

1.5.1 Peer Observation of Teaching within the School of Law

FOR DISCUSSION

This draft was generated during a discussion session on peer observation within the School of Law on 8th April 2009, to which all members of the School were invited.

The following document is put to the School for approval. The points contained in it were agreed by those members of staff who attended the workshop. The following proposal, if agreed by School, will be revisited after 2 years to assess whether any changes are needed.

The additional comments are those of the DUGS and are designed to give the reader a sense of the discussion which took place surrounding each of the points.

1. The name of the scheme

The scheme will be known as the Teaching Observation Programme (TOP).

Comment: The inclusion of the terms “review” or “evaluation” (not the intention of the programme), “support” or “exchange” (don’t convey any clear meaning) or “Peer Observation of Teaching” (acronym POT may not be appropriate to a School of Law) was opposed.

2. Aims

The scheme will have two primary aims, namely to encourage reflective practice and to enhance expertise in teaching by observing and/or being observed.

Comment: The inclusion of formal evaluation/appraisal, prescribing teaching practice, or review of substantive content among the aims of the scheme was felt to be inappropriate.

3. Participants

Every member of the teaching staff may volunteer to observe and/or be observed.

Comment: Tutors are not included in the scheme. Colleagues on sabbatical/research leave will not be involved during their period of leave. Participation must NOT be compulsory.

4. Confidentiality

The observation process and any records generated and kept will remain entirely confidential.

*Comment: This principle may be waived **only** if both parties voluntarily agree to share ideas on good practice etc.*

5. Frequency of Participation

Every member of staff should act at least once per year as observer and once per year as the subject of observation.

Comment: *This is merely a guideline.*

6. Choice of Peers

Participation as observer or as the subject of observation must be genuinely consensual. A measure of sensitivity is required when initial contact between observer and the subject of observation takes place. It is strongly suggested that the initial approach be made by email. The observer must accept the right of colleagues to decline/choose to participate with another colleague.

Colleagues are encouraged to move out of their own subject area for the purposes of observation. This removes the focus from content, and emphasises the delivery/practice element.

Comment: *There is no need for complete reciprocity in observation. A member of staff may observe a different participant if they wish. Furthermore, observation need not be limited to pairs: groups of threes/fours can also be accommodated within this scheme.*

7. Format of Feedback

Both parties are free to decide the format of feedback provided, whether verbal or written, directly after the teaching session or later.

Comment: *A number of different feedback pro forma sheets are available from the TLA which may help an observer to order his/her thoughts. Where these are used, the choice of pro forma sheets should be agreed by both parties and the paper copy given to the subject of observation at the end of the session.*

8. Administrative Arrangements

So that the use of the programme can be monitored during its trial period, observers are asked to report the date of each observation to Dr Jessica McCraw. Any data generated from this must not include the names of participants. In the event of problems, the first point of contact should be the Director of Teaching.

Comment: *Dr McCraw will merely record the fact of observation. She will not retain a record of the feedback sheet or details of the participants. The only copy of said sheet must be returned to the subject of observation at a time and date agreed by the observer and subject of observation.*
