



## POLICY ON PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

Revised 2022

### Aims

The aims of the University's Peer Observation of teaching process are:

- 1) To promote a culture in which good teaching is valued and to enhance teaching quality at the point of delivery by encouraging reflection on practice.
- 2) To provide a supportive and constructive framework for the University's teaching staff to monitor, reflect upon and improve the quality of their teaching.
- 3) To enhance the quality of teaching by providing an effective framework for the identification and dissemination of good teaching practice.
- 4) To enhance the quality of teaching by the identification of staff development needs and to inform the University in addressing those needs.

Peer Observation of Teaching is in place across the University, and it is important that the University continues to take a uniform approach to Peer Observation in order to meet internal and external teaching expectations, such as the new QAA quality code for Higher Education<sup>1</sup>. The University also needs to ensure that all members of staff undergoing Peer Observation of Teaching are treated in a fair and consistent manner.

### Procedure

- 1) The Head of School<sup>2</sup> or Peer Observation Group should establish who wishes to be a Peer Observer. The Head of School would not normally be a Peer Observer.
- 2) The Head of School should identify the Peer Observers who will form the Peer Observation Group. **The Group will be responsible for all aspects of the administration of the Peer Observation Procedure.** This will include the collection of the Summary Form following the completion of each observation and the analysis of data collected from these forms.
- 3) All Peer Observers must be trained. Training is available from The Academy ([theacademy@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:theacademy@liverpool.ac.uk)) and takes place within schools and amongst peers. It is also recommended that trained Peer Observers receive refresher every 4 years.
- 4) Every member of staff should normally be observed **at least once every two years**. Probationary staff should have the benefit of being able to be peer observed **annually until their probation is completed**. In cases where staff development needs have been identified,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> Or Head of Department or Institute where appropriate

the Peer Observer and Observee may agree to carry out a further observation session. The peer observation period will be the academic year, and the programme for observations would be set in the beginning of the first semester.

- 5) Where a member of staff is undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP), the observations to authenticate practice that are required for assessment of this qualifications will be deemed to be sufficient for the peer observation for that year.
- 6) Peer observation is primarily concerned with teaching delivery rather than teaching content. However, Peer Observers may wish to bear in mind the extent to which an observed session contributes to successful delivery of the learning outcomes specified for the module in question. It is acknowledged that the Peer Observer is normally working in the same (or related) discipline they may be able to comment on the level at which material is being taught.
- 7) The Head of School or the Peer Observation Group is responsible for pairing teaching staff with Peer Observers. The Head of School will consult with individual members of staff at the end of the previous academic year to establish who their Peer Observer might be.
- 8) The Head of School or the Peer Observation Group may want to consider involving all teaching staff (when trained to do so) to act as Peer Observers without implied hierarchies relating to the roles assumed; this has the potential to improve teaching across the school through mutual discussions and reflection on teaching related methods or processes.
- 9) A Peer Observer should also see this role as a personal learning opportunity through which they can reflect on observed practice as a way of informing their own teaching.
- 10) Appropriate arrangements should be in place so that the pairings for observation change for each cycle of observations. Where the Head of School is to be observed, a suitable peer should engage with the process as needed.
- 11) Peer observation will normally involve a single Peer Observer observing one teaching, learning or assessment activity, **for approximately an hour or as appropriate for the type of observation agreed.**
  - The Peer Observer should contact the member of staff to be observed at least two weeks before the observation takes place, in order to agree the arrangements for the observation.
  - For new staff, Peer Observers will need to take care to explain the observation process and the documentation including forms that need to be completed and retained or submitted to the school.
  - Observees will need to discuss in advance with their Peer Observer any issues considered relevant to the observed session, including such issues as student feedback. Any particular issues that the Observee would like feedback on should be discussed at this meeting and added to the Confidential Feedback Form.
- 12) The Peer Observer should use **the Confidential Observation Form**, or an approved alternative which should be completed at the end of the observation or as soon as possible thereafter.

- 13) As soon as possible after the observation, the Peer Observer should meet with the Observee to discuss the session and provide feedback. It is important that the verbal comments should be consistent with those that eventually appear on the Observation Form. **The Confidential Observation Form should be retained solely by the Observee.** The feedback should consist of constructive helpful comments and observations, and should be preceded by the Observee commenting on their own perceptions of the session.
- 14) The Peer Observer and Observee should complete **the Summary Form** which will be forwarded to the corresponding School's Peer Observation Group for appropriate action.
- 15) Immediately following the conclusion of the peer observation of teaching exercise for the year, the Peer Observation Group should meet to discuss the strategic/best practice aspects of the observations undertaken. The Head of School can be alerted to the strategic issues raised in respect of teaching, learning and assessment development and may also be asked to identify resources and/or opportunities to support the development of individual members of staff. **Wherever possible confidentiality of the individual should be maintained.** There should then be wider circulation within the School of the matters raised by the Peer Observation Group.
- 16) The Academy ([theacademy@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:theacademy@liverpool.ac.uk)) shows the range of teaching-related development available. Particular development requirements not already covered should be discussed with Academy staff.
- 17) Good practice identified during peer observation may be referred by the Head of School or a Peer Observation Group to the School Learning and Teaching Group (or equivalent structure), or the Faculty Student Experience Committee for wider dissemination. This can be done either with the agreement of the Observee whose practice has been commended or anonymously.

**Linked documents available on the website:**

- The Confidential Observation Form (downloadable as a Word document for completion)
  - The Summary Form (downloadable as a Word document for completion)
  - Brief guide for Peer Observers
  - Brief guide for Observees
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