

Peer Support of Teaching: Getting Started

Summary of Peer Support of Teaching

The University's framework for **Peer Support of Teaching** is being introduced across the whole institution from session 2018/19. The peer support activity is designed to be mutually supportive and useful, and to facilitate opportunities for dialogue about teaching and learning and for sharing practice.

Peer support of teaching is not part of any management or review process; there is no evaluation of performance, nor any judgement. The focus is entirely on a collaborative dialogue between peers. The only formal aspects of the framework are:

1. All individuals involved in teaching should participate in Peer Support of Teaching once per academic year;
2. Two sets of information should be communicated from the session: (a) confirmation that the peer support activity has been undertaken (a "yes"/"no" question as part of the PDR discussion); (b) identification of examples of good practice to be shared more widely (eg in-class feedback) and learning points for wider consideration (eg technology limitations). All other information remains confidential between the two individuals involved in the support activity.

The discussion can include any teaching activity (eg learning materials; assessments; new techniques; feedback to students; online learning); it does not have to be observation of face-to-face teaching. Individuals can choose whom pair up with, in which School, in which campus and also what type of activity will be discussed (pairings are to be agreed with relevant line managers).

The framework operates in parallel with (and does not replace) existing Peer Observation/Peer Development schemes, eg the observations of teaching practice undertaken as part of PG CAP and the Peer Observation process at HWU Malaysia.

Aims of Peer Support of Teaching

The University's framework for **Peer Support of Teaching** is designed to facilitate opportunities for dialogue about teaching and for sharing practice within and across disciplines, Schools and campuses. Peer Support aims to provide a positive learning experience for participants, with opportunities to:

- Acknowledge and build upon existing knowledge, skills and expertise
- Provide a structured approach to peer feedback
- Encourage mutual support and collegiality between colleagues
- Support the development of a culture of reflection and enhancement
- Provide complementary feedback to student feedback
- Facilitate discussions about teaching practices
- Share good practice in learning and teaching
- Provide feedback on new and innovative approaches to learning and teaching

Principles of Peer Support

Peer Support of Teaching is designed to be mutually supportive and useful, focused on a dialogue between colleagues, which is informal and confidential. It provides an opportunity for gaining feedback and for reflecting on practice. The main and only purposes of the University's Peer Support framework are **enhancing learning and teaching** and **sharing good practice**.

The framework operates entirely outside of all management structures and review activity; there is no reporting through PDR (other than indication of whether or not the peer support activity has taken place) or any other University process (eg course review or Annual Monitoring + Review). There is no judgement associated with Peer Support: it is not a process of checking performance against a tick-list.

A short, optional *Proforma for Good Practice and Learning Points* is available to assist participants. The only information which should be communicated beyond the two individuals involved in the support activity are (1) **confirmation that the peer support activity has been undertaken** (a "yes"/"no" question as part of the PDR discussion); (2) providing **examples of good practice to be shared more widely** (eg in-class feedback) and **learning points for wider consideration** (eg technology limitations). Schools and campus-specific Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fora will provide opportunities for discussing and progressing relevant good practice and learning points. An end-of-year summary of "Good Practice and Learning Points" will be provided to the University Committee for Learning and Teaching.

All individuals involved in teaching should participate in Peer Support of Teaching (as both an observee and observer) **once per academic year**. The discussion can include **any teaching activity** (eg face-to-face teaching; learning materials; assessments; problem-based learning; new techniques; feedback to students; online learning; laboratory work).

Individuals can choose whom pair up with, in which School, in which campus and also what type of activity will be discussed (pairings are to be agreed with relevant line managers).

Undertaking Peer Support

Below are some guidance notes to assist participants in Peer Support of Teaching.

- Peer partners (who will observe each other's teaching practice or discuss each other's learning or teaching activity) can be selected mutually and in agreement with the line managers of both participants.
- In advance of the peer support session, both participants should meet to discuss and agree arrangements, including the activity to be observed or reviewed, particular areas to focus on and intended outcomes.
- The peer support activity should be undertaken with a focus on supporting the development of learning and teaching, not on evaluating performance.
- After the observation of teaching practice or the review of another learning/teaching activity, peer partners should meet (this might be via Skype if cross-campus peers) to discuss and provide feedback on the observation/review. Feedback is designed to be constructive, focused, effective and non-judgemental, and should be provided with the aim of enhancing teaching practice/activity.
- As part of the discussion, both participants should identify and agree any examples of good practice which could be shared more widely and also any learning points for wider consideration; these may be relevant to the School or the University as a whole. The person being observed should forward on this information and confirm that the peer support activity has been undertaken. Each School will have its own process for communicating this information.
- With the exception of the "Good Practice and Learning Points" information and the confirmation of undertaking the peer support activity, all other aspects should remain entirely confidential (this includes any written self- or peer-evaluations).