

Peer review of learning and teaching

Approved by the University Board for Teaching and Learning on 14 July 2015, for implementation from the 2015-16 academic session, and revised in August 2016 to take account of organisational changes with effect from 2016-17.

[For the purposes of the processes described in this document, in Henley Business School, references to 'School' should be taken to mean 'programme area' and references to 'School Director of Teaching and Learning' should be taken to mean 'Director of Studies'.]

Background and scope

1. This policy and the accompanying *Guidance on peer review of learning and teaching* and associated pro-formas were developed by the Working Group on Improving Teaching Quality via Observation during the Autumn Term 2014 and Spring/Summer Terms 2015. They were informed by *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching* and *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement* of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*.
2. The policy and guidance are underpinned by the UK Professional Standards Framework ([UKPSF](#)), which outlines a national framework for comprehensively recognising and benchmarking teaching and learning support roles within Higher Education. Embedded within the UKPSF is the expectation that all staff involved in teaching and supporting learning should be engaging in continuing professional development and evaluation of their pedagogic practice (UKPSF Dimensions of Practice: A5, K5 and V3), which can be achieved in part by a commitment to engage regularly in peer review of teaching and learning. A formal system of peer review enables staff to compile evidence of their effectiveness and impact in teaching and learning which can inform applications for teaching awards, HEA fellowship via the University's Facilitating Learning and Teaching Achievement and Individual Recognition (FLAIR) Scheme, and promotion.
3. Peer review may be defined for these purposes as the evaluation, by colleagues or peers, of learning and teaching related activities. It includes, but is not restricted to, the direct observation of face-to-face teaching in a traditional classroom setting such as a lecture or practical class. Peer review also includes the evaluation of a wide range of other learning and teaching practices and associated materials, such as: 'virtual' teaching (e.g. webinars); preparing online content for a module; contributing to curriculum design (at the level of a session, module or programme); group learning; the 'flipped classroom' approach; supervision; planning and design of assessment, and feedback to students. In these cases, peer review may take the form of a 'professional conversation' between 'peer reviewer' and 'peer reviewee' regarding a specific aspect of the reviewee's learning and teaching practice, rather than a direct observation.

Purpose of peer review

4. A peer review system could serve one or more of a number of aims, including:
 - individual development;
 - enhancement of teaching and learning, and,
 - quality assurance.

It might also form part of a separate performance management process.

5. It has been agreed that the primary focus of peer review at the University should be individual development as part of continuing professional development (CPD). Peer review does not form part of the formal Performance and Development Review Scheme (PDR) and it should not involve summative judgements. Instead, it should be viewed as a supportive process that promotes reflection about learning and teaching linked to an individual's personal and professional development. Peer review should nurture a culture of colleagues engaging in professional and supportive dialogue about their teaching and students' learning.
6. An effective system for peer review should also reasonably be expected to result in the dissemination of good practice at School and University-level, to the enhancement of teaching and learning more widely and to an improvement in the student learning experience. It should lead to tangible outputs such as teaching and learning enhancement activities within Schools. An effective and properly-documented system should also provide clear evidence for quality assurance purposes.

Who is involved?

7. All Schools (or intra-School Departments where relevant) are required to operate a local system of peer review.
8. All staff involved in teaching and learning activities must participate formally in peer review as a reviewee, including staff at branch campuses, part-time staff, sessional staff, graduate teaching assistants and postgraduate research students with regular and substantive roles in teaching and supporting learning, but excluding visiting staff. Staff in professional student support roles, for example technical staff, Liaison Librarians and Study Advisers are also encouraged to consider participating in peer review as a tool to promote reflection on their practice.
9. For these purposes, involvement in teaching and learning activities should be understood in a broad sense to incorporate any activities which support student learning and assessment (see the UKPSF Areas of Activity undertaken by teachers and supporters of learning within HE), the precise nature of which will depend upon the teaching and/or learning support role of staff.

Frequency of peer review

10. All relevant staff are normally required to participate as a peer reviewee on an annual basis in order to maximise the effectiveness of the system, and therefore the potential for personal development and enhancement of learning and teaching more widely. Local schemes should be flexible enough to allow staff to increase the frequency of their observations/professional conversations to suit their own needs.
11. All staff are also strongly encouraged to act as peer reviewer to another member of staff on an annual basis wherever possible, since experience has shown that reviewers can learn as much, if not more, from this process as those being reviewed.
12. The scale of staff involvement in peer review may require some local adaptations. For example, where a School employs a large number of part-time and sessional staff, responsibility for overseeing peer review of these staff may be delegated to the relevant programme director(s). At branch campuses the responsibility for overseeing peer review will be delegated to the Head of Section. The frequency with which these staff participate in the formal peer review process should be commensurate with their teaching and/or supporting learning responsibilities.

Structure for peer review

13. Schools are free to choose an appropriate local structure within which peer review will take place. Local structures must be clearly communicated to staff. Some possibilities are:
 - free choice of reciprocal peer review pairs;

- small, self-forming groups of people who peer review each other;
 - relationships around existing team teaching arrangements;
 - allocated peer review partnerships;
 - designated peer reviewers with whom others can sign up (this may not be a reciprocal arrangement).
14. Peer review partnerships should normally change annually in order to facilitate sharing of good practice and different perspectives over time.
 15. Careful consideration should be given to the potential benefits and disadvantages of the various structures in the particular context of the School. For further information and advice relating to possible structures for peer review, please refer to the *Guidance on peer review of learning and teaching*.
 16. Schools are encouraged to explore possibilities for cross-disciplinary peer review, which can be beneficial in terms of focussing reflection on pedagogy, and less on subject content.
 17. Within the agreed local structure, the reviewer and reviewee will agree between themselves the focus and scope for a particular observation/professional conversation, based on the reviewee's current skills and areas for development.

Student involvement

18. While other formal mechanisms are in place for student evaluation of modules and programmes, students can still make a valuable contribution to peer review of learning and teaching. Schools are encouraged to incorporate student feedback into peer review wherever possible. For further information, please refer to the *Guidance on peer review of learning and teaching*.

Monitoring and reporting of peer review

19. School Directors of Teaching and Learning (or Departmental Directors of Teaching and Learning as designated by the relevant School Directors of Teaching and Learning) (collectively referred to as DTLs throughout the remainder of this document) are required to monitor peer review at an individual level and ensure that all those involved in teaching and learning are peer reviewed on an annual basis. At branch campuses Heads of Section are required to monitor peer review and ensure all those involved in teaching and learning are peer reviewed on an annual basis. Heads of Section will report to DTLs in regards to the Peer Review activities taking place at the branch campus.
20. The exact details of peer review discussions should remain confidential between the reviewer and reviewee, unless the reviewee chooses to share the information (for example, in the context of their PDR, as part of a promotion case, as evidence across the University's CPD framework or as a part of a portfolio towards a qualification or membership of a professional body). A written record should always be made by the reviewer and reviewee but it should remain under the control of the reviewee. Suggested pro-formas are provided as Appendices 1 and 2 of the *Guidance on peer review of learning and teaching*; Schools may wish to adapt these for local use. The pro-formas are intended to encourage reflective, explorative and supportive conversations in the context of peer review, and encourage engagement with relevant Dimensions of Practice of the UKPSF.
21. DTLs are required to collect and retain some form of written record of the peer reviews which have taken place each year in order to ensure the quality of the learning experience and promote enhancement of teaching and learning, this should include peer review at branch campuses. The written record might take the form of the completed pro-formas or of a joint reviewer/reviewee written statement. A suggested format for a joint written statement is provided as Appendix 3 of the *Guidance on peer review of learning and teaching*. Heads of School will also have access to these peer review records, which will be stored locally.

22. DTLs should produce an annual report summarising the outcomes of peer review in their School/Department, including branch campus provision, to include key areas of strength, examples of good practice and areas for enhancement. Annual reports should be used to plan School-level teaching and learning enhancement activities. This will ensure that outcomes from peer review are clearly articulated and linked to other teaching and learning activities.
23. Annual reports on peer review should be submitted to Teaching and Learning Deans during the Autumn Term for information and to facilitate the dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching. Teaching and Learning Deans will then submit an evaluative summary of the annual reports to the Sub-Committee on Delivery and Enhancement of Learning and Teaching during the Spring Term, setting out any common and/or significant issues identified and any resulting recommendations. The annual reports on peer review should also inform other review and enhancement processes, including the production of School Annual Quality Assurance Reports and the relevant School or Department's Self-Evaluation Document for six-yearly Periodic Review.
24. The Centre for Quality Support and Development will review annual reports on peer review to identify any staff training needs highlighted by the process which cannot be met locally by Schools.