

# Peer Observation of Teaching

UPR HR11 version 06.1

## Policies superseded by this document

This document replaces version 06.0 of UPR HR11 with effect from 21 October 2021.

## Summary of significant changes to the previous version

The University's higher and degree apprenticeship provision is under the oversight of Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework. This document has been amended to reflect the possibility of Ofsted carrying out lesson observations as part of their inspections (see section 3.8).

## Glossary

A glossary of approved University terminology can be found in [UPR GV08](#).

## Table of contents

1	Introduction .....	2
1.3	Purpose .....	2
1.4	Focus .....	2
1.5	Definition .....	2
2	Policy .....	2
3	Process .....	3
3.1	Principles .....	3
3.2	Nomination of observers and allocation to observees .....	3
3.3	Preparatory arrangements and choice of session .....	3
3.4	The review .....	3
3.5	Feedback .....	3
3.6	Reflection and feedback to appraiser .....	4
3.7	Teaching observations for new staff .....	4
3.8	Joint lesson observations for staff teaching on apprenticeships .....	5
4	Monitoring and Evaluation .....	5

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## 1 Introduction

1.1 This document sets out the University's policy and guidelines for peer review of teaching effective 21 October 2021.

1.2 The procedures described here are based on those established by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and are augmented by links to staff development and staff appraisal.

### 1.3 Purpose

The purpose of peer review of teaching is to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and assessment and to improve practice through critical reflection and professional conversation.

### 1.4 Focus

The University's peer review of teaching policy places a strong and active focus on learning from observing good practice in addition to being observed.

### 1.5 Definition

For the purposes of this document, the following definitions will apply:

**'staff':**

all staff who are active teachers, including those on part-time or fractional appointments, Visiting Lecturers and research staff who undertake teaching.

**'peer observer':**

staff member who is observing the teaching practice of a peer

**'peer observee':**

staff member who is being observed by a peer observer

**'link colleague'**

member of staff appointed to support and mentor new members of staff as part of the local induction process

## 2 Policy

2.1 The University adopts the principle that peer review of teaching is a worthwhile and necessary practice that enables individuals to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching and provides a means through which individuals can improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

2.2 All staff with teaching responsibility from 0.2 Full Time Equivalent upwards will be reviewed annually and undertake reviews in accordance with the process described in section 3.7. Visiting Lecturers will be automatically included in the process if they teach beyond the threshold of 0.2 Full Time Equivalent or 110 teaching hours per academic year. Visiting Lecturers who do not meet this threshold will be invited to take part at their discretion. Visiting Lecturers will be remunerated.

## **3 Process**

### **3.1 Principles**

- 3.1.1 Peer observers and observees must have a thorough understanding of the process and it is essential that all staff have appropriate development before carrying out the task. Staff engagement with development activity will be maintained on the School Peer Review Online Portal.
- 3.1.2 The value of observing others is recognised and the aim is to ensure that within a short time all staff become reviewers.
- 3.1.3 Each member of staff will normally be reviewed once per annum.

### **3.2 Nomination of observers and allocation to observees**

The responsibility of overseeing the nomination of staff being reviewed will be undertaken by Associate Deans of School (Learning and Teaching). A peer observee will normally have a different peer observer in succeeding years. The Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching) will publish a list of peer observers and peer observees.

### **3.3 Preparatory arrangements and choice of session**

It is the responsibility of the peer observer to contact their peer observee to identify one or more areas for review. In practice, there will be some negotiation between the observer and the observee to take account of availability.

### **3.4 The review**

- 3.4.1 If the peer review involves observing a teaching session, the reviewer must arrive in good time before the session commences and will normally stay for one (1) hour, unless the session is shorter, in which case the observer will stay for the whole session.

**(Note:**

To ensure a smooth changeover between teaching sessions, University practice is that teaching sessions begin five (5) minutes after the time scheduled for commencement of the session and conclude five (5) minutes before the scheduled end of the session.)

- 3.4.2 If the reviewer is considering teaching materials, for example, a StudyNet site, distance learning materials or an assessment exercise, they should normally spend one (1) hour with the person being reviewed to allow for explanation and discussion of the materials.

### **3.5 Feedback**

- 3.5.1 Feedback should be given directly after the review session or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

### **3.6 Reflection and feedback to appraiser**

3.6.1 After the observation, peer observer and observee will meet to critically reflect on the session, identifying points for consideration, areas of good practice and matters for the university. A critical reflection template on the School Peer Review Staff Portal is provided to support this process. Peer review records on the portal will be accessible to Deans, Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) and to relevant professional staff for administration purposes only.

3.6.2 The Associate Dean of School (Learning and Teaching), with the support of professional staff, will use the records on the Peer Review Staff Portal to:

- i ensure that all relevant staff and appropriate teaching and learning sessions are being reviewed;
- ii identify examples of good practice within the School;
- iii identify staff development activities for the School as a whole;

**(Note:**

Information relating to general staff development needs may also be used at School level to help plan staff development events.)

- iv collate information on issues concerning teaching rooms for onward reporting to the Director of Learning and Teaching, the Chief Information Officer, the Director of Estates, Hospitality and Contract Services, People Development and to other managers, as appropriate;
- v inform the production of an annual report that:
  - a will be received by the School Academic Committee;
  - b will inform the production of the Annual School Report on Academic Quality and Student Experience, which is received by the Education and Student Experience Committee and the Academic Standards and Audit Committee of the Academic Board
  - c as a means of sharing good practice at institutional level, will be summarised briefly in the Annual Report of the School Academic Committee to the Academic Board which is received both by the Education and Student Experience Committee of the Academic Board and the Board itself.

### **3.7 Teaching observations for new staff**

3.7.1 The process of review for new staff in their first year of teaching will vary from the process described in this document in that new staff will be observed once by their Dean of School (or nominee) and once by their link colleague. They will also have an assessed observation within their Continuing Professional Academic Development Programme.

3.7.2 New staff will be eligible to take part in the peer review process once they have completed their probationary period of employment satisfactorily.

### **3.8 Joint lesson observations for staff teaching on apprenticeships**

- 3.8.1 Staff who teach on apprenticeship programmes will be expected to take part in a developmental process on joint lesson observation to prepare them for involvement in Ofsted inspections. At inspection, a joint lesson observation/s will involve an inspector plus a member of University staff attending a taught session as detailed in the Further Education and Skills handbook.
- 3.8.2 These staff can capture the learning from this process in place of their peer review of teaching.

## **4 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Peer Review process and its appropriateness and acceptability will be monitored and evaluated by the Education and Student Experience Committee of the Academic Board.

Sharon Harrison-Barker  
Secretary and Registrar  
Signed: **21 October 2021**

### **Alternative format**

If you need this document in an alternative format, please email us at [governanceservices@herts.ac.uk](mailto:governanceservices@herts.ac.uk) or telephone us on +44 (0)1707 28 6006.