

UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

School of Social Sciences

ORGANISATION OF PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING FOR ACADEMIC STAFF AND TAs

Principles

Peer review should seek to encourage individual lecturers and tutors to reflect on their teaching, to identify and build on their particular strengths, to address any weaknesses and generally to increase their effectiveness as teachers.

Peer review should also provide a means by which best practice in the School's disciplines and across disciplines can be shared. It should not lead to homogeneity of teaching style. The peer review process should acknowledge that excellence in teaching can take a diversity of forms.

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;
- be documented in staff files under normal conditions of confidentiality;
- may be used in support of applications for promotion
- are required for confirmation of passing probation.

Peer Review Process

For the purposes of this document, "peer review" will refer to observation and review by colleagues of teaching carried out by:

- (a) Tenured Staff
- (b) Probationary Staff and Fixed-Term Lecturers
- (c) TAs

It should result in a written record (see appendix 1 and 2). In the case of (a) and (b) these will be placed in the member of staff's school file under normal conditions of confidentiality. It can be used in the PDR process and may be used in support of the reviewee's application for promotion or salary advancement. In the case of (c) it will be passed on to the DA Administrator and stored electronically.

Peer review will be organised by the Head of School Administration (HoSA) with the relevant Head of Discipline Area or a DA colleague appointed by them. For (a) and (b)

the HoSA and HoDAs (or their appointees) will draw up rotas, assign reviewers, collect reports to be placed on relevant files. For (c) the responsibility for carrying out (or, in large courses, organizing) the reviews lies with the course convenor.

Frequency of Reviews

Practices for peer review will vary according to the categories outlined above.

- (a) **Tenured academic staff** will be reviewed once **every three years**, by one reviewer from within the discipline, **every second review (every six years), there will be two reviewers** one from within the discipline and one from another discipline within the School drawn from a pool of experienced staff who will be selected on the basis of demonstrating their broad teaching experience and who will be trained to ensure integrity, rigour and consistency in their approach. The choice of reviewer/s rests with the HoDA or their appointee.

Peer review can also take place more often if, for example, applicants for promotion want to use the results of peer review in their applications. It should also take place if the course unit is new or if problems or issues have been identified through Unit Evaluation Questionnaires (UEQ) or complaints received from students to ensure that colleagues are provided with any support that may be needed.

- (b) **Probationary staff and lecturers on fixed-term contracts** will be reviewed on **an annual basis**. In the case of **probationary staff** completion of peer review within the period of probation is a requirement of the Humanities New Academics programme (HNAP). School probation review committees should also have access to the peer review forms or summaries when considering progress or making recommendations regarding re-appointment. Probationary staff should normally be reviewed by their **mentor and in years 1 and 3 also by a reviewer from another discipline**.
- (c) **TAs** will be reviewed on an **annual basis**, normally by their **course convenors** on all courses where they run independent tutorials. In the case of very large courses where there may be many TAs, this duty may be shared, in consultation with the HoDA, with other colleagues teaching in the relevant area or, where appropriate, with the Senior TA on the course. However, the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that all TAs are reviewed lies with the course convenor. (It should be borne in mind that the School TA policy requires, where practicable, to minimise the number of different TAs employed on any one course/module.)

Practice

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 one face-to-face session (e.g. lecture, seminar, tutorial, workshop).

Reviewers should consider:

- Design of course materials (written documentation), such as the course unit outline, content, learning outcomes and assessment requirements WHERE APPROPRIATE, recognising that not all reviewees will be responsible for and have input in to course materials
- The balance of teaching methods employed and whether it is appropriate for the stated aims and learning outcomes.
- Methods of feedback & assessment, including materials provided online, hand-outs, assignments or exam scripts, assignment guidance and marking schemes etc.
- Online & blended learning resources.

For tenured academic staff, probationary staff and those on fixed term contracts, reviewers will normally attend **either one lecture or one class** or their equivalents. The course unit(s) and session(s) to be attended will be chosen by the member of staff being reviewed, who will also be responsible for contacting the reviewer(s) to discuss and agree the arrangements for the teaching sessions to be reviewed.

Before the reviews take place, the member of staff will send the reviewer(s) a copy of the relevant syllabus and will arrange for reviewer/s to be granted access to relevant Blackboard materials for the required time period via the local PSS staff supporting the course. Any other relevant information that may help place the reviewed session in context should also be made available to the reviewer(s).

For TAs the course convenor (or on large courses, their colleagues or Senior TAs) should review **one tutorial/class/seminar/workshop**, as appropriate.

Documentation

Once the reviewed session has taken place, the reviewer(s) should within two weeks of the class complete the appropriate review form (see Appendix A and B) and send it by e-mail to the reviewee or the TA. The reviewee should be given the opportunity to comment and discuss the feedback with the reviewer(s). Where a review form cannot be agreed by all parties, separate review forms should be completed and submitted to the HoDA or his/her appointee.

In the case of **tenured academic staff, probationary staff and those on fixed term contracts** the reviewer/s should send the form electronically to the HoDA or his/her appointee, who will decide whether additional action is required and make note of this on the form. Once the peer review process has been completed, the HoDA or his/her appointee will then send the form electronically to the HoSA where it will be kept electronically under normal conditions of confidentiality, in order that it is available for discussion as part of the PDR process. Reviewers should not keep copies of the form.

For TAs the reports, compiled by course convenors, should be forwarded to the DA TA Coordinator who will decide on whether further actions are required and make a note of this on the form. In the case of large courses where colleagues or Senior TAs carry out the reviews the reports should be sent to the Course Convenor in the first instance. On completion of the peer review process, the form should be kept electronically by the discipline administrator for five years under normal conditions of confidentiality.

Following the conclusion of the peer review exercise for the year, a digest of the best practice aspects of the reviews undertaken will be extracted from the 'good practice' section of the form by the HoSA. These will be reviewed and discussed by the School's Teaching and Learning Committee and as part of the Continual Monitoring Process.

Appendix 1: Peer Review Report Form (Academic staff)

To be completed by the reviewers and made available to the reviewee for comments within two weeks of the final observation.

This form contains a number of headings under which the reviewer/s are expected to add comments, with supporting evidence wherever possible. Each heading lists a number of questions. These are meant as prompts only; the lists are not assumed to be exhaustive, nor is it expected that each of the questions is responded to in the comments. Where more than one session has been observed, the form should be adapted as appropriate.

In some cases, the lecturer may not have has responsibility for determining all aspects of the course unit, the course unit may have been designed by a course leader, the course unit outline may have been put together by someone else, etc. Comments here should be limited to areas where the reviewee has had influence.

Name of reviewee	
Name of reviewer 1	
Name of reviewer 2	
Observation 1	
Date	
Course unit code	
Type of contact session	
Number of students registered	
Number of students present	
Observation 2	
Date	
Course unit code	
Type of contact session	
Number of students registered	
Number of students present	

A. Pre-review discussion and documentation (discussion can be by face-to-face meeting or email)

Documentation considered as part of review 

Consider any materials that are relevant for the session, e.g. Course Unit description, ILOs for the session, Paper based resources, Online resources, Assessment materials and strategy

Comments on documentation 

- Was the information about crucial aspects of the course communicated clearly in the documentation (e.g. structure of course, contact sessions, eLearning elements, expectations between contact sessions, intended learning outcomes, reading lists, extra resources, etc.)?
- Are the intended learning outcomes appropriate for the level and the topic?
- Are the online resources appropriate for the nature of the content and method of delivery?
- Are eLearning resources (e.g. Virtual Learning Environment) organised so the student can relate them to the overall learning structure?
- Are eLearning resources easily navigable and the online experience consistent; is the structure and signposting similar for each area?

B. Contact sessions

Questions to consider when observing sessions 

Learning outcomes

- Was there explicit linking to previous and/or subsequent sessions?
- Were there clear learning outcomes and were these highlighted to the students?
- Was advice given on follow up work/forthcoming work signalled?

Session structure

- Was the session clearly structured?
- Was the communication clear in all respects?
- How well are resources used to support teaching?
- Were there any issues with control of the class?
- Was the pace and timing appropriate?
- What are the levels of energy and enthusiasm conveyed?
- Are the teaching methods appropriate?
- Was there good use of illustrative examples?

Students

- Were all students given adequate opportunity to participate?
- Were all students encouraged to be actively engaged in the session?
- Were their questions answered appropriately?

Observation 1

Observation 2

C. Assessment

- Is the amount and method of assessment appropriate?
- Is the assessment clearly linked to the intended learning outcomes?
- Is there an opportunity for formative assessment?

D. Feedback 

- What methods are used inside or outside the classroom to provide feedback to students on their progress?
- Is there an opportunity for students to receive formative feedback?
- Does the feedback help students understand their marks or how their performance might be improved in future?
- Does the Blackboard page for the unit have a clear section explaining the feedback mechanism that the unit will follow?

Reviewers' overall comments

This should not be a check box but should take a holistic approach to the needs for any development activity, for which some examples are provided

The following descriptions can be used, with examples:

- All, or almost all, aspects of the teaching reviewed were of very high quality, few or no suggestions for improvement could be made.
- All, or almost all, aspects of the teaching reviewed were of high quality, but some suggestions for improvement could be made.
- Some aspects of the teaching reviewed were of good quality, but a number of suggestions for important improvements can be made and some developmental activity is recommended.
- Some aspects of the teaching reviewed were deemed to raise sufficient concern that urgent developmental activity was recommended).

Signatures

Reviewer 1		Date	
Reviewer 2		Date	

Reviewee's reflections and comments			
Signature			
Reviewee		Date	

To enhance and disseminate effective teaching practice would you be interested in: 

- Acting as a mentor?
- HEA fellowships through LEAP?
- Presenting at Teaching and Learning Seminars or Showcases?
- Applying for Teaching Awards?
- Sharing your teaching materials?
- Others observing your sessions?

If so please contact your Faculty office to discuss further.

Recommendations for development activity or training 

To identify staff development needs that can help shape University and Faculty training provision

Please send to your Faculty office

Appendix 2: Peer Review Report Form (TAs)

Peer Review Report Form (TAs)

This form is to be completed and made available to the TA within 2 weeks of the observations.

The form contains headings under which the reviewers should comment with supporting evidence wherever possible. It is important to note that Teaching Assistants do not have responsibility for determining the design of the course unit and therefore comments here should be limited to the teaching and its delivery.

Name of Teaching Assistant		
Name of reviewer		
Date		
Course Unit		
Level		
Academic Year		
Programme(s) which the unit forms a part		
Type of session (lecture, tutorial etc)		

A. To be completed by the TA prior to the scheduled Review of Teaching

Please provide an overview of the session to be reviewed including the aims of the session to be reviewed, the preparation students are expected to have completed for this session, how the session is designed to fall in line with the Intended Learning Outcomes of the overall programme, how the session is designed to run and what materials (if any) are to be utilised to deliver the teaching

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B. Review of the Session				
	Yes	No	N/A	Comments
Was the session clearly structured?				
Did the session meet its intended aims?				
Were the teaching methods used appropriate to the session?				
Was there explicit linking to previous and/or subsequent sessions and/or required reading materials for the unit?				
Was the use of teaching materials appropriate (handouts/AV equipment/other resources)?				
Did the session begin and end on time?				
Was the session appropriately sequenced and logical?				
Was there appropriate control of the session?				
Was the session delivered at a level that the students could understand?				
Were examples or illustrations used to help students grasp key points?				
Were students given adequate opportunity to engage in the session?				
Were the students given the opportunity to ask questions?				
Were the questions answered in a clear manner that could be understood?				
Was the session drawn to a satisfactory conclusion?				
Did the conclusion look forward and encourage further action?				

Was advice offered on follow up work?				
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C. Overall assessment

This should not be a check box but should take a holistic approach to the needs for any development activity, for which some examples are provided

The following descriptions can be used, with examples:

- All, or almost all, aspects of the teaching reviewed were of very high quality, few or no suggestions for improvement could be made.
- All, or almost all, aspects of the teaching reviewed were of high quality, but some suggestions for improvement could be made.
- Some aspects of the teaching reviewed were of good quality, but a number of suggestions for important improvements can be made and some developmental activity is recommended.
- Some aspects of the teaching reviewed were deemed to raise sufficient concern that urgent developmental activity was recommended).

D. Areas of Good Practice and Strengths

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E. Recommendations for improvement and, where appropriate, further training

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Signature

Reviewer		Date	
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TA's comments			
Signature			
TA		Date	

Appendix 3 Guidelines for academic teaching staff being peer reviewed

To assist academics being reviewed in getting the most from the process, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Your reviewer(s) may ask you to provide contextualizing information in advance of your review. This may consist entirely of existing documentation, but a separate explanatory document may be required.
- Alternatively, you may wish to submit a document outlining your approach to teaching or highlighting any areas that you wish they pay particular attention to in the review. If appropriate, past Unit Survey information can be made available to the reviewer(s).
- If necessary, a pre-meeting between yourself and your reviewer(s) may be held to discuss the documentation submitted or any other aspect of the teaching that you would like them to consider. Your reviewer(s) should ensure that you understand the process of the review and how the resulting data can be used.
- In the session that is to be reviewed, consider whether you are going to explain the presence of the reviewers to your group.
- Teaching is a personal and complex skill. Consider how you will react to feedback and discussion with your reviewers.
- You will be provided with a copy of the form within two weeks of the final observation and given the opportunity to add written comments on the process and outcome, alternatively your reviewer(s) may contact you to discuss the feedback or to request further information
- Choose and take ownership of several points for development. These could be several small points or one bigger issue.
- Consider how you could achieve the points for development.
- Decide on a method to achieve the points for development.
- Agree with your reviewer(s) the aspects of good practice to be recorded.

Appendix 4. Guidelines for Peer Reviewers

To assist reviewers in getting the most from the process, the following guidelines are suggested:

- Agree with the reviewee which session(s) will be observed.
- Seek contextualizing information. This may consist entirely of existing documentation, but a separate explanatory document may be required. You may wish to discuss their approach to teaching in a pre-meeting or ask them to use the explanatory document to highlight any areas they wish particular attention be paid in the review. You may also wish to request past Unit Survey information.
- You should ensure that the reviewee understands the process of review and how the resulting data can be used.
- Discuss with the reviewee whether you are able to contribute to any discussions in class.
- Make notes to help you construct accurate feedback. Feedback should be evidence-based rather than subjective.
- Consider process more than content, and look for the many dimensions that occur within a session, such as structure, student engagement, re-iteration of key points, communication strategies, etc.
- Ensure that you seek out and report any items of good practice. Reach agreement with the reviewee and second reviewer (if there is a second reviewer) concerning the aspects of good practice observed, and record them.
- If the good practice is felt to be worthy of wider dissemination, check that the reviewee is happy for this to be reported on.
- Reach agreement with the second reviewer (if there is a second reviewer) concerning action points, and record them.
- Complete the relevant observation form along with the second reviewer (if there is a second reviewer). The form requires comment on four major areas. On some team taught units, the reviewee may have had limited input to some of these headings, comments should be limited to areas on which the reviewee has had an influence. If you need further information, ask the reviewee to provide it,
- The form should be made available to the reviewee within two weeks of the final observation. You may wish to organise a meeting with the reviewee before the form is signed off. The reviewee should be provided with the opportunity to add written comments on the process and outcome.

- A copy of the form should be provided to the reviewee and a copy forwarded to the reviewee's HoDA and Head of School Administration for use in discussing and implementing the recommendations, if appropriate.
- The reviewee may wish to discuss potential points for development. It is quite likely that you know of other ways of developing a particular aspect, and you could share this with the reviewee.
- Neither reviewer should retain a copy of the form.

Directing reviewees to sources of support:

Training opportunities

The Staff Learning and Development Unit (SLDU) offers training and development opportunities for staff. Browse the catalogue of current opportunities at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/employment/training/>

PgCert in Higher Education

The aim of the University's PgCert is to help colleagues think about their contribution to the University; develop a deeper understanding of the national and global Higher Education context; and progress in terms of professional confidence, personal effectiveness and long-term career strategies. See:

<http://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/cheril/higher-education-pgcert/>

Teaching and Learning Support Office (TLSO)

The TLSO manages and facilitates the implementation of institutional strategy for excellence in teaching and learning and the Manchester student experience. The Faculty's Teaching & Learning Support Services team works closely with the TLSO. The TLSO's website can be found at: <http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/>

The University's Manual of Academic Practice (information on Teaching and Learning specific policy and procedure) can be found at:

<http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/map/>

University policies and procedures can be found at:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/policies/>

Faculty Teaching and Learning Support Services resources

The Faculty's TLSS web pages are an excellent source of information on teaching and learning policy, procedure and practice. See:

<http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/our-services/teaching-and-learning/>

Information is available on Policy & Procedure, Quality Assurance, eLearning, News and Events, Teaching Assistants and the Humanities New Academics Programme.

Other resources and Toolkits are available eg Distance Learning Framework, Employability, Induction Toolkit, Handbook Toolkit, practice, peer support, Programme Directors' Toolkit, Mobile Developments, Teaching Awards and T&L Database.

eLearning & Blackboard support

The role of the Faculty's **eLearning Team** is to assist Faculty of Humanities staff in the development of eLearning materials and support staff in developing their eLearning potential.

They can advise on eLearning pedagogy, suitable eLearning delivery methods, provide support and advice on the development of Blackboard modules, create Blackboard modules, provide support for audio and video production and deliver training workshops and induction sessions for staff and students

Information on the support offered by the eLearning Team and information on Blackboard can be found at:

<http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/tandl/elearning/>

Suggested routes for disseminating good practice

Teaching and Learning News

Teaching and Learning News is published online monthly and circulated via Humanities eNews. It features articles on teaching topics, teaching ideas, and news and updates. <http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/humnet/news-events/teaching-and-learning-updates/>

Please contact Nicola Lord (Nicola.lord@manchester.ac.uk) with suggestions for content.

Teaching and Learning Showcase

The Faculty's Teaching and Learning Support Services runs a teaching and learning showcase each year in January and July. We welcome suggestions for presenters who would be willing to share their t&l, assessment and student support ideas with colleagues. Please contact Ewan Hannah, T&L Administrator (ewan.m.hannah@manchester.ac.uk) with suggestions.

Teaching Awards

Further information about the University's Teaching Awards (Distinguished Achievement Awards, Teaching Excellence Awards, National Teaching Fellowships) can be found on the TLSO site at: <http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/teachingawards/>

T&L Resources database

The Faculty has an online T&L Resources database which contains exemplars from past showcases etc. If you would like to suggest content for the database, please contact Nicola Lord (Nicola.lord@manchester.ac.uk).

Centre for Higher Education Research, Innovation and Learning (CHERIL)

The CHERIL offers annual funding in all kinds of areas related to Higher Education. See: <http://www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/cheril/funding-call/>

Appendix 5. Guidance on review of Unit Specification & Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)

Reviewers will consider written teaching materials which could include a session plan, student assignments or reading lists as part of the peer review process. The following prompts might be of use:

- The contents of the unit specification should be reviewed in light of the University template available online at:
<http://www.tlso.manchester.ac.uk/quality-framework/unit specifications/>
- A clear and appropriate statement of aims and intended learning outcomes forms an important element in programme design, in quality assurance and in focusing student learning. How clearly are the ILOs defined? The University's [Guide to Writing Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes](#) should be of use in reviewing unit ILOs and in suggesting clarifications where necessary.
- Consider whether the balance of teaching methods employed (lecture, seminar, work shop, online and blended learning activities), is appropriate for the stated aims and learning outcomes.
- Does each teaching session have its own ILOs where appropriate?
- How well are the methods of assessment matched to ILOs?
- Is it clear what is core, and what is supplementary reading? How current are the resources used?

Appendix 6. Guidance on review of methods & examples of feedback to students:

The University of Manchester is committed to providing timely and appropriate feedback to students on their academic progress and achievement, thereby enabling students to reflect on their progress and plan their academic and skills development effectively.

Methods and examples of feedback provided to students should be considered as part of the peer review process, including materials provided online, hand-outs, assignments or exam scripts, assignment guidance or marking schemes. Methods of feedback will vary according to assessment type, discipline, level of study and the needs of the individual student.

The aim should be to seek an objective overview of practice. The following prompts may be useful in reviewing feedback:

- Does the assessment strategy relate to that for the programme as a whole?
- Is the amount of assessment appropriate?
- Is the assessment clearly linked to the intended learning outcomes?
- Are the grading criteria appropriate and clearly explained?
- Do the grading criteria relate to the ILOS?
- Is there an opportunity for students to receive formative feedback before the main piece of assessment?
- Is information provided in unit outlines and course materials to inform students of the mechanisms by which they will receive feedback and the forms it will take for both formative and summative work?
- Does it help students understand their marks or how their performance might be improved in future?
- Does the Blackboard page for the unit have a clear section explaining the feedback mechanism that the unit will follow?
- Are there opportunities for tutor/peer interaction and are these well used?
- Is the course making the most of the opportunities for giving feedback? For example: immediate feedback through, discussion boards, multiple choice questions; podcasts; hot spots for the whole class pointing to extra materials; audio summary feedback to the whole group; Grademark for online assignment marking; peer feedback?
- Is the feedback timely? Is it clear to students that it IS feedback?

Appendix 7: Peer Review eLearning Prompts

These points should be seen as a starting point for discussion. The reviewer should look at the Blackboard 9 course, and also consider any other eLearning activity outside of Bb9, for example blogs, wikis, Twitter, Facebook, in-class technologies, etc. These activities may only become evident during discussion with the course convenor.

Expectations and orientation

- Has the time commitment of the eLearning elements been built in as part of the guided learning hours, and is this clear to the students?
- Is it clear how the online resources will be used in conjunction with the face to face teaching, and how the student will use them?
- Is it clear what the student is meant to do with each piece of information/activity? Does it specify whether it is optional or not? Is the aim of the activity clear, e.g. they will then be better able to undertake a piece of marked assessed work, they will gain a deeper knowledge of a specific aspect, they will be able to relate one aspect of the learning to another etc.?

Context

- Is there a clear pathway through the material?
- Is the material organised in such a way that the student can easily relate it to the overall learning structure, e.g. week by week or topic by topic?
- Navigation/signposting/context. Can a student find their way around easily, and back to parts they've already seen etc? Is the online experience consistent throughout the course, e.g. are the same terms and naming conventions used throughout; is the structure and signposting for each area similar?