhancing quality through peer review of teaching. Quality in Higher Education, 11, 137-149.
This paper provides a historical summary of teaching the QA origins of peer observation and subsequent shifts towards QE. It also provides interesting discussion of staff perceptions of peer review and issues relating to the pragmatics of implementing such schemes. The paper ends by reporting a case study implementation of a formative "peer review" scheme.

Lublin, J. (2002). A Guide to Peer Review of description and discussion of Teaching. Tasmania: University of Tasmania.
Provides distinctions between peer observation and broader peer review schemes, between formative and summative purposes and outcomes, and detailed procedural suggestions.

Martin, G., & Double, J. (1998). Developing higher observation, but focusing on benefits of observation and collaborative reflection Innovations in Education and Training International, 35, 161-170.
Widely cited paper based around peer education teaching skills through peer collaborative and reflective practice. Detailed, yet concise, suggestions and advice are also. given regarding successful implementation.

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