



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

Collegial feedback on teaching: A guide to peer review

Kelly Farrell



This guide was developed for the University of Melbourne by Dr Kelly Farrell of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education.

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A note on using this guide

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at the University of Melbourne runs successful programs of peer review of teaching as part of the Melbourne Teaching Certificate and the Graduate Certificate of University Teaching. The advice and resources provided in this guide have been developed and refined based on the experience of coordinating these programs as well as a national CSHE-CEDIR (University of Wollongong) 2008 research project on peer review of teaching in Australian universities. They are designed to support both individuals and academic units in arranging peer review of teaching processes with the review criteria contained in them based on principles of effective university teaching.

For ease of use this guide provides a suggested model of peer review (the same as that used in CSHE programs) with ready-made resources to support this particular model. However, there are many ways that peer review can be undertaken, many formats that supporting resources may take, and many ways that feedback can be framed.

Further information on how academic units can design alternative models of peer review can be found in *Peer review of teaching in Australian higher education: A handbook to support institutions in developing and embedding effective policies and practices* (Harris, Farrell, Bell, Devlin, James, 2008), which is available on the CSHE website.

Kelly Farrell

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Collegial feedback on teaching: A guide to peer review

Peer review of teaching

There was once a time, not too long ago, when it was difficult to find an academic with experience of having their teaching reviewed by a peer. Times have changed. An increasing number of university teaching staff are undertaking peer review as part of their professional practice, often through participation in teaching development or department-based programs, but also informally, by arranging for a colleague to visit a class or take a look at teaching materials.

Good teaching includes the continuous monitoring of the effects of teaching on students' learning using a variety of evaluative techniques. As the name suggests, peer review of teaching is simply the process of having a colleague review one's teaching and provide feedback. This can then be used alongside student feedback to provide an academic with a broad perspective on the effectiveness of what they do which, in turn, assists them to develop appropriate responses to the findings.

While an increasing number of academics are undertaking peer review, there is no getting away from the fact that having a colleague visit a class and provide feedback for the first time can be a daunting prospect for even the most experienced university teachers. This is an entirely natural response. While in some disciplines team teaching has become commonplace, in others a person may teach for many years without having a colleague sit in on a class or review teaching materials. However, most people who have completed a peer review process comment that the anticipation of the event causes them more anxiety than the event itself, which typically turns out to be a positive and productive experience. It appears that any nervousness about peer review is usually confined only to its initial experience.

What can be peer reviewed?

Because face-to-face teaching is the most common form of peer review, material in this guide focuses particularly on the review of this aspect of teaching. However, the beauty of peer review is that 'classroom' teaching is just one aspect of the teaching enterprise that may be reviewed. Assessment design and resources to support teaching are other aspects of teaching that can be the subject of review by a colleague.¹

Tailored resources to support peer review of other aspects of teaching are available on the peer review pages of the CSHE website along with all the resources included in this guide
http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/peer_review

¹ Peer review naturally has its limitations: research higher degree supervision is one area of teaching where peer review may not be an appropriate feedback mechanism, given the often one-on-one nature of meetings between student and supervisor.

The benefits of peer review of teaching.

The ultimate benefit of having your teaching peer reviewed is that it allows an individual to receive feedback on their teaching from a different perspective to the traditional – and what is sometimes the only – source of feedback on teaching: students. While student feedback is an essential method of gathering data about teaching (and complements feedback via peer review), students are, naturally, limited in the kind of feedback they can provide. For example, while they may be able to ably describe the features of the teaching they did not value or find useful for their learning, they are not well placed to provide informed suggestions as to how the teacher might go about improving these.

A colleague, on the other hand, who understands the complexities of teaching (and the many decisions that must be made before the teacher even enters the lecture theatre or tute room), is in a unique position to be able to offer not only insights, but suggestions - often drawn from experience - on how to design strategies to meet the inevitable challenges of ensuring learning takes place.

By the same token, peer review is not an exercise in one colleague telling another how they should teach. Peer review will only work well if colleagues respectfully acknowledge that there are diverse approaches to teaching and that the feedback they provide is to assist their colleague to critically reflect on their teaching and inform their process of designing strategies to address any areas for improvement. One of the distinct benefits of peer review is that a colleague is not only able to observe the *teacher* and what he or she may be doing, but they are in the unusual position of being able to observe the *students* and their level of engagement, interest and participation in a class.

While most university teaching staff who undertake peer review do it for the purpose of affirming and developing their teaching, there is a pragmatic dimension here. Feedback from peer review can be used as evidence in important personnel processes such as promotion, probation or performance development. It can also be included as part of teaching award applications (see the section on the use and interpretation of the results of peer review on pages 15 and 16). Indeed, peer review is incorporated in the academic promotion policy at the University of Melbourne: 'formal peer evaluation of teaching and learning' is cited as an example of how a candidate for promotion under *Criterion 1 - Contribution to Teaching and Learning* can demonstrate 'peer or community recognition for their teaching and learning', one of the essential aspects of demonstrating a case for promotion on the basis of teaching and learning (see *Academic Promotions Criteria Guidelines*, Human Resources).

For an academic department, a whole-of-unit peer review program has the potential to improve not only teaching itself, but communication between colleagues, and it has been known to aid in enhancing collegiality. From a wider institutional perspective, an increase in the number of departments or individuals undertaking peer review can raise the status of teaching across a university as well as communicate to current and future students, quality assurance agencies and the internal university community that the quality of teaching is a priority.

Item	Strongly agree or agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree or strongly disagree	Total responses
The feedback I received will enhance my teaching	35	3	0	38
The peer review process helped me to usefully discuss my teaching with my peer	36	2	0	38
The experience of reviewing a peer's teaching will enhance my own teaching	36	2	0	38
Overall, undertaking this peer review of teaching process was worthwhile for me	38	0	0	38

Fig 1. Feedback from Melbourne Teaching Certificate participants when asked about their experience of peer review (Semester 2, 2011 Cohort).

Let's take a look at some of the mechanics of peer review and discuss how individuals and departments can go about arranging it.

A suggested model

The model of peer review used in CSHE programs is reciprocal, with a pair of colleagues each, in turn, acting as reviewee and reviewer for the other. These colleagues need not be of the same classification, nor have the same number of years experience teaching; indeed, in some departmental peer review schemes at the University of Melbourne heads of departments and professors have been productively paired with first-time teachers, with constructive feedback flowing in both directions.

The reason a reciprocal model is encouraged is that it is 'flat' in structure and allows for continuity of discussions about teaching over the course of the peer review cycle. While an individual primarily undertaking peer review of teaching to collect data to be used in promotion or confirmation processes may consider a 'one-way' process only, it is worth remembering that it is crucial for a case for promotion based on performance in teaching and learning to 'represent a body of achievement showing sustained development over time' and that this must be thoroughly documented (*Academic Promotions Criteria Guidelines*, Section 2.2; p.3). Participation in periodic cycles of reciprocal peer review with colleagues (and clearly demonstrating how the process has assisted critical reflection and development of your own teaching) may be of more assistance in making this case, given the benefits reciprocity brings.

Protocols for peer review

Face-to-face teaching is a highly personalised activity that is not only about our disciplinary or pedagogical knowledge but is underpinned by individual communication and presentation styles. This is one of the reasons why first-time reviewees often experience anxiety about the prospect of a colleague reviewing their teaching.

While it goes without saying that anyone undertaking a review of a colleague's teaching should always conduct themselves in a collegial, professional and respectful manner, it is important that there is specific agreement on how a reviewer will approach their role. The Protocols for Reviewers Undertaking Teaching Observations set out the purposes, responsibilities and code of behaviour

for reviewers and should be read and agreed to by each colleague before they commence any observation of a colleague's class.

A note on confidentiality: It is strongly recommended that material generated in the course of peer review of teaching cycles (i.e., formal review plans and reports) *should be considered the property of the reviewee*. A reviewer should not provide these or any handwritten review notes to any third party unless otherwise agreed with the reviewee.

Peer Review of Teaching: Protocols for reviewers undertaking teaching observations

Acting as a reviewer serves two equally important purposes, to:

- provide feedback to a colleague;
- observe another's teaching for the purpose of reflecting on and learning about one's own teaching.

Thus:

1. Reviewers will approach their role in the spirit of respect and collegiality and will always behave in a professional and sensitive manner.
2. Without exception a reviewer is a silent observer. While they *may* initially be introduced to the class (if appropriate), during a class a reviewer will not speak, address the students, participate in learning activities or offer opinions on the teaching or the material presented.
3. Agreements made at pre-review meetings or discussions will be recorded on Form A and abided by during review.
4. Material generated during the course of peer review (i.e., review plans, reports and handwritten notes) will not be provided to any third party unless otherwise agreed with the reviewee.

The process

At the CSHE we use a four-step process for peer review: Plan, Review, Feedback, Respond. A description of each step and the resources to support it are included in the table below.

Steps in a reciprocal peer review process	
PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Form A (Plan)</i> • Meet with your colleague to discuss <i>Form A</i> • Agree on time, date and location for the class to be reviewed and the feedback meeting(s) • Exchange <i>Form A</i> with colleague
REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review colleague's teaching as arranged, using <i>Form B – Feedback Framework</i> as a guide. They will do the same for you.
FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with colleague as soon as possible after your review of their teaching to discuss your observations and suggestions. It is suggested that you arrange a separate meeting to 'reciprocate' i.e. to discuss the feedback from their review of your teaching. • Prepare your written feedback on your colleague's teaching, using the 'Report' section of <i>Form C</i>, and pass this on to your colleague • Your colleague will provide you with their written feedback.
RESPOND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the meeting record your response to the feedback you have received using Section 2 of <i>Form C</i> (optional but recommended). The Response form is not shared with the Reviewer.

* For a one-way process, simply do not include the reciprocal elements.

The 'Respond' step

While the 'Respond' step is optional, it is sound practice to complete it for both developmental and practical reasons. Completing a written response to the feedback you have received aids the process of reflecting on the feedback (and, if appropriate, the steps you might take to implement any strategies) but it has an important practical function also. That is, when using the results of peer review in promotion, confirmation or award application processes, it is important to explain how the process you undertook and the feedback you received has contributed to the constant development and improvement of your teaching. A written record, completed at the time of review, can be extremely helpful in describing this process. For further information about the use and interpretation of feedback from peer review of teaching in human resources processes, see the section on the use and interpretation of the results of peer review on pages 13 and 14 of this guide.

Arranging peer review: Individuals

Setting up a peer review process is straightforward for individuals: it is simply a matter of asking a colleague to visit a class or review materials and provide you with verbal and written feedback using the resources in this guide and on the CSHE website.

The time commitment required of a colleague to undertake a review of teaching (depending, of course, on the nature of the teaching being reviewed) is generally in the region of 2-3 hours. This includes time spent observing a one hour class or reading materials, meeting with the reviewee to provide verbal feedback and completion of the written report.

Even if your colleague is not inclined to undertake a formal reciprocal process (i.e., they do not wish to receive feedback on their teaching from you), ask if you could, at very least, sit in on one of their classes. Staff who have undertaken peer review almost universally comment that the experience of watching a colleague teach can be just as – if not even more – beneficial as receiving feedback on your own teaching. Watching someone else teach is effective in helping you reflect on what you do yourself as well as potentially giving you ideas for teaching strategies you may like to try.

Take some time to consider which of your teaching colleagues you would like to approach. As demonstrated in the table 'Identifying a partner for peer review' (included with the resources at the back of this guide) the kind of feedback you can expect from a peer review cycle is dependent on who you select as a reviewer. There are advantages in selecting a colleague whom you know well or that you know has a similar teaching approach to you; however, the insights and discussions you have with someone more experienced in teaching or who has a slightly different approach may prove illuminating. Also consider asking a colleague from a different department or even an entirely different discipline: cross-disciplinary pairings in the Melbourne Teaching Certificate have seen colleagues from disciplines as different as Veterinary Science productively paired with drama specialists from the Victorian College of the Arts; teaching medical doctors reviewing colleagues in Cultural Studies and Classics. Learning activities and teaching strategies routinely used in one discipline can spark an idea for adaptation for effective use in another. In addition, the lack of disciplinary knowledge can provide less content-focused – and subsequently more teaching oriented – observations.

Arranging peer review: Departments

There are departments at the University of Melbourne that have successfully engaged in whole-of-department peer review of teaching programs for some years. Research conducted as part of a national study of peer review of teaching by the CSHE and the Centre for Educational Development and Interactive Resources (University of Wollongong) found there was several ways organisational units could assist in creating a workplace environment conducive to a successful peer review program (Harris, Farrell et al 2008: 17-21). In summary, these are:

- Assuming collective responsibility for teaching; that is, the entire unit adopting a collective approach to the improvement of teaching, with the acknowledgment that all members of the teaching community share responsibility for the quality of the unit's teaching.
- The provision of information seminars and supporting materials and resources.

- Clear guidelines about how peer review will take place, including agreements about how the results of peer review will be used, the level of confidentiality of feedback, the frequency of cycles, and so on.
- Debriefing sessions to discuss not just the results of peer review of teaching but the process itself; that is, staff have input into decision-making about how the process will be conducted.
- There is not 'top-down' imposition of a peer review program but instead a 'one in, all in' approach where the organisational leadership, including the department head, also participates in peer review.

It is also worth considering the appointment of a Peer Review Coordinator to manage the process of implementing a program, including the pairing of colleagues. It is recommended this person is not the head of department, but should have a sound understanding of the workplace environment.

Departments may also like to consider the potential in teaming with another department – even from a different faculty or discipline – and pairing their staff across departments. As noted above and in the 'Identifying a partner for peer review' table in the 'Resources' section of this guide, cross-disciplinary peer review can provide excellent insights and lively discussions around teaching.

CSHE staff experienced in coordinating peer review are available to work with departments and academic units in designing and implementing peer review of teaching programs. Please visit the CSHE web site at http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/peer_review for further information.

Making peer review work well

Without doubt the best way to ensure that peer review of teaching is successful is to undertake it in a spirit of collegiality and respect, with the primary aim of the process being to affirm the positive aspects of a colleague's teaching as much as it is to provide feedback and suggestions. Just like peer review of research, peer review of teaching is based on individual professional judgment: it is one person's perspective on your teaching based on the nature of their own pedagogical approach and experiences of being both a teacher and a learner. All academics know that they are unlikely to give their career-best performance *every* time they step in front of the lectern or sit down with a tutorial class. And so it will be with peer review: the class your partner observes will not be the best you've ever given - it doesn't have to be! They are providing feedback on what they observe during a particular class on a particular day – it is important to approach the process with this firmly in mind and keep things in perspective.

Indeed, many participants in the Melbourne Teaching Certificate and Graduate Certificate of University teaching have actively sought to have their peer review partner attend a class in which they were having challenges, in order to have a colleague brainstorm with them the kinds of strategies they might use to meet these in future. Teaching is a potentially isolating experience – peer review is one way academics can share some of its inevitable uncertainties and begin a dialogue about the areas in which they may need support.

The following section will discuss how reviewers can provide balanced, constructive and ultimately useful feedback to their colleagues. First, however, a note on the role of reviewee.



While it is important for colleagues to provide feedback in a sensitive manner, it is just as important for reviewees to accept criticism graciously. It is a natural response to feel defensive when we are criticised; however, it is essential that reviewees allow reviewers the opportunity to properly express their feedback without being interrupted or contradicted. This is not to say a reviewee will—or should—agree with every element of the feedback provided by a peer review partner, but simply that, as their colleague has taken the trouble to observe their class or teaching materials and provide feedback, it is fair (and polite) to give them the courtesy of listening to their feedback.

Providing effective feedback to colleagues

Just as the provision of effective feedback is one of the cornerstones of learning for students so, too, it is for peer review of a colleague's teaching. Providing balanced, constructive feedback that can be acted on to colleagues is not easy, but there are a few general principles that can help.

In a peer review process, effective feedback:

- *Has the development of teaching as its primary focus.* Even when the reason for peer review is summative (i.e., for evaluation purposes) it can still be used for developmental purposes.
- *Is timely.* For face-to-face teaching verbal feedback should be provided immediately following a class or as soon as possible afterwards. Written feedback will necessarily take longer to complete but there should not be long delays between the review and the receipt of written feedback.
- *Gives emphasis to the reviewee's priorities and objectives.* Form A (see resources) includes space for the reviewee to list these and they should be discussed in the Plan stage of the process.
- *Always includes positive feedback and affirmation* of aspects that are working well.
- *Does not focus solely on communication style* but provides information to the reviewee about the effectiveness of their timing, pacing, choice of learning activities, volume of content covered and, importantly, what students are *doing* throughout the class (i.e., did their attention wander at a particular point; at what stage were they especially engaged, etc). The Feedback Framework (Form B) assists in encouraging this multi-dimensional view.
- *Always includes suggestions* for addressing areas that are not working well. It is not enough to point out that one particular aspect of the teaching could be improved upon; this is not helpful to the reviewee. Suggestions for possible strategies the reviewee could try should be offered. Reviewer and reviewee will often collaboratively arrive at solutions to teaching challenges during post-review discussions.
- *Is reasonably detailed and descriptive* so that when the teacher consults the written report in future they will know what aspects of their teaching are being referred to.

For an actual – and excellent – example of effective written feedback that incorporates virtually all of these principles, please see the sample review included in the resources section of this guide.

The use and interpretation of the results of peer review

While it can be fairly straightforward to document and describe one's research achievements, it can be more challenging to provide evidence of teaching effectiveness. Data on teaching collected via peer review can be used alongside data collected from other sources to illustrate and support an argument for achievement in teaching for promotion, teaching award applications, probation and performance development. The incorporation of the results of peer review should, however, be done carefully and must include detail of the context in which the peer review process(es) took place.

The following boxes are excerpts from *Peer review of teaching in Australian higher education: A handbook to support institutions in developing and embedding effective policies and practices* (Harris, Farrell *et al.*, 2008): it provides advice on both the presentation and interpretation of peer review in personnel procedures.

(Taken from Harris, Farrell, *et al.*, 2008)

Advice on the use and interpretation of peer review information as 'evidence'

Suggestions for including information from peer review of teaching in applications for confirmation, promotion, or teaching awards

1. Develop a statement of your objectives as a university teacher and your educational beliefs. Relate the information presented in your application to this statement.
2. Treat the information from peer review as one element of information presented — it should have a standing on a par with other information provided on teaching achievements and activities, and should be neither elevated above other data nor presented apologetically.
3. Explain in appropriate detail the context in which the peer review took place. This is necessary to assist with the interpretation of the information. Explain the processes, their purposes and any limits to the scope of the peer review activity. It is important to indicate, for example, whether the peer review was voluntary or mandatory and whether it was based on specified criteria or criteria negotiated by reviewer(s) and reviewee. Stress the systematic way in which peer review processes have taken place and the resulting information has been documented.
4. Present the information from peer review even-handedly: identify both strengths and areas for attention if these have been identified through peer review processes.
5. Comment on any action you have taken following peer review, such as enhancements to curriculum, teaching methods or assessment as a result of peer feedback, and the effects of these.
6. 'Triangulate' the information from peer review with information from other sources; that is, weave peer review information along with other information

Suggestions for interpreting information from peer review of teaching in applications for confirmation, promotion, or teaching awards

1. Be open to considering information from peer review to be as valid and reliable as information from other sources. Peer review may be conducted by highly experienced, expert teachers.
2. Remember that peer review can take many forms. Some knowledge of the nature of the peer review processes employed is necessary for interpreting the information. It is a reasonable expectation that applicants have offered sufficient explanation of the peer review in which they have participated for the information they have provided on their teaching achievements to be appropriately interpreted. Key questions might be: how was the reviewer chosen?; what is the relationship of the reviewer to the reviewee?
3. Peer review 'data' are likely to be qualitative and subjective. This does not undermine their value. In fact, the qualitative and context-sensitive character of peer review information are potentially rich assets in this context — and a distinguishing feature in comparison with standardised student evaluation questions.
4. The information from peer review is unlikely to be quantitative and rarely will it lend itself to direct comparisons between colleagues. Be cautious about any information that purports to 'rate' a staff member against colleagues.
5. Peer review processes may not be focused solely on face-to-face teaching. Peer review of teaching can be quite wide-ranging and may embrace curriculum planning, resource development and assessment design. One of the strengths of peer review is that it may consider the integrated package of decisions and activities that surround an individual's teaching and their teaching career.
6. Look for any actions individuals may have taken following peer review, such as enhancements to curriculum, teaching methods or assessment as a result of critical feedback.
7. In the overall assessment of an individual's case, integrate the information from peer review with information provided from other sources.

References

Harris, K-L., Farrell, K., Bell, M., Devlin, M., James, R. (2008) *Peer review of teaching in Australian higher education: A handbook to support institutions in developing and embedding effective policies and practices*. Centre for the Study of Higher Education.

Resources for peer review

The resources on the following pages support the process of peer review. While the resources in this handbook pertain to teaching observation the CSHE peer review website has resources to support review of other aspects of teaching. All are available for download at:

http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/peer_review

Resource	Description and use
Protocols for Reviewers Undertaking Teaching Observations	Code of conduct for reviewers. Must be read by anyone acting as a reviewer prior to commencing any review of face-to-face teaching.
Process for peer review	One-page information sheet detailing the four-step peer review process, including when to use each resource.
Form A Plan	Provides reviewee with opportunity to note objectives and priorities for reviewer to focus on.
Form B Feedback Framework	Taken in to the reviewed class to trigger observations. Includes a section for the reviewer to nominate any priority areas for particular focus.
Form C Report and Response	Reviewer records written feedback in Section 1 and provides this to the reviewee. Reviewee uses Section 2 to record their response to the feedback.
Example of written feedback	An exemplar of how to provide feedback to colleagues. This is used with the kind permission of colleagues from the Graduate Certificate of University Teaching.
Identifying a partner for peer review	Sets out the advantages (and possible disadvantages) of undertaking peer review with colleagues with various backgrounds and positions. Assists in helping individuals determine which of their colleagues they would like to invite to undertake a peer review cycle.
Invitation to a colleague to review teaching	Provides colleagues who may not be familiar with peer review with brief information about the process, their role and the time commitment required.

Protocols for peer review

The following protocols were developed to ensure clarity around the role of the reviewer in peer review of teaching processes.

Peer review of teaching: Protocols for reviewers undertaking teaching observations

Acting as a reviewer serves two equally important purposes, to:

- provide feedback to a colleague;
- observe another's teaching for the purpose of reflecting on and learning about one's own teaching.

Thus:

1. Reviewers will approach their role in the spirit of respect and collegiality and will always behave in a professional and sensitive manner.
2. Without exception a reviewer is a silent observer. While they *may* initially be introduced to the class (if appropriate), during a class a reviewer will not speak, address the students, participate in learning activities or offer opinions on the teaching or the material presented.
3. Agreements made at pre-review meetings or discussions will be recorded on Form A and abided by during review.
4. Material generated during the course of peer review (i.e., review plans, reports and handwritten notes) will not be provided to any third party unless otherwise agreed with the reviewee.

The reciprocal peer review process using CSHE resources

Steps in a reciprocal peer review process	
PLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete <i>Form A (Plan)</i> • Meet with your colleague to discuss <i>Form A</i> • Agree on time, date and location for the class to be reviewed and the feedback meeting(s) • Exchange <i>Form A</i> with colleague
REVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review colleague's teaching as arranged, using <i>Form B – Feedback Framework</i> as a guide. They will do the same for you.
FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet with colleague as soon as possible after your review of their teaching to discuss your observations and suggestions. It is suggested that you arrange a separate meeting to 'reciprocate' i.e. to discuss the feedback from their review of your teaching. • Prepare your written feedback on your colleague's teaching, using the 'Report' section of <i>Form C</i>, and pass this on to your colleague • Your colleague will provide you with their written feedback.
RESPOND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the meeting record your response to the feedback you have received using Section 2 of <i>Form C</i> (optional but recommended)

Form A: Review plan – Teaching observation

Reviewees complete this form and pass it to their reviewer. A brief planning meeting is recommended, as agreement is required on Parts B and C (see below).

Reviewee:			Reviewer:		
Have <u>both</u> reviewee and reviewer read the <i>Protocols for Peer Review of Teaching</i> ? (this must be completed before teaching is reviewed). YES <input type="checkbox"/>					
Name of subject/unit:					
Teaching session for review (e.g., lecture, tutorial, PBL, etc) and description of topic: Tutorial					
Date:		Time:		Location:	
Objectives of the teaching session:					
Part A. Class background					
Year level(s):		Degrees:		Number of students in class (approx):	
Further comments about the group (if any):					
Part B. Review					
Will the reviewer be introduced to the group?		If yes, how will this be done?		Where will the reviewer sit?	
Please note priority criteria you would like the review to focus on (if any):					
Please note potential difficulties or areas of concern (if any):					
Part C. Feedback meeting					
Date:		Time:		Location:	

Feedback framework for peer review of teaching: for the review of a teaching session, through observation

This framework is designed to assist the reviewer, triggering observations and note taking during the review process. It is not necessary to make notes on all points. However, the reviewer should consider each of the five broad areas.

1

Demonstrating enthusiasm and stimulating curiosity

Responses from students

- What was the **general level of student interest**?
- Was there any **particular aspect** which appeared to **engage the students**?
- Did the students appear to **lose interest** at any point?

Your experience

- Were **you inspired** by the session?
- Was there any aspect that **you found particularly stimulating**?
- Did you find any aspect **less engaging**?

Strategies observed

- What **methods** were used to attract and keep students' attention?

3

Encouraging critical thinking and student learning

What methods were used to ...

- ... encourage **critical thinking**?
- ... encourage **student engagement** and/or participation?
- ... check **students' understanding**?

4

Session mechanics

Structure

- Were the **methods** appropriate to the **objectives of the session**?
- How was the **session commenced**?
- How appropriate was the **pace** and **time-management**?
- How was the **session concluded**?

Clarity

- How effective were any **resources/materials** used?
- How **audible/visible** were the presenter(s) and/or materials?

2

Features of effective communication

Considering the presentation & interpersonal skills observed ...

- did you find any aspects **particularly impressive**?
- do you identify any areas in need of improvement?

5

Priority criteria

Feedback was particularly requested in the following areas:

-
-

Form C: Report and response – Teaching observation

Section 1 – Report

This section is completed by the reviewer, drawing upon Form B (*Feedback framework*) and any notes made during the teaching session. Please use as much space as required.

1. Demonstrating enthusiasm & stimulating curiosity

2. Encouraging critical thinking and student learning

3. Features of effective communication

4. Session mechanics

5. Priority criteria (as discussed by reviewee and reviewer)

6. Are there any examples of good practice you would particularly like to highlight?

Section 2 – Response (optional)

The reviewee has the option to complete this section following the feedback meeting with the reviewer. These notes may be of assistance in completing future probation, performance appraisal and/or promotion application processes. Please respond to the feedback provided. You may like to address aspects of the feedback that you might incorporate into your teaching in future, as well as discussing any feedback where you may differ in opinion from your reviewer.

Form A: Review plan – Teaching observation

Reviewees complete this form and pass it to their reviewer. A brief planning meeting is recommended, as agreement is required on Parts B and C (see below).

Reviewee: Colleague A		Reviewer: Colleague B	
Have <u>both</u> reviewee and reviewer read the <i>Protocols for Peer Review of Teaching</i> ? (this must be completed before teaching is reviewed). YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Name of subject/unit: [A Medicine subject]			
Teaching session for review (e.g., lecture, tutorial, PBL, etc) and description of topic: Tutorial			
Date: 30 September	Time: 9am	Location: Medical Building	
Objectives of the teaching session: [Not included as able to be identified]			
Part A. Class background			
Year level(s): 4th year	Degrees: Medicine	Number of students in class (approx): 9	
Further comments about the group (if any):			
Part B. Review			
Will the reviewer be introduced to the group? Yes	If yes, how will this be done? As a colleague comparing notes	Where will the reviewer sit? Behind/to the side	
Please note priority criteria you would like the review to focus on (if any): Length of the introduction Engagement			
Please note potential difficulties or areas of concern (if any): Tutorial is out of normal time line and students haven't done prior learning			
Part C. Feedback meeting			
Date: 30 September	Time: 11am	Location: Baretto cafe	

Form C: Report and response – Teaching observation

Section 1 – Report

This section is completed by the reviewer, drawing upon Form B (*Feedback framework*) and any notes made during the teaching session. Please use as much space as required.

1. Demonstrating enthusiasm & stimulating curiosity

The students were engaged and participated well throughout the tutorial. There was one student that tended to try and take over who you tactfully engaged but then moved on with humour. The first part of the tutorial was mostly delivered by the reviewee, with appropriately asked questions to engage the students.

The first half of the tutorial did tend to flag a little as there was a lot of information to deliver. The students really enjoyed the practical part of the session. They all engaged really well and were attentive to each other to make sure that all had a go.

You responded extremely well in driving the practical part of the session, getting the point across with humour and tactfully giving feedback in an appropriate manner so the students weren't made to feel silly if they had made a mistake.

I really enjoyed that practical session as well, it was 'real life' scenarios!

I too, like the students, found my attention wandering mid way through the initial 'talk' part of the tutorial.

Methods used to attract and keep students' attention was the posing of questions then real life enactment.

2. Encouraging critical thinking and student learning

Methods used to encourage critical thinking were the posing of questions throughout the tutorial which often lead to lively discussion.

The encouragement of participation in the scenarios was that the students played them out – all students rotating in their roles. The scenarios were a great way of checking their understanding of the information that had been delivered.

3. Features of effective communication

The communication was generally very effective. You were well prepared with handouts and powerpoint to keep the information to be delivered on track. You had an open, friendly manner which made the students feel comfortable to engage and participate. The seating arrangement in the 'talk' session worked well. The semi-circular arrangement of the seating with you slightly to the side enabled good eye contact and made everyone feel included.

You managed the dominant student well, including and acknowledging him, but making sure he didn't take over!

In the scenarios a lot of praise was used to reinforce what was going on.

At the end of the session, as the students were starting to get restless you brought them back on track, acknowledging that it had been a long session, but it was nearly finished and then wrapped it up quickly, again highlighting the main points of the session.

4. Session mechanics

The structure of the session was a delivery of information followed by role-play scenarios.

I thought the way you set out the expectations and objectives at the beginning of the session were excellent. The leading questions at the start engaged the students from the beginning.

The wrap-up at the end was excellent, again highlighting the major take-away messages from the session.

As we discussed, the only problem with the session was the 'talk' part went on too long and was mainly delivered by you, so student engagement did drop a little in the middle part.

Ways to try and break this up could be to give out some [materials described] for the students to interpret in pairs for 5 minutes. Another point where you could have broken the pace was again to pair the students for 5 minutes to come up with the answers to the [description of exercise].

Another idea would be to post a very small amount of pre-reading prior to the session so the 'talk' bit could be cut down a little. As we discussed, the pre-reading would need to be short, sweet and to the point,

otherwise the students wouldn't bother.

The scenarios all worked well with the students participating. They were very well involved, and really seemed to enjoy the session. The praise and humour used throughout worked well.

You spoke clearly, used good eye contact and used all the resources well. Even the glitch in the battery power was handled well, and actually gave the students some reflection time.

5. Priority criteria (as discussed by reviewee and reviewer)

The priority criteria was: was the initial part too wordy and how could it be improved? I think this has been addressed in question four.

Were the students engaged and did they learn the objectives for the session?

The students definitely demonstrated that they had learnt the objectives of the session. They were mostly well engaged, except in a small area of the initial part of the session – see question four.

6. Are there any examples of good practice you would particularly like to highlight?

I found the session ran smoothly [and] was engaging and fun learning!

The role-play scenarios enabled all students to participate.

You handled that over-bearing student with humour and direction!

Identifying a partner for peer review

(Authored by Kerri-Lee Harris)

By its very nature, peer review of teaching draws upon individuals' different – and sometimes quite diverse – perspectives and experiences. This is an inherent strength of peer review, and therefore there is no single rule for what constitutes an appropriate reviewer. Some peer review of teaching programs match individuals with two partners of different type, such as a departmental colleague and someone else from a very different discipline, seeking to capitalise on the different benefits involved.

The following are some of the possibilities:

	Advantages	Possible disadvantages
Colleague in the same discipline	Will have experience in teaching the same, or related, concepts. May be able to comment of the currency and accuracy of information ('content')	Focus on content may distract from the fundamentals, including the effect of the teaching on students.
Colleague in the same department	As for disciplinary colleague, with the added advantage of encouraging an open culture of discussion about teaching in the department, between colleagues.	Focus on content may distract from fundamentals, including the effect of the teaching on students.
Colleague from 'distant' discipline (e.g. arts with science; engineering with performing arts)	Potential for exposure to 'novel' teaching approaches. Reviewer likely to avoid distraction of specifics of the content and instead focus on the core aspects and effects of the teaching.	Reviewer may need more background information in order to understand the context of the subject and class.
Colleague experienced in university teaching	More likely to understand the 'practical realities' of teaching. Likely to have direct experience of various teaching strategies (although experience is neither necessary nor sufficient for effective peer feedback).	A large difference in 'seniority' can be a challenge to open and collegial feedback (although it need not be).
Colleague involved in teaching similar 'class types' (e.g. large classes; graduate level; clinical teaching)	Most likely to be able to share experiences and strategies.	
Colleague teaching in the same unit/course	If teaching in the same course, is aware of the overall course objectives. If teaching in the same unit, knows the student cohort and the specific role of the particular class in the overall unit design. Benefits for coordination – making connections between topics, and avoiding repetition – in team taught units.	Even more than with 'disciplinary colleague', reviewer can be distracted by the specifics of the content. Limits opportunities for introducing new ideas and strategies.

(Kerri-Lee Harris, 2010)



An invitation to undertake reciprocal peer review of teaching

Dear [Colleagues name],

I would like to invite you to undertake a peer review of teaching cycle with me.

Peer review of teaching is the process of colleagues observing each other's teaching and providing feedback for the purposes of affirmation, development and, possibly, future use in personnel procedures such as promotion and probation.

This paper gives you brief information about what is involved should you agree.

The process

Each of us will, in turn, act as Reviewee and Reviewer. There are four steps in a reciprocal peer review process:

1. **Plan:** this includes a discussion of the context of the teaching and the priorities for the review;
2. **Review:** we review each other's teaching guided by criteria based on principles of effective university teaching;
3. **Feedback:** this includes discussion immediately following the class followed by the provision of written feedback; and
4. **Respond:** (Optional, but recommended) You record your response to the feedback you have received. This may include aspects of the feedback you do not agree with (responses are not shared with Reviewers).

The Centre for the Study of Higher Education provides ready-to-use resources that support each step. These are described overleaf and can be downloaded from the CSHE website at www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/peer_review.

Time commitment

The time commitment for the entire process is generally in the range of 2-3 hours, which includes time spent observing a one-hour class.

Confidentiality

All materials (including handwritten notes) generated as part of this peer review process are confidential. Before we begin the process, we will agree not to share them with any third party, unless otherwise agreed (please see the Protocols for Teaching Observation overleaf).

Should you require further information about the benefits and process of peer review the publication *Collegial feedback on teaching: A guide to peer review* describes these in detail. It is available on the CSHE website at www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/resources_teach/feedback/

Kind regards,

[Your name]

Peer Review of Teaching: Protocols for Reviewers Undertaking Teaching Observations

Acting as a reviewer serves two equally important purposes, to:

- provide feedback to a colleague;
- observe another's teaching for the purpose of reflecting on and learning about one's own teaching.

Thus:

1. Reviewers will approach their role in the spirit of respect and collegiality and will always behave in a professional and sensitive manner.
2. Without exception a reviewer is a silent observer. While they *may* initially be introduced to the class (if appropriate), during a class a reviewer will not speak, address the students, participate in learning activities or offer opinions on the teaching or the material presented.
3. Agreements made at pre-review meetings or discussions will be recorded on Form A and abided by during review.
4. Material generated during the course of peer review (i.e., review plans, reports and handwritten notes) will not be provided to any third party unless otherwise agreed with the reviewee

Three forms are used during the process:

Form A <i>Review Plan</i>	used to plan review with colleague
Form B <i>Feedback Framework</i>	designed to assist the reviewer, triggering observations and note taking during the review process
Form C <i>Report and Response Sheet</i>	used by the reviewer to record feedback and the reviewee to reflect on feedback