



University of Tasmania

Strategy for Institutional-level Peer Review

September 2015

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1 PREAMBLE

The University has a commitment to ongoing evaluation, enhancement and recognition of learning and teaching. A framework has been established to describe an approach which reflects Brookfield's four lenses for evaluation of teaching: students; peers; self; and the literature (Brookfield, 1995).

This document defines peer review of teaching as a component of this framework. It lays out the principles of peer review of teaching adopted by the University and outlines the purposes, strategy, processes and responsibilities for peer review of teaching activities.

2 ABOUT PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING

As a self-accrediting institution, the University of Tasmania has a responsibility to ensure that it continues to demonstrate high standards of performance in research, learning and teaching and associated institutional activities.

The University strives towards excellence in learning and teaching. Peer review of teaching is one of a number of methods or techniques that can be used to gather evidence about one's teaching. It is recognised as an important contributor to the ongoing evaluation and enhancement of learning and teaching, as well as a process to recognise excellence.

2.1 Definition

For our institutional purposes, we understand peer review of teaching to be:

"Peer review of teaching in universities involves academic colleagues giving and receiving feedback on their teaching practices and its effectiveness in promoting student learning ... [Peer Review draws] on the knowledge and insights of university colleagues, peer review can recognise and accommodate diversity in approaches to teaching, curricula and disciplinary contexts. While often equated with classroom observation, peer review can cover the full range of teaching activities and environments including assessment, the development of teaching and learning resources, curriculum design, online teaching, clinical and other field-based teaching. This further complements systematically collected evaluation from students, which tends to focus on their experience in the classroom." (Harris et al, 2008, p.5).

Peer review of teaching is necessarily dialogical, and involves a mutually respectful and beneficial relationship between peer reviewee and reviewer with a focus on teaching practices to promote student learning.

Whilst there are many processes within the university that employ peer review (for example, the course approval process and the teaching awards process), for the

purpose of this document, peer review of teaching occurs when the focus of the review concerns the actions of an individual teacher in the course of conducting activities designed for student learning.

Peer reviews may be formal or informal.

Informal Peer Review of Teaching

Informal peer review of teaching occurs whenever there is a dialogical exchange between colleagues with a focus on an aspect of teaching. This may occur through team teaching scenarios, as part of a formal or informal mentoring arrangement, or for collegial support. In these instances, feedback for improvement and exchange of ideas contribute to developing teaching practice in *ad hoc* and just-in-time ways. This is an important part of the teaching process, and reflects a collegial and supportive teaching environment.

Informal peer review also occurs as part of a planned teaching process, for example 'lite' reviews of unit outlines ([insert link to template](#)) and internal moderation of assessment (<http://www.teaching-learning.utas.edu.au/assessment/moderating-teacher-judgments>). These processes are *expected* in the normal teaching process, but are not formally documented. Where these processes have not occurred, or issues with unit design or assessment have triggered a review, then these processes may become a focus of a formal peer review (see below).

Formal Peer Review of Teaching

Formal peer review of teaching occurs when there is a purposeful dialogical exchange between colleagues with a focus on an aspect of teaching that will be formally documented, acted upon and reported.

The formal peer review process is the subject of this document.

2.2 Purpose

The purposes for undertaking formal peer review of teaching include providing:

- Feedback on teaching for developmental or improvement purposes
- Evidence for use in promotion, probation or teaching award applications
- Affirmation of good teaching practice
- Broader knowledge of the curriculum being taught by peers
- Insights into how colleagues teach and ideas for teaching
- Improved relationships with colleagues
- Opportunities to develop skills in scholarship of teaching
- Benchmarking of teaching and assessment with colleagues
- Information to assist with monitoring and review of units and courses
- A clear message about the importance of the quality of teaching to the institution.

(with reference to Harris et al, 2008)

2.3 Benefits

Peer review of teaching has a number of benefits that have been widely documented in the peer reviewed literature. These include:

1. Raising the status of teaching as a scholarly activity
2. Demonstrating an institutional, and individual, commitment to continuous improvement of learning and teaching
3. Enhancing learning and teaching practices
4. Providing feedback, and suggesting action on a wide range of teaching-related activities
5. Ability to be adapted to different contexts and learning environments
6. Draws on the expertise of the academic body
7. Increases communication between academic staff, both within and between disciplines
8. Provides a form of internal (and external) referencing of teaching and assessment practice
9. Encourages critical self-reflection on practice
10. Is beneficial to both the reviewee and the reviewer.

2.4 Categories of Peer Review of Teaching

Peer review of teaching is highly regarded at the University of Tasmania. In general there are three categories of Peer Review of Teaching:

Category 1: Voluntary peer review of teaching

Peer review of teaching is strongly encouraged for all teaching staff due to the considerable benefits outlined above. It is also recognised as part of the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs).

Category 2: Mandatory peer review of teaching for:

- a. Application for promotion
There is an expectation that all staff with a teaching role who are applying for promotion will undertake peer review of teaching (within the two years leading up to the promotion).
- b. Completion of probation
There is an expectation that all staff with a teaching role who are on probation will undertake peer review of teaching during the probationary period, and be able to report on its outcome and impact.
- c. In conjunction with a performance improvement plan
In the case of staff on performance improvement plans, aspects of teaching practice to be peer reviewed may be specified by the performance manager.

Category 3: Mandatory peer review of teaching assigned through career conversations

Peer review of teaching may be mandated by performance managers through setting annual TPEs. This would occur:

- a. In cases where student evaluations have indicated a low measure for teaching questions.
- b. For high performing staff considering an application for a teaching award.

- c. To prepare for course re-accreditation (for example external peer review of assessment).
- d. For new units or those where there has been significant innovation in a unit.

3 PRINCIPLES

3.1 General principles

- i. Peer review of teaching is one of a suite of approaches that can be used to gain feedback on teaching.
- ii. Peer review of teaching is underpinned by good practice principles, and reference to the scholarly literature.
- iii. Peer review of teaching is a collegial activity that is underpinned by trust and respect.
- iv. Peer review of teaching should be undertaken with a clear purpose.
- v. Peer review of teaching is supported through a framework and provision of templates.
- vi. Peer review of teaching is recognised through the teaching performance expectations .
- vii. Peer review of teaching should not be a once off activity, but be embedded within a process of continual monitoring and review.
- viii. A register of formal peer review of teaching arrangements should be kept at School level.
- ix. This strategy applies to all staff with teaching roles at the University of Tasmania, inclusive of sessional staff and contract staff.

3.2 Exchange of information

The following should be taken into account where an exchange of information is involved:

- i. All peer review of teaching exchanges should be treated respectfully and professionally.
- ii. Written peer review reports that:
 - a. Will be used for promotion, recognition or reward or requested for ongoing improvement purposes (Categories 1, 2a, 3b, 3c – see section 2.4) are confidential to the reviewee. They can be used for the purposes for which they were intended, or related purposes, at the discretion of the reviewee.
 - b. Have been prepared for the purpose of course re-accreditation have a primary purpose of informing continuous improvement of a course, and as such are provided to the course-coordinator and would normally be used without reference to individual staff member's names (except where express permission is granted) (generally Categories 3c or 3d).
 - c. Have been prepared for performance review should be shared with the performance manager to inform career conversations and/ or performance management (Categories 2b, 2c and 3a). A copy may be held in Human Resources on the staff member's confidential file. They should not be used

for any other purpose unless the express permission of the reviewee is given.

- iii. Publication and external communication of peer reviews should not occur without the permission of all partners involved in the process.
- iv. Exchange: The type or level of information exchanged should be comparable between the partners.
- v. Intellectual property: All rights relating to any intellectual property developed in the course of any peer review of teaching activity need to be negotiated and recorded by the relevant partners.

3.3 Choice of Reviewer

The choice of a peer reviewer is very much dependent on the specific context in which the review is taking place, and the primary purpose for which it is being undertaken.

3.3.1 Peer review of teaching

Peer review of teaching is usually best carried out in pairs, or groups of three. These may comprise:

- Colleagues within the same organisational unit
- Colleagues from the same discipline or subject area
- Colleagues from a different unit, discipline or institution
- Staff from TILT
- External academic staff teaching similar units in other universities
- External industry or clinical professionals.

For academic staff undertaking peer review for promotion, the reviewers should be at (or above) the level of the aspired promotion. It is recommended that at least one peer review is undertaken by a peer from another discipline area.

For staff who are undertaking peer review of teaching as a component of a performance improvement plan, the reviewer should be at an appropriate level, in line with the relevant policy/ procedure.

3.3.2 External peer review of assessment

Selecting appropriate partners is critical for successful external peer review of assessment. An external reviewer should:

- have a commitment to quality improvement and a 'willingness to share'
- demonstrate a record of good performance in the area(s) to be benchmarked; and
- be from the same discipline, and where possible teaching a similar unit.

In addition to the above, international benchmarking partner institutions should:

- have a Memorandum of Understand (MoU) with the University or other agreement, preferably including reference to peer review or benchmarking; and
- have English as the primary language of instruction.

4 RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Role of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee

The Academic Quality and Standards Committee endorses the peer review of teaching strategy as a component of the quality assurance and enhancement process of the University of Tasmania.

The Academic Quality and Standards Committee monitors the Peer Review of Teaching strategy by:

- Receiving a report on the numbers of staff engaging with the process of peer review of teaching, by faculty/ Institute, once each calendar year.
- Receiving a report from Human Resources of the number of staff who have been requested to undertake peer review of teaching through the performance management process; and the outcomes of that process.

4.2 Role of the Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)

The Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) has a role in leading the peer review strategy in each faculty/ Institute. This role encompasses collaborating with Heads of School/Discipline to determine: who to encourage to undertake peer review of teaching; specific units to target; and types of peer review to be undertaken. Associate Deans also have a role in promoting the peer review guidelines and templates and encouraging quality in peer review practices. Associate Deans are also able to provide support in identifying best practice strategies for learning, teaching, assessment and the peer review process itself.

4.3 Role of the Head of School/Head of Discipline

The Head of School/Head of Discipline should keep a register of formal peer reviews that are to be undertaken in the School in a calendar year. These are reported through to Academic Quality and Standards Committee and/or University Learning and Teaching Committee/s on an annual basis.

The Head of School/Head of Discipline may recommend a formal peer review of teaching at the annual career conversation in the case of:

- a. A staff member who has received student evaluations that indicate a low measure for teaching questions.
- b. For high performing staff considering an application for a teaching award;
- c. To prepare for course re-accreditation (for example external peer review of assessment.
- d. For new units or those where there has been significant innovation in a unit.

Where the Head of School has recommended a formal peer review, they should discuss suitable potential reviewers with the reviewee as well as the process for review. On completion, they should follow up on the outcome (and action plan, if relevant).

4.4 Role of the Performance Manager

The Performance Manager may recommend a formal peer review of teaching in the case of:

- a. A staff member who has received student evaluations that indicate a low measure for teaching questions
- b. For high-performing staff considering an application for a teaching award
- c. To prepare for course re-accreditation (for example external peer review of assessment)
- d. For new units or those where there has been significant innovation in a unit.

Where the Performance Manager has recommended a formal peer review, they should discuss suitable potential reviewers with the reviewee as well as the process for review. On completion they should follow up on the outcome (and action plan, if relevant).

The Performance Manager should also ensure that any peer reviews of teaching required in Category 2 are undertaken, specifically:

a. Application for promotion

There is an expectation that all staff with a teaching role who are applying for promotion will undertake peer review of teaching (within the two years leading up to the promotion).

b. Completion of probation

There is an expectation that all staff with a teaching role who are on probation will undertake peer review of teaching during the probationary period, and be able to report on its outcome and impact.

c. In conjunction with a performance improvement plan

In the case of staff on performance improvement plans, aspects of teaching practice to be peer reviewed may be specified by the performance manager.

Performance Managers should ensure that any peer reviews of teaching that have taken place are reported to the Head of School for inclusion in the register of peer reviews.

4.5 Role of the Course Coordinator

The Course Coordinator, in collaboration with Performance Managers may recommend a formal peer review of teaching to prepare for course re-accreditation (for example external peer review of assessment). They should discuss suitable potential reviewers with the reviewee and be made aware of the outcome (and action plan if relevant). They should ensure that any peer reviews of teaching that have taken place are reported to the Head of School for inclusion in the register of peer reviews.

4.6 Role of the Reviewee

The reviewee should familiarise themselves with the Framework for Formal Peer Review and the documentation available through the learning and teaching website. They should prepare for the review by meeting with the reviewer, identifying areas of teaching to be reviewed, providing necessary contextual information and/or documentation. They should

conduct post-review meetings and engage in a discussion with the reviewer around the review and the review process.

4.7 Role of the Reviewer

The reviewer should familiarise themselves with the Framework for Formal Peer Review and the documentation available through the learning and teaching website. They should prepare for the review by meeting with the reviewee, reading or viewing any course documentation. They should conduct the review in a professional manner, with minimal disruption to the learning and teaching activities taking place. They should conduct post-review meetings and engage in a discussion with the reviewee around the review and the review process. At the completion of the review, they should supply a written report in the agreed format.

4.8 Role of the TILT

TILT should provide up to date information about the peer review of teaching process, as well as adaptable templates for use. TILT will provide more formalised training for the process through ELT502, a core unit in the Bachelor of Education (Professional Hons) Higher Education and the Graduate Certificate of University Learning and Teaching.

TILT staff will be available to provide advice and resources where peer review of teaching is taking place following a ‘trigger’, such as low eVALUate scores on teaching-related questions.

5 FRAMEWORK FOR FORMAL PEER REVIEW

This framework has been based on the questions provided in the Peer Review of Teaching in Higher Education Handbook (Harris et al, 2008).

Key considerations	Description
1. Whose teaching will be reviewed?	All staff with teaching responsibilities (which may include research fellows, sessional teaching staff, and professional staff involved in teaching)
2. What will be the policy regarding participation?	<p>1. Strongly encouraged for all staff</p> <p>2. Mandatory for all staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. applying for promotion (within the two years leading up to the promotion) b. on probation or c. on performance improvement plans. <p>Can be mandated by performance managers through setting annual TPEs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. In cases where student evaluations have indicated a low measure for teaching questions

	<p>b. for high performing staff considering an application for a teaching award</p> <p>c. to prepare for course re-accreditation (for example external peer review of assessment)</p> <p>d. For new units or those where there has been significant innovation in a unit.</p> <p>Involvement in the process as either a reviewer or a reviewee is recognised in the Teaching Performance Expectations.</p>
<p>3. What will be reviewed?</p>	<p>Peer review of teaching encompasses all teaching activities, including curriculum design, unit design, online design, choice of assessment, face-to-face and/or online teaching, and the design of web-based resources.</p> <p>For categories 1 and 2a, 2b, 3b above, any aspect of teaching as nominated by the reviewee can be the subject of the review.</p> <p>For categories 2c, 3a, 3c, 3d, above, any aspect of teaching as nominated by the Head of the organisational unit, in consultation with the reviewee.</p>
<p>4. Who will the reviewers be?</p>	<p>Colleagues within the same organisational unit Colleagues from the same discipline or subject area Colleagues from a different unit, discipline or institution Staff from TILT External academic staff teaching similar units in other universities External industry or clinical professionals</p> <p>For academic staff undertaking peer review for promotion, the reviewers should be at (or above) the level of the aspired promotion. It is recommended that at least one peer review is undertaken by a peer from another discipline area.</p> <p>Where a peer review of teaching is being undertaken to be used in a reaccreditation, consideration of an external, industry or clinical peer may be warranted.</p> <p>Where the peer review is an external peer review of assessment, the reviewer will be an academic from the same discipline, who is teaching a unit similar to the one being reviewed.</p> <p>A suite of resources to support reviewers in peer review of teaching is available from the Learning and Teaching website.</p> <p>Professional development is available in a unit in the Graduate Certificate of University Learning and Teaching specifically focuses on peer review of teaching (ELT 502).</p>
<p>2. What from will the review process take?</p>	<p>The review process will vary depending upon purpose, the focus of the review and the teaching context. In general reviews will follow the six phases outlined in section 6.</p> <p>Where possible, the reciprocal peer review of teaching will be encouraged, as it is broadly acknowledged that the process is mutually beneficial. This also promotes genuine discussion and sharing of ideas. It is certainly acceptable to have more than one reviewer, and choosing</p>

	<p>reviewers from more than one discipline can be particularly informative.</p> <p>For peer observations of teaching, it may be beneficial to have more than one session, however this is dependent upon time constraints and context.</p> <p>The external peer review of assessment process has separate guidelines.</p>
<p>6. What reporting will take place?</p>	<p>Written feedback is generally beneficial to the reviewee, and should be supportive and constructive in its intent.</p> <p>Peer review reports that will be used for promotion, recognition or reward or requested for improvement purposes (Categories 1 and 2) are confidential to the reviewee. They can be used for the purposes for which they were intended, or related purposes, at the discretion of the reviewee.</p> <p>Peer review reports that have been prepared for the purpose of course reaccreditation have a primary purpose of informing continuing improvement of a course, and as such are provided to the course coordinator and would normally be used without reference to individual staff member's names (except where express permission is granted).</p> <p>Peer review reports used for performance review should be shared with the performance manager to inform career conversations or performance management. A copy may be held by Human Resources on the staff member's confidential file. They should not be used for any other purpose unless the express permission of the reviewee is given.</p> <p>Performance managers should record the number of staff who have undertaken peer review of teaching, as a reviewee or a reviewer at annual career conversations. This data should be provided to the Head of School who can report this number to the Data and Strategy unit.</p>
<p>7. What type of follow up will occur after completion of the peer review process?</p>	<p>Follow up will be variable depending on the purpose and the findings of the peer review.</p> <p>In the case of categories 1 and 2, actions will be initiated by the participants. If a number of staff are involved in peer review contemporaneously, then a community of practice, or discussion forum may form to discuss the process. It is highly recommended that staff keep a record of the impacts of any enhancements made as a result of this process.</p> <p>In the case of category 3a, the performance manager will meet with the reviewee to discuss their teaching, using records/reports as appropriate. Any appropriate follow up action will then occur. Advice may be provided to the reviewee on support and development options offered by TILT as appropriate. Written reflection on the process, and plans for further review and development may be required.</p> <p>In the case of category 3c or 3d, the reports may be used in a broader review of the unit.</p>

6 PHASES OF THE PEER REVIEW OF TEACHING PROCESS

The specific process of the peer review will vary dependent upon the purpose, however, in general there are a number of phases (outlined in the table below).

Peer Review Phase	Key Actions and Questions	Approval/Reporting Process
1. Planning phase	<p>What is the purpose of the review? How will the outcome of the review be used? What is the intended focus of the review? Who is the best peer reviewer to choose?</p>	<p>Reporting of the planning phase is only recommended in category 3 reviews (see above).</p> <p>Approval of line managers of selected peer reviewers may need to occur before the next phase.</p>
2. Pre-review phase	<p>Meeting between reviewer and reviewee</p> <p>Discussion of teaching context and sharing of documentation e.g. unit outline)</p> <p>Agreement on focus of review, timing, mode of feedback</p>	<p>Agreement on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus of the review by both parties; - timing of review by both parties - agreed template or form for feedback
3. Review	<p>Inform students (as relevant)</p> <p>Conduct observation or review of materials</p> <p>Meet briefly for short de-brief and to answer any questions</p> <p>Reviewer and reviewee agree on formal post-review meeting</p>	<p>Agree on time for formal post-review meeting</p>
4. Post-review phase	<p>Reviewers provide oral and written feedback</p> <p>Reviewer and reviewee meet to discuss the feedback</p> <p>Reviewer and reviewee discuss any suggested actions</p> <p>Reviewer and reviewee formalise review documentation</p>	<p>Formal review documentation provided to reviewee.</p>
5. Reporting phase	<p>Follow up meeting with performance manager or course coordinator (Category 3 reviews)</p> <p>Use of peer review report for applications as appropriate</p>	<p>Formal review documentation to performance manager, or to course coordinator if required.</p>
6. Improvement Phase	<p>What actions have resulted from recommendations? What results demonstrate improvement and impact?</p>	<p>Should be reported through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Career conversations; Promotion applications; Award applications

		(Responsibility: Reviewee) Re-accreditation documents. (Responsibility: Course Coordinator)
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7 COMMUNICATING FINDINGS

The value of peer review is primarily for the individual/s involved, however, in many cases it is valuable to share findings with colleagues. Formal and informal opportunities for discussion of peer review should be encouraged by Heads of School and Associate Deans as appropriate.

Performance managers should record the number of staff who have undertaken peer review of teaching, as a reviewee or a reviewer at annual career conversations. This data should be provided to the Head of School who can make the number available to the Data and Strategy unit.

8 LINKS TO RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Learning and Teaching Evaluation enhancement and recognition framework
- Peer Review formative templates (see example in Appendix)
- Peer Review checklist templates
- Peer Review of unit outline template
- Quality Matters review template and online tool (contact Quality.Matters@utas.edu.au)
- Process for Moderating Assessment (see: <http://www.teaching-learning.utas.edu.au/assessment/moderating-teacher-judgments>)
- External Peer Review of Assessment guidelines (see: <http://www.utas.edu.au/student-evaluation-review-and-reporting-unit/peer-review-of-assessment>)

9 KEY REFERENCES

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Appendix: Lecture Observation Schedule (Formative) – Template (*adaptable*)

Lecturer: _____ Observer: _____ Date of observation: __/__/__ Class: _____

Area of focus	Aspects done well	Aspects for development	Suggested action(s)
Rapport & engagement with students			
Structure, pacing and variety of the lecture (e.g. clear beginning, wrap up, clear segments, varying activities/strategies)			
Use of supporting resources/visual aids (PowerPoint, YouTube, Flash animations, models etc.)			
General presentation skills (voice, written/board work, movement etc.)			
Steps to monitor/check student learning			
Generation of interest (e.g. through relevant/topical examples, scenarios etc.)			
Management of the audience (questioning, disruptions, in-lecture activities, time in/time out, etc.)			
Other			