Peer Observation of Teaching: Supporting Notes.

This document provides an outline of the essential components of peer observation.

**What is peer observation?**
This is inviting a colleague to sit in and observe you when you are teaching, followed by a constructive discussion to include feedback from the observer.

**Who should my observer be?**
This should be a colleague (a peer), who you select as being someone who will observe you teach and then give honest and constructive feedback on your teaching.

**When should I ask my observer?**
For the purposes of FRT recertification, we would encourage teachers to consider what sort of feedback they feel would be most helpful to support their development as a teacher, and to discuss this with their chosen observer before the teaching session.

**What feedback form should I use?**
We would strongly recommend that the observation exercise is discussed prior to the teaching session in order for the observer to make appropriate notes. The choice of an appropriate observation feedback form is left to you. There are a number of sample questions in the notes below which you can adapt to suit your own circumstances.

**What constitutes a teaching session?**
Any form of teaching, from a one-to-one, teaching a practical skill, a work-based assessment (such as assessing someone doing an ACP or an RDCP), facilitating a workshop or a presentation to a group of people.

**Do I need to submit the feedback form?**
The peer observation process is confidential, and the evidence you are required to submit is merely the signature of your observer that the observation and discussion has taken place in section 2 of the FRT recertification form. You may choose to write a reflection about the process which would be appropriate to include in your appraisal documentation. You may choose to include the observation form as part of this. This is your choice.
Can the process of being the observer count towards FRT recertification?
Yes, under section 5 of the FRT recertification form. You would be expected to write a brief reflection on the process of observing a peer (i.e. what it felt like from your perspective, and what you learned from being the observer, not a description of the person being observed).

Why is peer observation considered so important a part of FRT recertification?
(The following notes are adapted from Peer Observation of Teaching Faculty. A peer appraisal approach to developing and maintaining quality in teaching by Dr Kay Mohanna).

Reproduced with permission from peer observation process devised by Kay Mohanna

Peer review of the teaching process - having a colleague sit in and observe us as we teach, facilitate a reflective conversation and offer feedback - is a cornerstone of quality control in teaching. The aim will be a professional conversation, allowing the person being observed the opportunity for guided reflection on their teaching practice. The material for discussion may include personal reflection on practice, feedback from students and comments from the observer. The agenda for the discussion will be set by the person being observed who will identify specific areas for the observer's comments.

It should not be seen as an opportunity for one teacher to 'explain' to another how they can 'improve' their practice, but for each teacher to reflect on their own practice with the guidance of feedback from a colleague.

Following the feedback element, the observer and the person being observed might prepare an action plan to implement any proposed changes.

The following ground rules apply:

1. The observation of teaching is undertaken by peers unless the person being observed chooses otherwise.
2. The person being observed chooses their observer
3. Students/Participants should be advised that the observation is taking place and the nature and purpose, in general terms, explained to them
4. Observation is based on a reflective, development model. Discussion of the teaching observed is not part of the appraisal system or any other management process unless the person being observed chooses to disclose evidence from the observation or submit it as supporting documentation at appraisal. An appraiser may inquire as to whether peer observation has been carried out but disclosure of the outcomes of the observation will be solely at the discretion of the person being observed.
5. The content of the conversation is confidential. Both parties will sign a form to record only the date and time that the conversation took place.
Summary of Process

1. Undertake a self-critique to identify the objectives for any observation
2. Discuss with your partner the objectives for the observation, agree a session and which assessment tool will be used
3. Undertake the observation
4. Set aside structured time for feedback
5. Agree a confidential action plan if considered appropriate, or summarise main comments for your personal records
6. Both parties sign the satisfactory completion of peer observation form (see below).

General rules for effective feedback

1. Focus on observed behaviour rather than your interpretation
2. Give specific examples
3. Aim to be descriptive or sensory based rather than interpretive, non-sensory based.
4. Aim to be non judgmental rather than evaluative

For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluative, interpretive or judgemental</th>
<th>Descriptive, sensory based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The beginning was awful, you just seemed to ignore the students</td>
<td>At the start you were looking at your notes, which prevented eye contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The beginning was excellent, great stuff</td>
<td>At the beginning you gave the students your full attention and never lost eye contact – your facial expression registered interest in what they were saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Its no good getting embarrassed when patients talk about their sexual history</td>
<td>I noticed you were very flushed when she spoke about her husband’s impotence, and you lost eye contact…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ensure your feedback ‘has teeth’

The best feedback is high on support and high on challenge. The following figure describes the qualities of feedback of different dimensions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low support</th>
<th>High Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low challenge</strong></td>
<td><strong>High challenge</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safe, general, potentially patronising.</td>
<td>Focussed, attentive, potentially threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good. Carry on. Seems to be working</td>
<td>“Well that could have been better. Why did you not focus on….more early on?” Critical, induces defensiveness, potentially paralysing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Use a structured feedback format.**

Four examples of ways to give feedback are:

1. Pendleton’s rules
2. The SCOPME model for giving feedback
3. The Chicago model
4. The six step problem solving model

**1. Pendleton’s rules**

1. The observed person goes first and performs the activity
2. Questions are then allowed only on points of clarification of fact
3. The person being observed then says what they thought was done well
4. The observer then says what they thought was done well
5. The person being observed then says what was not done so well and could be improved upon
6. The observer then says what was not done so well and suggests ways for improvement with discussion in a supportive manner
2. The SCOPME model

1. Listen to the person being observed
2. Reflect back - for further clarification
3. Support
4. Counsel
5. Treat information in confidence
6. Inform - without censuring
7. Judge constructively
8. Identify educational needs
9. Construct and negotiate achievable learning plans.

3. The Chicago Model

1. Review the aims and objectives of the teaching session at the start.
2. Give interim feedback of a positive nature.
3. Ask the person you are observing to give their own self-appraisal of their performance to you.
4. Give feedback focussing on behaviour rather than on personality (e.g. what actually Happened, sticking to the facts not your opinions).
5. Give specific examples to illustrate your views.

4. A six step problem solving model

This model aims to try to get agreement between two individuals for solving problems, agreeing goals, aims and objectives.

1. Problem presented
2. Problem discussed
3. Problem agreed
4. Solution proposed
5. Solution discussed

When things have gone wrong you could use it to decide exactly where this has happened and where the difficulty really lies.

In the very unlikely eventuality that you want to give feedback to someone whose teaching is completely unacceptable, but they seem unaware of this, there are ways of delivering the information and still maintaining a relationship that will enable you to continue to work together.
Consider these tips:

1. Make sure the person is OK before you start
2. Use a ‘wake-up’, warning phrase
3. State, very simply, your opinion
4. Give a specific example
5. Relax the tone to allow for a positive response (usually suggestions for improvement ensue)
6. Respond to the offer positively, but define specific measurable outcomes
7. Do not be drawn into discussion on justification of behaviour or your right to judge

Higher Education Funding Council for England Guidance for Assessors

Before observing the session, discuss its purpose and structure with the teacher being assessed.
During observation, make notes relevant to the prompts given below.
Do not expect them all to be relevant in every setting.
At the end of the session ensure feedback is given to the teacher.

Prompts:

1. What were the objectives of the sessions? Were they appropriate?
2. Did the teacher outline the structure and purpose of the session?
3. Did the teacher address the issue of the learners’ needs?
4. Could the teacher be seen and heard?
5. Were the key points emphasised?
6. Were the explanations clear to the students?
7. Were the examples and analogies appropriate?
8. Was appropriate use made of audio-visual aids?
9. Was the session stimulating for the students?
10. Was there a variety of activity?
11. Did the teacher ask or invite questions or other forms of student participation?
12. Did the teacher cite references and/or refer to relevant research or scholarship?
13. Did the teacher summarise key points and conclusions.
14. Was the type of educational activity chosen appropriate to the learning outcomes?

Which of the following statements best summarises the class:

a. The session failed to make an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the learning objectives set.
b. The session made an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the learning objectives but significant improvement could be made.
c. The session made a substantial contribution to the attainment of the learning outcomes but there is scope for improvement.
d. The sessions made a full contribution to the attainment of the learning objectives
You may like to use this form to comment on the strengths and weaknesses of a teaching session:

Detail of teaching session:
Date:
Time:
Description of learners:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of objectives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods/approach</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivery and pace</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content (Currency, accuracy, relevance, use of examples, level, match to students’ needs)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of accommodation and learning resources.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
You may like to use the following form which has been adapted for observing a trainer assess a trainee doing an ACP or RDCP:

**Peer Observation of Teaching for use in Practical DFSRH scenarios, ACP / RDCP observation**

**Details of the ACP / RDCP under observation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompts</th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning and organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity of objectives with trainee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of accommodation and learning resources.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support to trainee during the assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of trainee response to teacher input and assessment during the ACP RDCP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback from trainee under assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback from teacher under observation

Comments for further development by the observer of the teacher

Title of Session observed

Teacher

Observer

Date

Place

Record of completion of peer observation