Peer review of teaching

Who should be reviewed? It depends on the purpose of the review:

- It could be most staff if you are aiming at broad quality enhancement.
- It could be a specific cohort that needs a targeted program – sessional or new staff.

Should the review be mandatory, encouraged or optional?

1. Should it be all or most teaching staff within a department?
By including all/most teaching staff you are acknowledging that teaching quality is a shared responsibility.
This encourages collegiality and an enhancement focus where ideas are shared.
It promotes an open teaching culture especially in the case of reciprocal or group review.
The focus can be on priorities for the department or interests of individuals or both.
To maintain collegiality participation should be optional, but strongly encouraged.

2. Should it be new staff?
A program targeted at new staff can accommodate their particular needs.
A targeted program can complement induction that is beneficial to all new staff.
Pairing new staff with experienced staff offers a range of benefits.
Targeted programs for new staff can be mandatory.

3. Should it be sessional staff?
Sessional staff have specific needs – a targeted sessional program can help ensure they are supported and well equipped to provide quality teaching.
Programs targeting sessional staff can accommodate their limited time and recognise their financial status.
Targeted programs can help overcome the isolation felt by some sessional staff.
Targeted programs for sessional staff can be mandatory if staff receive remuneration for participating in peer review.

4. Should it be staff enrolled in a particular professional development program?
Staff enrolled in foundations programs, graduate certificates or other teaching courses can be targeted.
Targeted programs can effectively engage new staff or those with a particular interested in quality teaching.
The review process and approach can be effectively embedded into the program curriculum.
Participation in review may be made a requirement of completing the program.
Start here . . .

➢ This kit is intended to provide a simple introduction to peer review of teaching
➢ It’s meant for both those who will be reviewed and those doing the reviewing.

1. Each card addresses a topic that you should think about

Have a look at all the cards now to get an overall idea of the issues

Why? Think about what you want to achieve.
What? What is to be reviewed?
Who? Who will be the reviewer?
How? How will the peer review take place?
Reporting? How are the results to be communicated?
Followup? Questions to think about after the review and reporting.

2. It’s a cycle, but you need to start somewhere

If you’re new to peer review, you might want to start with Why? Getting a clear idea of your aims will help guide the rest of the process.

Then perhaps move on to What? and Who? will be the reviewer.

Once you know who is working with you can discuss with them How? And Reporting?

After that comes Followup?

Once you’re more familiar with peer review you can decide on an order that suits you.

Think about keeping notes to help your planning and reflection.

Communicate as much as possible about your goals and intentions to the other people involved in the review.

3. What else is in this kit

• A diagram of the model of peer review underlying the design of these materials
• Some sample forms for the reviewer(s). They range from the very informal to the highly detailed. You can use them as is or as the basis for your own forms.
• A selected list of references and other materials, if you wish to read further about peer review
Think about why you want a peer to review your teaching or material.
Make notes, they’ll help in your later reflection.
Let the other people involved know your intentions.

1. You want help with a particular issue in your teaching:
This can be useful in addressing an issue that appears, eg. in student feedback.
It can help focus the review and in getting precise recommendations.
However, if the focus is defined too narrowly the reviewer may miss other useful issues.
You need to be very clear with the reviewers exactly what you want reviewed. However, if the focus is defined too narrowly the reviewer may miss other useful issues.

2. You want feedback to identify issues you may not be aware of:
This can be useful in general teaching enhancement.
It doesn’t take a great deal of preparation.
Reviewer recommendations may comment on areas you are not expecting – be prepared for this.
Reviewer recommendations may be in areas you consider unimportant or difficult to act upon – be prepared to discuss this with them.

3. You want to engage with your colleagues in discussions about teaching:
You should let your reviewers know that you are looking for ongoing discussions.
Making yourself the subject can get people talking without feeling threatened.
Many of the comments under 2. apply here.

4. You want to get promoted:
Make sure you know the requirements for documentation for promotion purposes and that your reviewers are happy to satisfy them.
See if you can use it for one of the above purposes as well.
We don’t recommend peer review as being mandatory for any reason, including this one.
Peer review of teaching

What is to be reviewed?
- You can have peers observe/review anything to do with your teaching, not just what happens in the classroom. It’s up to you.

1. Preparation
Always spend some time with your reviewer beforehand, discussing and agreeing on what is to be reviewed, the range and scope of the review and the issues you are seeking to address.

Putting this down in writing keeps everyone on the same page and helps in your reflections on the results.

2. If the review is to be in the classroom
A lot happens in the classroom, so think about, and discuss with your reviewer, how general or specific you want their review to be.

Specific reviews may address the issues you identify, but miss other matters. Do you want reviewers to note things outside the range you’ve defined?

General reviews still won’t catch everything. The reviewer may note issues you hadn’t thought about. For a really general review you may need to ask the reviewers not to spend too much time concentrating on one or two issues.

3. A lecture? A tutorial? A laboratory?
The answer should come from deciding what you want reviewed.

Be aware that the smaller the number of students in a class the more a reviewer will be noticeable – which may make everyone a little uncomfortable unless some effort is taken. It would help to suggest positive things that can be done to put everyone at ease. A reviewer might blend in with a large lecture – not so likely for a small tutorial.

4. Can things outside the classroom be reviewed?
A lot of teaching happens outside the classroom, so for instance reviewers can look at teaching materials or handling/marking of student submissions.

Again it’s important to agree with the reviewer what is being reviewed – specific issues or the general nature of the material.

Reviews of materials do not need to be done with you present, so they can be easier to organise than classroom review.
Peer review of teaching

- **Who should I get to observe me?**
- **It could be one person—keeps it simpler.**
- **More than one reviewer may get more insights.**
- **Regardless of level, discipline, etc., it should be someone you respect.**
- **Think about making it reciprocal.**

1. **Should it be someone in my discipline?**

They will understand your subject material, and look at content issues, but an outsider may give fresh perspectives, and consider more general teaching practice.

Someone from outside your discipline may be able to bring fresh perspectives on teaching.

A long-term conversation might be easier with someone in your discipline.

2. **Should it be someone at my level of appointment?**

Someone on a different level may have a different perspective to you, which can be useful in reflecting on your teaching practice.

Someone at a lower level may be uncomfortable critiquing your teaching. Make sure you are clear about how open you are if you partner with someone in this position.

Be aware of the potential problems if one of you is on a contract or is employed on a casual basis and the other isn’t.

3. **Should I get someone who I know has similar teaching practices? Or that I have a good relationship with?**

That can make discussion and communication easier.

They may be more aware of the issues confronting you, but be aware that you may share common faults.

They may be unwilling to critique you. If so, make it clear how open you are to criticism.

4. **Someone in my discipline but outside my department?**

If they’re from your discipline but at another university they’ll understand the content but may be unaware of local issues.

You could even get someone from outside the university system (an industry or clinical professional). They may have valuable insights about discipline practice, but be unfamiliar with teaching principles or specifics.

5. **Should it be staff enrolled in particular professional development programs?**

Targeted programs can effectively engage new staff or those with a particular interest in teaching.
How will the review take place? It depends on the purpose of the review:

- It could be informal.
- It could be very formal.
- It depends on what you want to achieve.

1. Where will the review take place?

If you have organised for your teaching to be observed then your colleague will need to attend the relevant lecture, tutorial or practical session.

If you favour a formal system then you will need pre and post briefings in a mutually agreed space, such as an office or meeting room.

If you favour an informal system the location could be more relaxed: a coffee shop, tea room, in the corridor, while walking back to the office, etc.

If you want your materials reviewed you might not even need to meet face-to-face: it could all happen by email.

2. What does the reviewer do?

If you asked the reviewer to observe your teaching then they will need to attend the relevant session.

If this is a large lecture the reviewer’s presence will probably go unnoticed.

In a small tutorial or practical session the students will probably notice the reviewer’s presence and this will change the dynamic - be aware of this.

It is up to you whether you tell the students what you are doing.

Remember that this is a reciprocal process of learning and teaching.

A reviewer can benefit from reviewing your teaching and using that in reflections on their own teaching.

3. What form(s) to use?

If you favour a formal system you will probably want to use specifically designed forms (see Reporting).

If you favour an informal system you may not even need forms - a chat can often be enough.

Between these extremes you have a great deal of flexibility - where you fall depends on what you wish to achieve.
Peer observation of teaching

- Reporting: How will the results be communicated?
- What documentation is produced during the entire review process?
- How long is documentation kept?
- By whom is it kept?
- How are results of the review communicated to the reviewee?

1. What documentation will be produced?

This kit contains a range of sample forms you could use or adapt. An informal review need produce no documentation at all. A formal review can produce a range of documentation including:

i. Pre-briefing notes specifying what is to be reviewed (e.g. lecture) and the desired focus (e.g. ability to engage all students);
ii. Reviewer’s report on session or materials based on (i);
iii. Reviewee’s response to reviewer’s report;
iv. Notes on de-brief session during which reviewer and reviewee discuss (ii) and (iii); and,
v. Action plan that identifies reviewee’s professional development needs in light of (iv).

2. Who owns the documentation?

If the review does produce documentation it is essential that all involved are clear about who owns it and how it may be used. There are two scenarios: owned by the reviewee or owned by the university.

If the reviewee owns the documentation it is up to them how to use it and who to show it to.

They may decide to use it in a promotion application or they may decide not to show it to anyone and just use it to plan their own professional development.

Even if the documentation is owned by the reviewee it is generally advisable to seek the reviewers permission to use the documentation in promotions or formal reviews.

If the university owns the documentation, who is responsible for passing on the documentation, how it will be stored, who will have access to it and how it can be used should be clearly specified in university policy.

3. How are the results communicated to the reviewee?

The first thing to consider is the timing of communication.

A very informal chat can happen directly after the lecture on the way back to the office.

At the other end of the spectrum a very formal process requires time for the reviewer to prepare their report and the reviewee to prepare their response before the post-review meeting.

If you are reviewing materials a face-to-face meeting may not be necessary.

Or you may want a face-to-face debrief.

Or you may like to combine comments on the teaching materials with a face-to-face debrief.
Peer review of teaching

➢ What do we do once the results are communicated?
➢ You need to decide what use to make of the reviewer’s comments.
➢ This doesn’t have to be the end.
➢ The following applies to both reviewees and reviewers.

1. Do we keep talking?
This may be an opportunity to start a longer term discussion about teaching.
Think about doing more peer reviews in the future.
Peer review is only one way to assist in developing each other’s teaching.
Even if you want different partners, with different points of view next time, there could be value in maintaining the contacts you just made.

2. Have you changed anything in your teaching?
Has this process made a difference?
Did it address the issue you started with? (assuming you had a goal in mind at the beginning).
How can you tell whether any changes are successful or not?
Can the students notice a difference? And does that always matter?

3. Reflect on what happened in the peer review process.
When do you think it would be worthwhile to be reviewed again?
What would you keep for next time, what would you do differently?
Would you review the same aspect of teaching?
Make the focus broader or narrower?
Partner with the same people or look for others?

4. You’re experienced now (if you weren’t already).
You can assist colleagues who might be thinking of trying peer review.
Your practical experience can help your future teaching development and those of others.
You might want to think about examining the literature in the light of your experience.
Or even contributing to it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewee:</th>
<th>Reviewer:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Unit:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activity Type:</td>
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Free Response
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<tr>
<th>Reviewee:</th>
<th>Reviewer:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
<td>Unit:</td>
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<td>Activity Type:</td>
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# Review

**Reviewee:**

**Reviewer:**

**Date:**

**Unit:**

**Activity Type:**

## CHECK LIST FORM

### Planning/Organisation/Content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>Observed?</th>
<th>Brief Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching purposes are clear and stated in appropriate term e.g. aims, outcomes etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching purposes are appropriate to the needs, experience and abilities of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structure of session: introduction, development, conclusion is evident</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Content is appropriate for the level, abilities, needs and interests of students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Content is well researched and up-to-date</td>
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### Teaching Strategies/Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOPIC</th>
<th>Observed?</th>
<th>Brief Comment</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Methods are appropriate to purposes of session</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods are chosen with regard to students’ age, abilities, needs and needs of unit/content</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Check List Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Methods are chosen to gain interest and participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class management is effective and appropriate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources are used effectively and complement content, methods and purposes</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Presentation, Management etc**

| Effective presentation/ communication skills are used |  |
| Employs effective use of questioning to promote monitoring and understanding |  |
| Student contributions and participation is encouraged in a positive atmosphere |  |
| Equal opportunities exist for all students |  |

**Assessment/Monitoring**

<p>| Suitable methods are used to identify and monitor student progress |  |
| Constructive feedback is provided |  |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning/Organisation/Content</th>
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<td>Teaching Strategies/Resources</td>
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<td>Presentation/Class Relationships/Class management</td>
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<td>Assessment and Monitoring of Students</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Comments and Suggestions for Future Development</td>
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Bibliography

Papers


Guides and Materials
