

Peer Development of Teaching Policy

The University has had a policy on peer observation of teaching since June 1998. This policy on Peer Development of Teaching (PDT) replaces that policy from September 2009.

It intends to reflect the evolution of practice in Schools with regard to collaborative practice, to encourage the enhancement of our teaching and to support innovation and change where appropriate. It should encourage broad engagement within a suitable School framework, to enable the sharing of good practice and allow open discussion and debate.

1. Policy

- 1.1 PDT should be seen as a continuous, rather than one-off process;
- 1.2 PDT should recognise and encourage a partnership approach between colleagues and the mutual benefit of being involved in this process;
- 1.3 PDT can include the direct observation of teaching, but can also be extended to any aspect of teaching practice, including pastoral support, educational resources, learning technologies, assessment, at any point in the student life cycle;
- 1.4 It can include all students of all levels (UG and PGT) and may also encompass the PGR experience;
- 1.5 PDT is not connected with the appraisal process or probationary requirements. Observation of probationary staff is included in the formal probationary process (see Human Resources Probation Arrangements at <http://www.soton.ac.uk/hr/managing/induction/index.html>);
- 1.6 Although the probationary process is distinct, staff on probation should be fully included in PDT.

2. University requirements for Peer Development of Teaching (PDT)

- 2.1 Specifically, this policy requires Schools:
 - 2.1.1 to have a PDT policy, which contains the core features as listed below;
 - 2.1.2 to include the policy statement in the School's Quality Evidence Base;
 - 2.1.3 to implement that policy;
 - 2.1.4 to report on its implementation on an annual basis.
- 2.2 Additionally, it is recommended that all staff be involved in PDT at some point in the year, in some way. Ultimately, it is for the individual School to specify a reasonable frequency of involvement.
- 2.3 PDT should support the professional development of teaching staff and ultimately lead to enhancement of the student learning experience. School procedures should include the core features listed below and may also extend to the optional ones. Existing practice may already be consistent with this. (See examples from Schools). For more guidance on policy development and implementation, please see the Additional Guidance document.

3. Core features

- 3.1 to involve staff in appropriate dialogue and discussion about teaching.

- 3.2 to encourage reflective practice and constructive feedback.
- 3.3 to encourage staff engagement.
- 3.4 to enable the sharing of good practice.
- 3.5 to link to existing quality enhancement systems.
- 3.6 to ensure appropriate confidentiality in order to ensure full and open participation.

4. Optional features

- 4.1 to shift from a focus on direct observation of teaching towards consideration of all aspects of learning and teaching.
- 4.2 to encourage collaboration with other disciplines or Schools if appropriate.
- 4.3 to enable a planned developmental process for all staff.
- 4.4 to enable Schools to use it as a strategic development tool, if desired.

Schools may wish to develop forms to enable the process, or may choose to model them on those in use elsewhere (see School examples referred to above).

*The reporting should include numbers of staff involved, issues considered, activities undertaken and their outcomes.

5. Enhancement

5.1 Taking a look at your Peer Observation Scheme

5.1.1 Think through your approach/policy to peer observation, thinking through the purpose of your peer observation scheme in particular:

- Discuss how you do peer observation as a School;
- Timely to check if your peer observation record form is working.

6. Going beyond 'monitoring'

6.1 Current practice is generally a rotary system of peer observation with completed observation forms going to the Deputy Head of School (Education) or their nominee(s) and line managers of observees. Some other approaches are:

Approach	Reporting
Develop a reflective practice approach where you set up peer coaching pairs – where these pairs discuss L&T related things and include peer observation. Usual peer observation form used	Presented at appraisals as evidence of reflective practice and what has been gained from peer coaching – small 1 page report – similar to what is expected from membership of HEA.
Concentrate on the observer – the form is completed, but not on how the observee did, but on what the observer has got out of observing. Need to adapt the peer observation form for this.	Presented at appraisals as evidence of reflective practice and what has been gained from peer coaching – small 1 page report – similar to what is expected from membership of HEA.
As part of curriculum design teams - have peer observation related to ongoing curriculum development at possibly year level. May want to adjust the observation form to account for this.	Information on peer observation is reported back to curriculum teams who might want to take on board issues of particular teaching points.

As part of module/programme review using the same form, an external person gives a report on a series of targeted units. Need to look at a sufficient sample to get an overview to make report meaningful.	Independent report goes to the review team. It is important to have teaching observation conducted by those not involved in teaching the programme.
Methods of teaching – you may want to have someone look at 'small group teaching', 'supervisions' etc for a given programme in a particular year.	This may be identified by staff or the School as a focus for the year. The information on the peer observation needs to have been seen by one person in order to summarise any needs and report back. Ideal preparation for an 'away day'.

6.2 Each of these can be seen as part of the overall quality process. You may want to mix and match these approaches over the years.

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