

Policy on Peer Dialogue for Teaching



Principles

Principle 1 - The purpose of Peer Dialogue is to support colleagues in developing their practice

1. Structured conversations between peers regarding learning and teaching are widely recognised as a key way to support colleagues to enhance their teaching practice, and thereby improve the student learning experience.
2. It is also recognised that both parties can learn much from the interaction, thus making the role of observer as important as the observee.
3. In order to maximise the benefit from the process support should **not** be based on reciprocity or a 'buddy' system, where two staff observe each other's teaching.

Principle 2 - Peer Dialogue covers all aspects of assessment, learning and teaching.

4. The policy applies to all aspects of assessment, learning and teaching, however delivered, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, whether face-to-face, through e-learning, on campus (Newcastle, London, Singapore and Malaysia) or off campus.

Principle 3 - Peer Dialogue is a developmental and confidential process

5. As the purpose of Peer Dialogue is to enhance teaching, the detail of any discussions should remain confidential unless the observee chooses to make use of them as part of annual PDR or other activity.
6. Academic staff are strongly encouraged, where examples of effective practice are observed, to jointly agree to put forward any such examples to the appropriate group in the Academic Unit or subject.

Principle 4 - Peer Dialogue is a flexible process

7. The flexibility of Peer Dialogue is exemplified in several ways, including:
 - a. The many and varied ways in which staff teach (for example face-to-face, online, synchronously and asynchronously) mean that there is a wide range of practice that falls within the scope of this policy. Individual staff may wish to use the opportunity to reflect on particular aspects of teaching such as face-to-face teaching, laboratory or fieldwork, assessment, online discussion boards etc.
 - b. An Academic Unit or subject may choose to focus on specific aspects of teaching for a particular academic year such as (but not limited to) formative assessment, feedback, online materials, induction, small group teaching.
 - c. Staff can choose to use a group approach, for example, where a degree programme chooses to look at assessment across a programme, or where new online provision is being introduced.
 - d. Where an academic unit wishes to operate an alternative approach to peer dialogue but which it believes will meet the overarching aims of peer dialogue, they may make a case to the chair of the Faculty Education Committee to adopt this alternative approach. The decision of the Faculty Education Committee Chair is final.
8. Heads of Academic Unit remain entitled to observe teaching as a means of supporting performance improvement and the arrangements in such cases are available from the HR pages of the university website (<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/hr/>).

Principle 5 - Peer Dialogue should include all appropriate staff

9. This policy applies to all staff who make a significant contribution to teaching. This includes part-time staff and teaching assistants, but would usually exclude guest lecturers teaching on less than three

sessions in a module in the year. Part-time staff and teaching assistants may particularly benefit from the opportunity to observe others, but this may not always be practical.

10. For programmes where staff who contribute are not University employees (e.g. MBBS), alternative approaches to the development of individual teachers will operate.
11. Where staff are taking part in one or more teaching dialogues as part of another scheme (e.g. CASAP, UKPSF), they do not need to be observed again during the same academic year or cycle. However, outcomes from these non-Academic Unit teaching dialogues could also be used as part of annual PDR, if the observee chooses (Principle 3).

Principle 6 - Peer Dialogue requires time and commitment from all involved

12. To work effectively Peer Dialogue requires preparation by **both** parties and a contextual briefing of the observer by the observee. They should jointly use this to identify areas where the observee particularly wants feedback.
13. The main benefit of the process arises from a follow up conversation. This should normally be within 48 hours of the dialogue event so that the event is fresh in the participants' minds. The purpose is not to offer a judgment after the event, rather to explore what were the effects of the observee's practice, and how and why did particular practices have the observed effect. The observer will also be able to take away ideas for his/her own practice.

Policy

14. The University requires all Academic Units that provide teaching to have a systematic Peer Dialogue process.
15. Faculty Education Committees are responsible for:
 - a. Determining which categories of staff in that faculty should be covered by the policy in line with Principle 5.
 - b. Reporting the number of staff who have engaged with the process each year and the proportion this represents of eligible staff.
 - c. Encouraging dissemination of examples of effective practice which can be shared more widely through a range of approaches (for example by a report to an Academic Unit Executive, a lunchtime seminar, a regular newsletter).
16. Academic Units are responsible for:
 - a. Deciding the most appropriate approach to be taken in a year (Principle 4).
 - b. Ensuring that all aspects of teaching are covered over a period of time (Principle 2).
 - c. Encouraging all appropriate staff to engage with the process during the year, either as observer or observee (Principles 1, 5).
 - d. Ensuring that over time any individual member of staff has the opportunity to be both observer and observee (Principles 1, 5).
 - e. Ensuring sufficient time is allocated so staff can participate fully (Principle 6).
 - f. Ensuring all taught provision is included, undergraduate and postgraduate (Principle 2).
 - g. Ensuring staff are aware of the confidentiality of the process and the appropriate way to share effective practice via the DELT/HELT or other nominated person (Principle 3).
 - h. Recognising where staff are undertaking a peer dialogue or review as part of another scheme and including that within their annual reporting (Principle 5).

Reporting requirements

17. Academic Units should report to Faculty Education Committee through their Annual Monitoring and Review report(s) on the approach they are taking to Peer Dialogue during an academic year, and on the proportion of teaching active staff participating in the process in the academic year under review.
18. There should be an annual report on generic identification of good practice and of issues to the Academic Unit Executive, which should also be sent to boards of studies in the Academic Unit. AMR should include review of the operation of the scheme within the Academic Unit and consideration of its outcomes by boards of studies. Learning and Teaching Review will also review the effectiveness of the scheme.
19. Sample proforma paperwork and examples of possible processes can be found on the Organisational Development Unit's web pages.
<https://newcastle.sharepoint.com/hub/orgdev/Pages/default.aspx>.

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