Liverpool Hope University

Peer Observation Policy

Approved by Senate	Date: 10 December 2014

Peer Observation at Liverpool Hope University

Preamble

Liverpool Hope University has a highly supportive structure for the development of learning and teaching. One part of this is the operation of a process of peer observation. The arrangements for this process are constantly kept under review and, where necessary, revised in the light of experience in ways designed to enhance overall provision.

The document below is based largely upon proven practice in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. This practice was identified by the PVC (Academic) as good practice via his annual review of enhancement-driven documentation. In consultation with the Dean of Students it was determined that this document should be considered by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee with a view to a recommendation being made for the adoption of this policy to Senate in December 2014.

It is important to note that this policy relates to *peer* observation. However, it is a core principle of governance at Liverpool Hope that a high degree of responsibility for academic quality lies with the relevant Head of Department or, in the case of the Faculty of Education, those charged with similar seniority. It is therefore these individuals who must agree the arrangements for peer observation in his or her area of responsibility.

It is important also to note that the document here outlined is *not* part of formal performance management *other than insofar as it may be used as evidence that a peer observation has taken place.* This document will hence *not* be made available as part of performance management unless the person reviewed wishes to submit it as part of their portfolio. In the relatively unusual cases where teaching practice becomes a matter of concern, a formal process of review, which will be by a line manager, is followed.

Please note that in the case of colleagues in Teacher Education a different process is used. This is because there are Ofsted-related requirements that govern peer observation of all those who are involved in the delivery of 'teacher training' (to use the Ofsted speak). Teaching and Learning Committee periodically reviews those arrangements so as formally to approve them as an alternative to what is outlined in this policy.

For clarity, those who will see the completed record/reflection sheet are:

- You and your observer;
- Your immediate line manager;
- Your performance reviewer (though this will again normally be your immediate line manager) *if you indicate that it is your desire*;
- The Faculty Executive Officer, who is responsible for collation of completed forms;
- The co-ordinator for staff development (who is based in the Personnel Office) who may use this information in the context of staff development planning;
- The Chair of Faculty QLT who will present an anonymised overview report for discussion within the Faculty and wider in the University.

LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY

Guide to Peer Observation

PEER OBSERVATION: POLICY AND PRACTICE

1. INTRODUCTION

In the continued pursuit of teaching excellence, Liverpool Hope University operates a peer observation scheme based on collegiality and reflectivity which is developmental in nature. The purpose is to provide constructive feedback to individual lecturers to enable them to develop and enhance their teaching (rather than make evaluative judgements about teaching quality) and for teams to develop and share best practice. It is important that the University is clear about the purpose of the Peer Observation Scheme as there are many different aims.

The University sees peer observation as integral to meeting the targets set out in its learning and teaching strategy and there is recognition of peer observation as an essential factor in staff development which should help academic staff to develop their own learning as well as enhance the learning of others.

While the University has operated a peer observation process for many years, it considers that now (December 2014) is an apposite time to confirm the arrangements and that it is reinforced that *all* teaching staff (full time, part-time, associated lecturers, hourly paid, new, and experienced, on all campuses) are observed at least once in an academic year. This is because the new curriculum has had a full year to run and hence experience of teaching on the new curriculum, including its revised patterns of learning and teaching, can inform the process.

The University needs to assure itself that all teaching staff take part in the peer observation process regardless of their employment contracts to ensure that we are providing the best possible learning experience for our students by providing this opportunity for continuing professional development.

2. BENEFITS

The University supports peer observation because a well thought-out peer observation scheme can potentially deliver a wide range of benefits. It can:

- place teaching in the public domain;
- be a supportive and constructive, practical, collegial activity;
- motivate all those involved;
- develop awareness that 'problems' in teaching are shared by others and that solutions can be found with others;
- provide new ideas and skills;
- build awareness of the value of, and skills in, critical reflection and reflective practice;
- reveal 'hidden' or unconscious behaviour;
- stimulate discussion about teaching and learning within teams;
- develop a sense of collegiality and an environment which values the sharing of experiences and ideas through teaching discourse;
- promote self-assessment;
- benefit the observer by providing insights and ideas;
- open up the private teaching space to others;
- support continual improvement;
- reassure highly self-critical teachers;
- provide feedback on innovative teaching methods;
- allow changes to be made based on evidence;
- provide evidence of teaching teams as self-critical and reflective communities.

3. OVERARCHING OBJECTIVES

Peer Observation at Liverpool Hope is designed to:

- assist in providing a high quality educational experience for students;
- emphasise the importance attached to the quality of teaching;
- encourage all staff to reflect on the effectiveness of their own teaching and identify their development needs;
- foster discussion and dissemination of good practice;
- increase staff awareness of the student learning experience;
- identify any issues and put in place an action plan to address them;
- help staff prepare for external inspections and review/audit.

4. PRINCIPLES FOR PRACTICE

- The peer observation system is based on a developmental model recognising that professional practice can always be further improved and that there is benefit in the wider sharing of good practice;
- Colleagues are encouraged to discuss arrangements for Peer Observation with the HOD, or other senior manager in the case of Education, who will approve the proposed observer;
- The why, when, what and how of the peer observation should be agreed in advance, between the parties involved;
- Opportunities for discussion should be allowed at the start and at the end of each observation. Feedback and developmental needs should be formally recorded to support the participants' continuing professional development and planning;
- As noted above, Peer Observation is not linked to appraisal, promotion or performance review although it is a requirement of the Performance Review process that all teaching staff have been observed during the year;
- What constitutes good teaching and what creates an effective learning environment should always be debated and diversity should be valued.

5. PROCEDURE

The process outlined here, largely an updating of the system already operating in a large section of the University, has been recommended for approval by Senate by Learning and Teaching Committee. It was approved by Senate on December 10th, 2014.

1. All staff who teach during should be observed. This includes hourly paid staff;
2. Observer/observed will involve staff from different subject areas;
3. The observed will not in turn be the observer of the person who observes them;
4. No staff will be observed by someone from their own Department;
5. Hourly paid staff will not be expected to observe anyone;
6. There is no hierarchy of observations. Staff of different grades will observe each other;
7. Selection is done randomly within each Faculty and the process will be monitored by the Dean's Office via the FEO;
8. Staff will be notified of who they will be observing and who will be observing them and when, broadly speaking, the observation will take place;
9. The member of staff who is the observer will contact the person they are observing to agree a suitable session for them to observe.
10. Prior to observation, the observer and the observed should have the opportunity to discuss the expected outcomes of the session and should complete Section1 of the form;
11. The observation itself should normally be for at least 30 minutes;

12. Following the observation there should be a meeting to review the session and complete Section 2 of the form. Please note that the purpose of the meeting is to enter into a dialogue about the session not to appraise or assess it;
13. The completed form should then be returned via email to the Faculty Executive Officer;
14. The completed forms will be analysed by the Chair of Faculty QLT who will then abstract key themes which will be presented in a report for wider dissemination across the Faculty, principally to Faculty Board. The overview report will be based around the following areas:
    - identify development needs
    - highlight good practice
    - raise learning and teaching issues of relevance across the University
15. The data will also be used as part of the Annual Monitoring Process of each Department;
16. Data will be anonymised and no individuals will be named in these reports;
17. If you have any questions about the Peer Observation Process then you should discuss these with your Head of Department or your FQLT Departmental Representative.

Peer Observation
Record and Reflections

Section1 - To be completed prior to Observation

Observer	**Observed**
Date(s) of Observation	
What is the session to be observed? e.g. lecture, seminar, tutorial in xxxxx	
Observer: What are you hoping to gain from the observation? e.g. a demonstration of effective small group work; an insight into online teaching principles; an understanding of the structure of an effective lecture;	**Observed: What are you hoping to gain from the observation?** e.g. feedback on my ability to encourage group discussion and sharing ideas from elsewhere; feedback on the structure of my lecture and suggestions on how to improve students' contributions;

Section 2- Reflection following Observation

Observer	**Observed**
Comments on areas of good practice observed **Comments on other aspects of the observation:**	**Reflections and Comments on your Observation:**