

University Peer Review of Teaching (2017)

Purpose of University Peer Review of Teaching

This document sets out the principles and process for University Peer Review of Teaching (PRT). PRT provides a uniform process for assessing teaching across the University and supports staff teaching development. It will enhance teaching quality by encouraging dissemination of good practice and by ensuring consistency in support for all colleagues engaged in teaching... PRT may be supplemented by local processes as required for example a more frequent discipline based review of teaching.

The Peer Review of teaching is a supportive process whereby colleagues act as reviewers and explore a reviewee's teaching performance with them through the direct observation of their interaction with students and the review of their teaching materials and course unit design. Alongside other information about colleagues' teaching, PRT will build a comprehensive picture of a teacher's strengths and areas for development that can be used to enhance, manage and modify performance as necessary, and thereby facilitate career progression and enhance teaching quality across the institution.

By forming a part of colleagues' portfolio of information related to teaching, and by encouraging reflection and developmental activity, PRT may also play a role in supporting the desire for teaching staff to have an additional teaching qualification e.g. PGCert.

The process should:

- promote a culture in which good teaching is valued;
- enhance the quality of teaching by providing an effective framework for the identification and dissemination of good practice;
- provide a supportive and constructive framework for teaching staff to monitor, reflect on and improve the quality of their teaching, and from which both the reviewer and reviewee can benefit;
- link to training and development opportunities when appropriate and play a role in shaping the programme of training and development activity offered by the University;
- feed into performance and development reviews, course unit meetings and programme evaluations as appropriate;
- lead to outcomes that should be kept on the staff file under normal conditions of confidentiality;
- assist with applications for promotion.

The effectiveness of the process as a whole, the level of engagement with it, and the addressing of any issues that may be identified as a result of it, should be managed and monitored through:

- the Annual Monitoring exercise (to confirm that the process is taking place);
- School Quality Committees (for more detailed discussions)
- Annual Performance Review.

Reviewers

A College of Peer Reviewers of Teaching will be established at Faculty level. This College will consist of colleagues with broad teaching experience who are trusted to assess teaching fairly across the range of disciplines within the Faculty and to provide thoughtful and sensitive feedback to reviewees. The members of the College will receive training developed for the purpose and the work will be recognized through work load allocation models or equivalent.

The process for appointing members of the College of Peer Reviewers will be determined at Faculty level. Seven principles guiding the appointment process are that a College Peer Reviewer should

- i. have passed probation
- ii. should have more than 4 years teaching experience to be able to judge which aspects of the reviewees' teaching are most effective
- iii. have the ability to present the outcome of the review honestly, constructively and sensitively to the person reviewed
- iv. have the flexibility to engage with content material not related to the reviewer's own field
- v. have enough experience of different styles of teaching and awareness of support available to be able to suggest ways of enhancing strengths and addressing shortcomings, where appropriate
- vi. have a willingness to ensure consistency also by taking on up to five reviews per year
- vii. be prepared to undertake the training organised as part of the Staff Learning and Development programme.

Generally, the review will be carried out by one member of the College of Peer Reviewers and one colleague from within the same discipline as the reviewee. Where it is felt that the presence of two reviewers might disrupt the teaching, a School may determine that the review is carried out solely by the member of the College. However, a member of staff should always have the right to request also to have a discipline colleague involved.

Each School can determine who within the School should act as a discipline- specific reviewer; some may opt to have a small set of reviewers, whereas others may wish to involve as many colleagues as possible. Any reviewer should have passed probation and should have at least three years teaching experience. All reviewers will undergo training delivered at University or Faculty level.

Frequency of PRT

Under normal circumstances, every member of staff with a normal teaching load should undergo PRT every five years.

More frequent PRT will be carried out under the following circumstances:

- colleagues on probation should undergo PRT in their first and third year but this should take into account previous teaching experience, normally the mentor will be one of the reviewers;
- colleagues who are going forward for promotion can request to undergo an extra PRT

- so that information from a recent review can be included in the documentation for promotion;
- where serious concerns have been raised about a reviewee's performance through a previous PRT an additional PRT will be arranged before the next scheduled session to confirm that performance is improving as a result of action taken.

It is recommended that a process for more frequent local peer reviews of teaching be developed at School level. This process may include regular more frequent review of all staff, but should certainly take place under the following circumstances:

- in cases where the course unit that is being delivered is new;
- where very poor Unit Survey results have given rise to serious concern.

Organisation of the review

A schedule for PRT is drawn up at School level annually. It is anticipated that a member of the professional support staff with responsibility for HR matters acts as co-ordinator of peer reviews, but that input is sought from an academic member of staff, e.g. Head of Discipline/Division or T&L Director, as necessary. In each School there must also be one academic member who has oversight of the process.

A request for the appropriate number of members of the Peer Review of Teaching College is forwarded to Faculty in good time, and a local peer reviewer is assigned for each reviewee. Once the names of the two peer reviewers are known, this should be communicated to the reviewee.

Should a reviewee wish to change their reviewer(s) this should be communicated to the peer review co-ordinator within a week of the initial selection having been made known to the reviewee, in order for the request to be considered and for other arrangements to be put in place if necessary. To inform the selection of a more appropriate alternative reviewer or reviewers, the reviewee should make it clear why they disagree with the initial choice of reviewer(s).

Preparation for the review

The reviewee is made aware of which semester the PRT will take place in and is asked to make accessible the necessary documentation and information about the time and place of the contact hours for that semester.

At this stage, the reviewee is also asked to provide contextualizing information. This may consist entirely of existing documentation, but a separate explanatory document may be required. The reviewee may wish to submit a document outlining their approach to teaching or highlighting any areas that they wish particular attention to be paid to in the review. If appropriate, past Unit Survey information can be made available to the reviewers. If necessary, a pre-meeting of the reviewer(s) and reviewee may be held to discuss the documentation submitted or any other aspect of the teaching. The reviewer(s) should ensure that the reviewee understands the process of the review and how the resulting data can be used.

The two reviewers agree which contact hours to observe and give the reviewee at least one week's notice of each chosen time slot.

Scope of the Review

Peer Review should take a holistic view of the reviewee's teaching, considering written materials and online and blended learning resources as well as observing at least two face-to-face sessions. Where the reviewee is involved in more than one type of teaching (lecture, practical, tutorial etc.), or teaches on more than one course unit, the observations should ideally cover some of the breadth of activity.

Outcome of the Review

The reviewer(s) should produce a written document using the PRT form. This will involve the reviewers assessing the reviewee's all-round teaching performance.

The form requires the reviewers to provide comments motivating the assessment, to identify good practice and recommend development activity where appropriate. The form requires comment on four major areas: (i) documentation (e.g. quality of course unit information, lecture handouts and or slides etc.), (ii) contact sessions (e.g. structure of lecture, quality of communication etc.), (iii) assessment (e.g. how appropriate and links between assessment and intended learning outcomes), and (iv) feedback (e.g. nature and timing of feedback to students). On some team taught units, the reviewee may have limited input to some of these headings, comments should be limited to areas on which the reviewee has had an influence. There is a final summary section with suggestions for any developmental activity.

The agreed form is made available to the reviewee within two weeks of the final observation. If the reviewers require further information, the reviewee may be asked to provide this, or a meeting may be held between reviewers and reviewee before the form is signed off by the reviewers. The reviewee is given the opportunity to add written comments on the process and the outcome.

A copy of the completed form is retained by the reviewee and a copy is forwarded to the reviewee's line manager for information, and so that an action plan for implementing the recommendations can be formulated, if appropriate. The FPRT form is then filed along with other information such as Performance and Development Review outcomes and subject to the same conditions of confidentiality. It should form part of the documentation reviewed as part of the P&DR process and it may also be taken into account in promotion.

The reviewer who is a member of the College of Peer Reviewers is responsible for ensuring that the examples of good practice are forwarded to the appropriate person for dissemination. The report of the review process is not retained by either reviewer.

The output from the PRT is one of a set of documents which feed into the assessment of a member of staff's teaching, it also includes for instance information about teaching contribution, Unit Survey results and other student feedback, local peer review and external examiner report.

As in the case of REFPE, there is no appeal against the assessment itself. Concern about procedural irregularity should be raised with the academic within the School who has oversight of the PRT.