



Peer Observation Template for Academics

Introduction and guidelines for peer observation of teaching.

Academics are typically comfortable with peer review of research but perhaps less familiar with the concept of a peer review of teaching. Observers and the peer they observe are afforded the opportunity to experience, reflect on, and discuss the teaching and learning encounter. Comments from the observation can be used to stimulate reflection and 'follow-on' actions for what to change – or what to keep doing. For the observer, peer observation is also an opportunity to think about how you 'do' feedback in relation to supporting peers.

Comments should be phrased constructively: our role in peer observation is not to judge or evaluate a colleague's approach to teaching or to interrogate their teaching philosophy, but to identify positive features of their teaching style and to identify strategies or action points they can address to enhance their teaching approach.

- Be specific: what is the area for enhancement and how should the colleague 'address' this?
- Be concise: too many comments will overload the response. Focus on one or two things to improve.
- Don't forget - comments should be on the behaviours/performances/acts of teaching you can observe, not on the individual.

It is essential to allow time for a conversation between the peers, both the observer and the observed, after the session.

Suggestions on what you might focus on as observable within a teaching session:

- Introduction of a theme/concept
- Classroom management.
- Structuring of a teaching event.
- 'Pace' (e.g. timing).
- Nature of interaction between learners and teacher.
- Assessment and feedback (e.g. use of Classroom Assessment Techniques (CATS) within a class).
- Integration of technological tools into the teaching event.
- Areas of development for you and your peer.

Remember:

- the focus is on teaching activity(ies), not on the 'content' of the session.
- you 'give' feedback - but the decision whether to act on it lies with the 'recipient'. To support that 'acting' on feedback - consider how specific your recommendations for action are!
- you're giving colleagues the benefit of your time and insight with the aim of helping them. Give generously!



Further Information on Formal Peer Observation Toolkits.

If you choose to undertake a more formal peer observation of teaching (e.g. as part of a peer development review or as part of a reflective assignment focusing on peer review of teaching), Edinburgh's Peer Observation of Teaching resource is likely to offer additional insights and suggestions on how you might structure an observation and UCD's teaching toolkit pro-forma is intended to support you with session planning.

- Blackwell, R. and Machin, M. (1996) Peer observation of teaching and staff development. Higher Education Quarterly 50(2): 156-171.
- Peel, D. (2005) Peer observation as a transformatory tool? Teaching in Higher Education 10(4): 489-504

Form to be completed during Peer Observation

A 'timeline' is provided to assist you to make notes on what is happening during the peer observation. This timeline is followed by structured questions that are to go back to the person you are observing.

- Constructive commentary can be difficult to experience, so try and uncouple the comments on the behaviours from the person themselves. The form below is structured to help this.
- It is essential to allow time for a post session conversation between the peers, with reference to the template completed by the observer, and the observer's session plan.



Observation Template

Title of session:	
My understanding of session learning outcomes (learner experience):	
Teacher activity (and timings during the session):	Learner activity (and timings during the session):



FEEDBACK TEMPLATE:

1. Circle your overall opinion: the teaching session was:

1 = Borderline, 2 = Good, 3= Very Good, 4 = Excellent
2. The session was learner-focused:
 1. strongly agree
 2. agree
 3. disagree
 4. strongly disagree
3. The learner's interest was piqued:
 1. strongly agree
 2. agree
 3. disagree
 4. strongly disagree
4. The learner was clear on the 'direction of travel' of the session
 1. strongly agree
 2. agree
 3. disagree
 4. strongly disagree
5. The learner is aware of what to expect from the session:
 1. strongly agree
 2. agree
 3. disagree
 4. strongly disagree
6. What did you most like about the session? Be specific & identify at least two positive aspects to the presentation:
 - a)
 - b)
7. Could you provide an area for improvement to your peer lecturer or suggest an alternative way of doing something?
8. Have you any other comments for your peer lecturer?