

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

Purpose and Context

This document sets out the expectations of the University for the peer observation of teaching (POT) which provides a developmental framework for all staff to enhance their teaching performance in a supportive environment.

Scope

These principles and guidelines apply to all full-time academic teaching staff at the University. It may also apply to postgraduate researchers engaged in appropriate teaching activities.

1 Introduction

This framework sets out the principles and guidelines to be adopted by all Schools. It should be read in conjunction with the Framework for PGRs and Teaching.

2 Peer Observation of Teaching Principles

Schools should adopt a model of peer observation which:

1. Recognises the diversity of teaching and learning interactions in the University, including on-line engagement and assessment and feedback;
2. Encourages the open discussion of teaching issues;
3. Promotes the identification and sharing of good practice in teaching and learning;
4. Has the potential to enhance the practice of both the observer and the person observed;
5. Produces qualitative outputs in terms of the enhancement of teaching quality;
6. Promotes, where practicable, the widening participation agenda within the school;
7. Promotes, where practicable, the delivery of an inclusive curriculum.

3 Peer Observation of Teaching Guidelines

Processes of peer observation in Schools should require:

1. All full-time academic teaching staff to engage in pot annually;
2. All full-time staff involved in pot normally to be observed and to observe another person teaching on at least one occasion in the course of the academic year;
3. All hourly paid and research staff involved in forty or more hours teaching per year to be observed annually;
4. Each observed session normally to involve one observer and one person being observed. However, where appropriate, staff should have the option of opening sessions up to a wider circle of observers;
5. The avoidance of reciprocal observer-observed relationships;

6. Each observed session normally to be preceded by a pre-meeting to discuss aims and objectives;
7. Each observed session normally to be followed by a debriefing meeting;
8. An agreed summary to be produced, contributed to and signed by both the observer and the observed, which highlights both good practice and issues to be addressed;
9. A record of peer observation of teaching sessions to be kept centrally within the school or department;
10. Anonymised peer observation summaries (or agreed sections thereof) to be shared with heads of department (or their nominee) who will use the summaries to inform the staff development priorities for the school and department;
11. Records of peer observation of teaching to be considered in appraisal for the purpose of development and the identification of support needs.

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