



Division for the Student Experience

PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING PROCEDURE

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The University of Sussex recognizes the value and importance of peer observation of teaching as an activity that is both collegial and developmental. It is important both for enhancing the status of teaching and learning and for strengthening quality assurance processes. It is the University's position that all academic departments (and interdisciplinary groups) must engage annually in peer observation of teaching. Peer observation at Sussex is linked to the [UK Professional Standards Framework \(UKPSF\)](#).

2. Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of peer observation of teaching at Sussex are to:
- foster discussion and dissemination of best practice
 - help ensure that the University is providing a high-quality educational experience for its students
 - encourage all staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching
 - enhance the importance attached to the quality of teaching
 - help inform both personal and departmental staff development planning
 - identify any weaknesses and put in place an action plan to remedy them
 - help staff prepare for a periodic or external review.

3. Procedures for Peer Observation

- 3.1 The procedures for peer observation of teaching are that:
- 3.1.1 Peer observation is organized and managed by departments (or interdisciplinary groups) with a named individual (the head of department or her/his nominee) responsible for the process.
- 3.1.2 Each department should engage in peer observation each academic year, and each member of permanent academic faculty is expected to participate at least every other year.

- 3.1.3 Other members of teaching staff on fixed term or temporary contracts (Doctoral Teaching Assistants for example) should be invited to participate in peer observation. At least some staff in these categories should be observed each year.
- 3.1.4 The department should ensure that the full range of teaching methods deployed (lecture, seminar, laboratory etc) are sampled during the two-year period.
- 3.1.5 Peer observation is a developmental and collegial exercise and is not to be considered as a part of appraisal or review, although any member of faculty may choose to include evidence from a teaching observation in their own submissions for appraisal or career advancement.
- 3.1.6 Observations should be scheduled far enough apart to enable development time in between.
- 3.1.7 Peer observation should enable the following seven stages of an annual process to be carried out:
- Departmental (or interdisciplinary group) planning for peer observation
 - Observer and observee holding pre-session meeting
 - Teaching session(s) and report
 - Observer and observee holding feedback meeting
 - Production of individual action plans
 - Departmental (or interdisciplinary group) discussion, summary and group action plan
 - Staff development (for individual and for department) undertaken and evaluated.
- 3.1.8 It is recommended that the peer observation documents developed for the University's PGCert in Higher Education are used to document the process. These can be accessed at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/adqe/qualityguide>. If required, departments are able to adapt this version as appropriate to their needs. All peer observation records should include four sections:
- Section 1: pre-observation discussion record
 - Section 2: notes on the session being observed
 - Section 3: post-observation evaluation meeting
 - Section 4: Reflections on the process of observation and the feedback received.
- Sections 1,2 and 4 are confidential to the observer and observee and remain the property of the observee. Section 3 will be sent to the peer observation organizer within the department to inform discussion and required staff development.
- 3.1.9 It is the responsibility of the department's peer observation organizer to ensure that the department or group discusses the results of each year's scheme and identifies developmental issues to be incorporated in departmental staff development plans.

- 3.1.10 Departments should produce a short report on peer observation. This should be considered concurrently with their annual monitoring reports. The report should confirm that the process has been completed, include numbers of staff observed and identify whether this is consistent with the departmental plan. It should also note any general issues about the process itself; identify both good practice for dissemination and any developmental needs.
- 3.1.11 It is the responsibility of the Faculties /Academic Schools to ensure that this procedure is implemented at departmental level and to consider the departmental reports.

Review/Contact/References	
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