

University Code of Practice

Observation and Development of Teaching, Learning and Assessment

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| Application to collaborative provision: | Mandatory |
| Contacts: | Academic Administrator |
| Applications for exemptions to: | Academic Quality and Standards Committee |
| Report Exemptions to: | Academic Board |
| Summary/ Description: | |
| <p>This Code sets out the University's approach to, and requirements for observation of any aspect of learning, teaching, assessment and feedback. It sets out the University's principles including that the scheme is designed to be developmental and a means to help individual staff reflect on their practice and take responsibility for their own professional development needs. It is based on a dialogue between observee and observer in a way which is not judgemental and relies on the sense of mutual trust and support between colleagues.</p> <p>All staff involved in any form of teaching and/or assessment of students must engage in the University's Teaching Observation and Development Scheme. The Scheme includes being observed at least once per academic year (except where staff are new to teaching or on probation). The process is essentially in three stages: (i) preparation including the observee deciding which area of practice and specific activity would benefit most from being observed (ii) the observation (iii) the follow-up discussion designed to promote effective reflection by the observee on their practice.</p> <p>The scheme, administered by the Programme Coordinator(s), aims to enable effective or innovative practice to be captured and spread, as appropriate for enhancement and developmental purposes.</p> | |

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The Academic Quality and Standards Committee maintains oversight on the effectiveness of the Scheme across the University.

Further Guidance

See the Introduction to the Quality Handbook (QH:A1) for further guidance and explanations of:

- how the Handbook is designed to work and what it covers and does not cover
- how it is structured
- the 'external reference points' and established practice which have informed each of the Codes
- key concepts and themes
- some suggestions for further reading
- a quick guide to each Code, including definitions and things to watch out for.

This university Code has been written in accordance with the approach approved by the University to enhance clarity involving the following terminology: **must** = mandatory **should** = advisable **may** = desirable. Where these terms are used they are emphasised in bold.

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INTRODUCTION

Authority

1. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is the final arbiter of the application and interpretation of this code of practice.

Scope of the Code

2. This Code applies to the teaching, learning and assessment delivered on programmes classified by Academic Board as taught and which lead to the award of the University's higher education qualifications (as set out in the Academic Regulations: Taught Programmes (QH:C1)).
3. All staff involved in any form of teaching and/or assessment of students **must** engage in the University's Teaching, Observation and Development scheme, including (where practicable) through participating in at least one observation and being observed on at least one occasion in each academic year.
4. Staff who are new to teaching or on probation **must** be observed at least once per semester in their first year or during the period of probation, whether by the same or different observers.

Application to collaborative provision

5. Unless specified by the Academic Board, this Code applies to all provision referred to in paragraph 2 whether that provision is delivered by the University or another approved provider in accordance with a formal legal agreement.

PRINCIPLES

6. Teaching observation is a key component in the evaluation of teaching quality. Peer observation is designed to be formative and is dependent on staff working together on the basis of mutual trust and support. It is:
 - (a) a means for individual staff to take responsibility for their own professional development needs;
 - (b) developmental: enabling and contributing to the continuing development of each member of staff's practice;
 - (c) dialogic: enabling an effective dialogue between observer and observee which stimulates ongoing reflection by the observee, rather than a one-way feedback of observations;
 - (d) progressive: each year's observation activity builds on the previous year's activity and development;

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- (e) collegial, collaborative and non-judgemental;
- (f) interconnected with other development activities and initiatives, including each member of staff's engagement in research and scholarship (both pedagogic and subject-specific);
- (g) interconnected with programme and module monitoring and review in the sense of informing, and being informed by, that process (including feedback gained from students and external examiners and the analysis of data);
- (h) individually and collectively-focused: focusing on the individual needs of the observee while enabling the identification and sharing of effective and innovative practice beyond the individual;
- (i) focused on any activities which contribute to the student learning experience whether the design of, preparation for, or delivery of: formal teaching, assessment activities (including marking and moderation); the provision of feedback on assessment, and whether those activities are face-to-face or on-line;

OBSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHING SCHEME

7. The following sets out the University's approach to, and requirements for, the observation of the delivery by teaching staff of any aspect of learning, teaching, assessment and feedback through any mode.

Terminology

8. Throughout this Code the following terminology is used:
 - (a) observee: a member of staff participating in the Teaching, Observation and Development scheme as part of their reflection on their practice and on-going development.
 - (b) observer: the programme coordinator or a member of staff chosen to conduct the observation including the follow-up discussion and record-keeping specified below.
 - (c) 'formative' observation: is a collaborative peer-to-peer process in which the observee works closely with the observer to receive feedback focused on an area of practice for which the observee considers they will gain the most benefit.
 - (d) 'summative' observations: are used for quality assurance purposes such as comparing the quality of teaching across modules / programmes and assess staff developmental needs. The purpose of summative observation may include for example, to evaluate an individual lecturer's performance in relation to that of peers.

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9. Any reference to an 'observation' includes reference to all the elements of the process set out in para 14 onwards unless otherwise indicated.

Context

10. The University is committed to investing in the development of its staff and believes that a process through which staff reflect on their own practice and professional development is an effective way of enhancing the knowledge and skills of staff and in turn enhancing the quality of the learning experience of students. This commitment is part of the University's strategic approach to learning, teaching and assessment and to providing equality of opportunity to students and staff. All staff with teaching responsibilities are expected to continually enhance their practice throughout their career, taking an academically rigorous (evidence-informed) and professional approach.
11. Observations under this scheme are 'formative' (as described above).
12. A 'summative' observation may be conducted by the Programme Coordinator or a member of senior management where considered necessary. In all cases the member of staff to be observed will be informed that the observation is summative, the purpose of the observation and of any implications as applicable.
13. A Teaching Observation Report Form will be completed by the observer for all summative observations.

Process

14. Each Teaching Observation and Development activity should be based on the following:

Selection of observer

15. Each member of staff will be observed by either a Programme Coordinator, or other member of staff, including a colleague involved in a completely different programme, provided that:
 - (a) the choice does not result in a reciprocal arrangement (i.e. two staff conducting each other's observations);
 - (b) the observer has not previously observed the observee on more than two occasions (unless this is unavoidable);
 - (c) the observer, if not the Programme Coordinator, is approved by the Programme Coordinator or Head of School;
 - (d) the observer is not new to teaching or on probation.

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Preparation

16. The observee should identify the area of practice and the type of activity which they would like to address and be observed. This should be an area and activity which the observee thinks will be most helpful at this point in their development, in terms of for example: addressing a particularly challenging aspect of practice; reviewing a relatively new or potentially innovative activity; addressing an issue raised via student feedback. The choice should also reflect consideration of previous observations and what the observee may have learnt from observing colleagues.
17. The observee and observer should meet to discuss the selection, including the nature of the activity and how it will be observed. This discussion may help the observee with their choice of area/activity. The discussion should enable agreement over any specific issues or elements which the observee would like to discuss following the observation.
18. The observee and observer must agree the date and time of the observation and the date and time of the follow-up discussion.

Observing the activity

19. The observation should be conducted at the agreed time, with students involved in the activity being informed of the reason for the observer's presence.
20. For peer-to-peer observations, the observer should take notes which will form the basis of the follow-up discussion, bearing in mind that the notes will remain confidential to the observer and observee.
21. In the case of summative observations, a Teaching Observation Report Form will be completed by the observer to be discussed in the follow-up meeting.

Follow-up discussion

22. The follow-up discussion must reflect the principles for the Scheme set out above and be based on a dialogue between the staff. The dialogue should include the observer's observations and the observee's reflections on their delivery of the activity as well as on the observer's feedback. The observer's focus should be on asking questions – with an appropriate level of challenge - which encourage the observee to reflect on and analyse their own practice and stimulate their consideration of their developmental goals and how to achieve them.
23. The observer should draw attention to, and stimulate discussion on, practice which appears to be particularly effective and/or innovative and which therefore has the potential to benefit other staff or to be extended to other activities delivered by the observee.

Record-keeping

24. While the discussions and the notes of the observation are confidential between the two colleagues involved, the observer must provide a record of the observation for assurance purposes to the Programme Coordinator(s) of the observee's and the observer's programme(s) recording only the following:

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- (a) name of the observer and observee
- (b) date of the observation
- (c) nature of the activity observed (e.g. 60 minute workshop involving x 1st year students)
- (d) date of the follow-up discussion.

25. Where the two colleagues consider that the activity evidenced particularly effective and/or innovative practice worthy of sharing with other colleagues, it should be included in the Module Enhancement and Evaluation Report (MEER) (see QH:C12)) and a [separate] summary provided to the relevant Programme Coordinator/s of the practice and how it might benefit other colleagues' practice.

26. The Programme Coordinator will:

- (a) disseminate to relevant teaching staff, and
- (b) incorporate it into the Programme Review and Enhancement Plan (PREP).

27. The Director of Academic Quality and Learning will ensure that such good practice is shared more widely as appropriate.

Development needs

28. The observee is responsible for discussing with their Programme Coordinator:

- (a) their development needs including those identified in the follow-up discussion
- (b) any other issues stimulated by their reflection on their practice – for example suggestions for changes to a module, which can be included in the Module Enhancement and Evaluation Report (see under the Code on Programme Monitoring and Review (QH:C12)).

University oversight

29. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee is responsible for maintaining oversight of the implementation of the Teaching, Observation and Development scheme and its effectiveness in achieving the principles set out above.

30. Programme Coordinators are responsible for providing a summary in their Programme Review and Enhancement Plan (see QH:C12)) which:

- (a) confirms that all staff on the programme have participated in the required number of observations for the year (including as observers and observees);
- (b) summarises cases of particularly effective and/or innovative practice considered worthy of sharing beyond individual colleagues and reports on how this has been disseminated (if that is the case);
- (c) highlights any issues arising from the process, including suggestions for enhancing it.

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31. In its annual consideration of the Annual Development Review reports for all programmes, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee will pay particular attention to the effectiveness of the Teaching, Observation and Development scheme and to examples of particularly effective and/or innovative practice, including ensuring that they have or will be disseminated effectively across the University.

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