Student Learning Experience Committee

Peer Support of Teaching: Guide to the Framework

Following an initial discussion at the Learning and Teaching Board Away Day on 7 March 2017, the Learning and Teaching Board considered and endorsed, at its meeting on 5 April 2017, a proposal for a University-wide approach to Peer Support of Teaching as a mechanism for enhancing learning and teaching and for sharing good practice.

A proposal was presented for wider consultation across the institution via Learning and Teaching Board members, which took into account the recommendations of the Learning and Teaching Board and, in particular, the peer observation schemes currently used as part of PGCAP and those in operation at the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses.

At its meeting on 6 September 2017, the Student Learning Experience Committee (SLEC) approved for implementation with effect from session 2018/19, the framework for a University-approach to Peer Support of Teaching as a mechanism for enhancing learning and teaching and for sharing good practice. At its meeting on 1 May 2018, SLEC approved a series of guidelines and a proforma to support the implementation of the framework.

This paper presents **the 2018/19 Guide to the University's new framework for Peer Support of Teaching,** which will be implemented across the institution as a whole from 2018/19.

University Approach to Peer Support of Teaching: Aims and Principles

As a means of **enhancing learning and teaching** and of **sharing good practice**, Peer Support of Teaching will be introduced **across the University from 2018/19**. The framework is designed to be **informal** and dependent on **mutual, supportive observation of teaching practice or other learning activities**. There is **no requirement to provide a formal written record** of any peer support of teaching activity, other than **confirmation that the activity has been undertaken once per academic year** and **identification of good practice to be shared more widely** and **of learning points for wider consideration**. The framework's Aims and Principles are outlined below.

Aims

The framework for **Peer Support of Teaching** 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

The framework is University-wide, facilitating opportunities for dialogue about teaching and sharing practice within and across: disciplines, Schools and campuses.

Principles

The framework for **Peer Support of Teaching** is underpinned by the following Principles:

- The criteria and process should be transparent and clearly understood, ie that the main and only purposes are enhancement of learning and teaching and sharing good practice;

- The framework should be outside all types of management structures (including any key themes identified by the University or School committees); it should provide an opportunity for safe, honest and shared discussions;

- The process should be informal and not overly bureaucratic (there is no requirement to use any type of proforma to record peer support activity; only confirmation that the activity has taken place and a note of any good practice and learning points);

- All individuals involved in teaching should participate in Peer Support of Teaching (as both an observee and observer) once per academic year;

- Individuals should be able to choose: whom they wanted to observe/be observed by, in which School, in which campus and what type of activity;

- Directors of Learning and Teaching and the campus-specific Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fora should encourage participation in Peer Support of Teaching.

University Framework for Peer Support of Teaching: Guide to Implementation

The following section provides some guidance on the implementation of the University's approach to Peer Support of Teaching.

1. Approval, Implementation and Evaluation

The former Learning and Teaching Board considered and endorsed, at its meeting on 5 April 2017, a proposal for a University-wide approach to Peer Support of Teaching as a means of enhancing learning and teaching and sharing good practice. At its meeting on 6 September 2017, the Student Learning Experience Committee (SLEC) approved, for implementation with effect from session 2018/19, a framework for a University-approach to Peer Support of Teaching. SLEC further approved, at its meeting on 1 May 2018, guidelines to facilitate the implementation of Peer Support of Teaching.

The University-wide Peer Support of Teaching will be implemented with effect from 2018/19, and will be incorporated into the remit of the Learning and Teaching Academy, which will be responsible for supporting Schools in introducing the framework[1].

Various information on facilitating Peer Support of Teaching is available, including a brief guide, *Peer Support of Teaching – Getting Started* and a short *Proforma for Good Practice and Learning Points*

The University Committee for Learning and Teaching has institutional level responsibility for University-wide Peer Support of Teaching Framework, and has delegated oversight of the scheme to the Student Learning Experience Committee. In practice, the operation of this scheme will be managed by the Learning and Teaching Academy as part of its wider remit for staff development and training in learning and teaching.

An evaluation of the framework will be conducted by the SLEC towards the end of session 2018/19, at the end of the first year of implementation. The evaluation report will be considered by the UCLT at its meeting in June 2019.

2. Engagement in Peer Support of Teaching

Directors of Learning and Teaching are responsible for the implementation of Peer Support of Teaching across their entire School, in all campus locations, including promoting the framework and encouraging staff participation. The practical elements of implementing the framework may be delegated as appropriate.

The campus-specific Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fora and the Deputy Vice-Principals (Dubai and Malaysia) will support the Directors of Learning and Teaching in promoting engagement in and in encouraging participation in Peer Support of Teaching, including cross-School and cross-campus peer activity.

3. Frequency of Participation

All staff involved in teaching should participate in Peer Support of Teaching, as both an observee and an observer[2], once per academic year. Schools may opt to include additional peer support sessions. PG CAP participants would be exempt from participation until such time as they have completed PG CAP (new programme to be known as PGCILT).

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[1] Until such time as the Learning and Teaching Academy is established, the Quality and External Partnerships will provide (via its website) all information relevant to the Peer Support of Teaching framework.

[2] The terms "observer" and "observee" are used generically to refer to, and differentiate between, the two individuals involved in a peer support activity. As Peer Support of Teaching can include any type of teaching or learning activity (see Section 5), it should be clarified that use of the terms "observer" and "observee" does not imply that Peer Support of Teaching is based only around observation of teaching practice in a classroom setting,

4. Allocation of Peer Pairs

The process of matching of pair peers across disciplines (and indeed campuses) is by means of self-selection. Individuals can choose whom to pair up with, in which School, in which campus and also what type of activity will be discussed. The pairing should, however, be agreed in advance with relevant line managers.

Pairs can be reciprocal, ie the pairs can review each other's teaching activity.

5. Types of Activity

Any teaching activity can be considered as part of the peer support framework (eg learning materials; assessments; problem-based learning; new techniques; feedback to students; online learning; laboratory work); it does not have to be observation of face-to-face teaching. The selected activity should be something which the observee has identified as being beneficial to discuss with, and receive feedback from, a colleague.

6. Communication of Outcomes

As Peer Support of Teaching is designed to be a mutually supportive and useful dialogue about teaching and learning between colleagues and to provide an opportunity for reflection and feedback, confidentiality between the peer pairs is integral to its success.

Therefore, 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
Communication that Peer Support of Teaching has been completed is by means of inclusion of a yes/no question as part of the PDR discussion.

(2) Identification of examples of good practice to be shared more widely (eg in-class feedback) and learning points for wider consideration (eg technology limitations). *See Sections 7 and 8 for more information on identifying and sharing examples of "Good Practice and Learning Points".*

7. Proforma for Good Practice and Learning Points

It is recognised that that an overly complex proforma could discourage participation, being interpreted as evidence of a bureaucratic and/or management-driven process. As main purpose of University's framework is emphatically related to enhancing learning and teaching and for sharing good practice, the value of Peer Support of Teaching is on the opportunity it provides for discussion, mutual support and reflection, and on the learning and teaching conversations and developments following from that interaction. In this context, a brief guidance sheet *Peer Support of Teaching – Getting Started* has been provided to guide the peer support discussion in order to achieve the overall aims and principles.

One of the key recommendations of the Learning and Teaching Board was that practice identified through Peer Support of Teaching should be disseminated more widely, including identification of key themes for discussion by School Learning and Teaching Committees and by the Learning and Teaching Board (now the University Committee for Learning and Teaching).

Therefore, a shorter, *Good Practice and Learning Points for School and University Proforma*[3] has been produced to facilitate capturing and forwarding on this information by peer pairs (*see Section 8 for advice on how to*

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[3] A more comprehensive, *Peer Support of Teaching Proforma* has also been produced, and, as per standard practice, features two parts: one for the observee; the other for the observer. The proforma, including any feedback provided by the observer to the observee, remains confidential. A proforma may be of use in providing a guide and structure to the peer support activity. This more detailed proforma is designed

communicate this information if the "Good Practice and Learning Points for School and University Proforma" has not been used).

There is no requirement to use the University's *Proforma for Good Practice and Learning Points* as part of Peer Support of Teaching; this will be a matter for Schools to determine, and Schools may in fact leave it up to peer pairs to discuss use of the proforma.

8. Good Practice and Learning Points

The Learning and Teaching Board was particularly supportive of an institution-wide framework for Peer Support of Teaching because of the potential it offered for enabling good practice to be shared and adopted more widely across the institution (the Board had long recognised the challenges associated with dissemination and implementation of good practice in learning and teaching, as highlighted in the University's QAA Enhancement-Led Institutional Review in 2011 (ELIR2) and again in 2015 (ELIR3).

Therefore, while the peer support activity is designed to be a confidential, mutually supportive and useful dialogue about teaching and learning between colleagues, there is a requirement to communicate two types of more generally relevant information beyond the two participants (observee and observer): good practice which could be adopted more widely and learning points which should be taken into consideration; as an example, the former may include opportunities for interaction or feedback during a lecture; the latter may include identification of technological difficulties or limitations.

As part of the Peer Support of Teaching framework, the *Good Practice and Learning Points for School and University Proforma* is a short form which has been specifically designed for communicating this information.

The University Framework for Peer Support of Teaching does not require use of this proforma; it is entirely optional and as a guide. Each School can take a view on whether or not the proforma is to be used; indeed, Schools may leave this as a matter entirely to the discretion of each peer pair.

In cases where the proforma is not being used, the School should put in place mechanisms for ensuring that good practice and other generic learning points identified through Peer Support of Teaching are captured and communicated at School level by each pair peer.

Irrespective of the means used to communicate good practice and learning points, Schools should ensure that there is an appropriate opportunity at a meeting of the School Learning and Teaching Committee (or other relevant group) to discuss and progress these learning points and good practice within the School. Campus-specific Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fora (LTEF) will also provide institutional-level opportunities for discussing and making recommendations on relevant good practice and learning points.

A single, end-of-year summary of "Good Practice and Learning Points" will be produced by the Clerk to Student Learning Experience Committee, using as a basis the outcomes from the discussions at the three LTEF's. The report, which should also contain any recommendations on the scheme itself and on learning and teaching in general, will provided to the University Committee for Learning and Teaching for consideration at its June meeting, when the UCLT considers all annual summary reports with a view to determining its agenda and strategic priorities for the following academic year.

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for use in other peer support schemes, eg that in operation at the Malaysia Campus for probationary staff; it is not envisaged that this proforma will be used in the University Peer Support of Teaching scheme, unless both pairs mutually agree that it would be beneficial. Within this more comprehensive proforma, there is a separate, generic and anonymised section "Good Practice and Learning Points for School and University" for both participants to complete as part of the peer support process. It is envisaged that only this section will be forwarded and collated within the School (*see Section 8*) if in fact this proforma is used by participants in the University Peer Support of Teaching scheme.