Title: **UEA Peer Observation Policy 'Learning from the Practice of Others'**

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1   Scope

1.1   This policy sets out the procedure for peer observation of teaching which is mandated. This policy is relevant for Associate Deans, Heads of School, Director of Teaching (DoT), Teaching and Quality and staff roles which involve teaching. Schools are able to determine the frequency and details of their own peer observation of teaching schemes, subject to the minimum requirements of this policy.

The Policy applies to the following categories of staff:
- ATR;
- ATS;
- PBL tutors;
- Associate Tutors;and
- Staff seconded to the University, and whose role entails teaching.

It does not apply to:
- Honorary lectures (except where an entire modules is delivered by an individual honorary lecturer); and
- PG students who are not on an AT contract.

1.2   It is acknowledged that the categories of teaching staff listed above may not encompass every type of teaching status which may arise at UEA. In the event that an individual in a teaching role does not reasonably fall into any of the listed categories then that individual and their line manager should reach mutual agreement on whether or not this policy applies to the individual concerned and that if it has been decided that the policy does apply, this should be recorded

2   The Purpose and Principles of Peer Observation

2.1   Observation and reflection on teaching is an important process in developing and enriching practice to help with student learning. The core principle of this flexible policy is that by placing the emphasis on **observing the practice of others** and reflecting on that experience an individual will enhance their own practice. Deeper reflection can come from the act of observing another's good practice and their innovative pedagogy. Observation of not only teaching delivery but also how a colleague has prepared or evaluated their teaching activities can provide a source of new ideas, as well as affirm existing practice. Reflection can make individuals more aware of strengths and weaknesses of their own practice. All teaching staff, regardless of length of experience can benefit by observation of others followed by reflection. Commitment to peer observation demonstrates to students, prospective

students and other stakeholders the importance of high quality teaching to the institution. Summative peer observation will have been conducted for new staff through the MAHEP programme delivered by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning. Staff coming in with these qualifications or Fellowship of Advance HE will have had peer observation as part of their course or to satisfy [UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)](#) for Advance HE Fellowship.

2.2 For the purpose of this policy teaching and learning activities which may be used in this process can incorporate any activity which supports student learning and assessment. Observation examples include, but are not restricted to: face to face teaching in lectures, seminars and practicals, virtual teaching e.g. webinars, assessing virtual material e.g. captured material with ECHO360 or other screen casting software, review of material prior to an active learning session, the planning and design of assessment and feedback provided to students. Cross-disciplinary peer observation of the good practice of colleagues in other schools, faculties, or institutions can also be undertaken. Group conversations can also occur with colleagues in the library, student support services, learning technologists within the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning (CTEL), external examiners or other external 'critical friends' such as employers. Conversations can also take place with members of the Centre for Higher Education, Research Practice, Policy and Scholarship (CHERPPS).

2.3 Peer observation is intended to support the personal and professional development of academic staff, and to disseminate and share instances of innovative and or best practice in lecturing via Faculty LTQCs. All reflections from staff will be recorded using a method of personal choice. However it is recommended that this is via the UEA supported portfolio software tool PebblePad. The portfolio or other documentation can be shared with the relevant DoT so that they can draw information from staff members in their school for reporting as an annual standing item at the relevant FLTQC. The reflective nature of the reporting could provide rich sources of information for Teaching Excellence Plans (TEPs) and subsequent subject level TEF narratives.

2.4 The focus of the policy is on continuing professional development and no summative judgements will be made on individual performance. Information from peer observation can be used in the Staff Appraisal process, but this is not compulsory.

2.5 The policy is underpinned by the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) which provides a set of benchmarked standards for all staff involved in learning within a Higher Education Institution. The UKPSF identifies three dimensions of professional practice;
1. Areas of activity undertaken by teachers and support staff (A)
2. Core knowledge needed to carry out those activities at the appropriate level (K)
3. Professional values that individuals performing these activities should exemplify (V)

Taking part in peer observation fulfils some aspects of the dimensions of practice (specifically A5, K5 and V3) and this can be used to help with promotion though the [Academic Progressions Handbook](#) (APH), fellowship application to Advance HE or other awards such as Chartered status. See Peer Observation Handbook.

2.6   If schools deem their current process of peer observation where the observer is providing feedback to their peer to be working effectively, then this policy allows for the continuation of existing practice under the 'Observed peer observation' (4.1). It is recognised that in some Schools there may be a requirement for this type of peer observation to report on teaching quality to external bodies for accreditation purposes or for PSRB regulated programmes. There may also be other 'equivalent' activities undertaken by staff for the purposes of professional revalidation that demonstrate reflective practice which may be accommodated by this policy.

2.7   All staff for whom peer observation is a requirement should undertake a minimum of one observation per year. At a more local level Schools can determine the frequency of observations.

3   Structure of the Observation Process where the Emphasis is on the Observer

3.1   The management of the system should be within a safe environment which allows for deep and honest reflection. It is for each School to decide how they want to structure and manage the observation process. There are two suggested models which are described in the Peer Observation handbook. Model 1 would be the preferred approach, as it is mutually supportive, but it is recognised that some staff have research work which takes them away from the university for periods of time. Schools can adopt a mixed model approach.

4   Voluntary Observed Peer Observation

4.1   If a member of staff wishes their practice to be observed by a colleague within or outside of their School for e.g. promotion or recognition for Advance HE Fellowship then this can be requested as a voluntary process. We can draw on University resources including, but not limited to University Teaching Fellows, National Teaching Fellows and other staff members with SFHEA or PFHEA. Where staff are using this method of observation process they should refer to the UK professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).

4.2   A staff member can also request a student observation of teaching for e.g. promotion or recognition for Advance HE Fellowship. This would be supported through a student observation scheme (run in partnership with the SU) where students and academics engage in a dialogue and feedback is provided on a specific learning and teaching session. Students would be trained in peer observation.

Approved LTC: 08.03.2023

Peer Observation Guidance

Purpose of the Guidance

This guidance introduces the principle and practice of 'learning from the observation of others'. It will help Heads of School (HoS) and Directors of Teaching and Learning (DoTL) decide how the policy will be implemented at school level. It also provides guidance for individual staff members.

Who is Peer Observation for?

Staff	Minimum Number of Observations
ATR	One per academic year
ATS	One per academic year
PBL Tutors	One per academic year
Associate Tutors	One per academic year
Staff seconded to the university whose role entails teaching	One per academic year

Principle of Reflective Learning

Observation and reflection on teaching is an important process in developing and enriching practice to help with student learning. The core principle of this flexible policy is that by placing the emphasis on **observing the practice of others** and reflecting on that experience an individual will enhance their own practice. Deeper reflection can come from the act of observing another's good practice and their innovative pedagogy. Observation of not only teaching delivery but also how a colleague has prepared or evaluated their teaching activities can provide a source of new ideas, as well as affirm existing practice. Reflection can make individuals more aware of strengths and weaknesses of their own practice. All teaching staff, regardless of length of experience can benefit by observation of others followed by reflection. Commitment to peer observation demonstrates to students, prospective students and other stakeholders the importance of high quality teaching to the institution. Summative peer observation will have been conducted for new staff through the MAHEP programme delivered by the School of Education and Lifelong. Staff coming in with these qualifications or Fellowship of the HEA will have had peer observation as part of their course or to satisfy UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) for Advance HE Fellowship.[1]

Staff offering observation sessions can also benefit by having this as evidence of collaborating with others to enhance practice (UKPSF V5).

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[1] The new UKPSF framework was published in January 2023, however staff wishing to apply for Fellowship can still use the old UKPSF up until January 2024.

Key Contacts

The University Teaching Fellows (UTFs) have extensive contacts across the university and will help suggest people to contact with specific expertise. To get in touch with them please visit the CHERPPS site, or get in touch with the centre Director Prof Fabio Arico (f.arico@uea.ac.uk).

Model 1 Peer Group

In the peer group model staff work together in a peer group of not fewer than three members to discuss the type of teaching they wish to observe. Support can be available to facilitate this process, for example the signposting of opportunities within and across different schools. Micro-courses covering different aspects of teaching will also be available on Blackboard which can be accessed via the Blackboard Catalogue.

Peer group has four steps

1. Group discussion (1 hour recommended-but longer needed if group more than three) where each individual shares their current teaching practice and indicates the practice/type of teaching that they wish to observe. Support is then given by the group members in helping to suggest where this could be found within the school, faculty, institution or other institution. The lead on the teaching session(s) to be observed are contacted and permission sought to observe if the session is being delivered face-to-face. If a recorded session is being observed, then access to the relevant *Blackboard* site may need to be given. If observation is happening at another institution (UK based) then this should be discussed with the DoT and HoS to determine a funding source for travel and a decision made on the basis of how valuable the observation would be to wider school practice.
2. Observations occur of learning and teaching within an agreed timeframe.
3. Group reflection (1 hour recommended-but longer needed if group more than three). The group reflects on the observation experience, the practice under consideration and the group discusses how the practice could be embedded into the individual's teaching, so that personal development activities can be identified.
4. Recording-each group member records their observation, reflection and potential practice change and their personal development activities.

Model 2 Individual Observation

The observation process can be done on an individual basis, with staff initially reflecting on their practice and then deciding what type of teaching they want to observe to enhance their practice, and seeking out the relevant opportunities. Opportunities can also be discussed with DoTL. The activity is then reflected upon using the UKPSF dimensions of professional practice and recorded. The UKPSF has changed, the previous version (appendix 1) can be used up until January 2024. The new version (appendix 2) was released in January 2023 and can be used with immediate effect.

Documenting Reflection

It is recommended that staff record their reflection on PebblePad, which is an institutionally supported portfolio software tool, intuitive and very simple to use. Training on PebblePad and information on how to access is available here.

What to observe?

Table 1 provides suggested observation opportunities, you do not have to be limited to these examples.

Table 1

Type of event	Description
Lecture	This could be a lecture which has an active learning embedded within it, e.g. use of TurningPoint or Padlet
Seminar	This could be a seminar which uses role play or debating techniques
Workshops	Observation of skill development, e.g. statistical analysis
Active learning	Observation would include reading the material given to the students and then observation of the active learning session
Assessment	You can observe someone going through marking an assignment in a verbal process to see the thought process behind marking, or discuss the use of rubrics with colleagues
Micro-courses	You can take advantage of the range of micro-courses on different aspects of teaching which are available to you
Conversations	Individual or group conversations with professional services, e.g. CTEL, CHERPPS, Student Support or external examiners
Meetings	You could ask to observe an advisor/advisee meeting

Etiquette

You will need to contact the person whose practice you wish to observe and gain permission. If you wish to observe a session with an advisor and advisee, then permission needs to be obtained from the student(s). The observer will be a passive recipient (unless directly invited otherwise).

How to observe?

There are no specific guidelines on how to observe, but the diagram in figure 1 outlines a process flow which might be useful for a reflective approach.
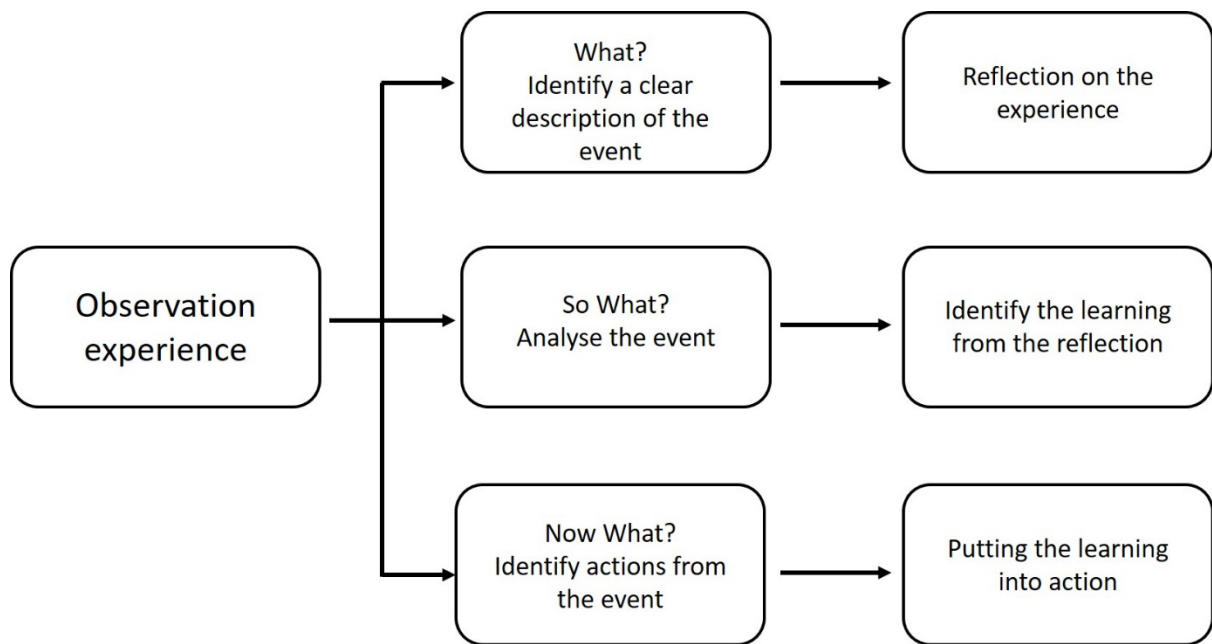
Figure 1 Reflection process starting with the observation experience

Feedback

Since the focus of the peer-observation practice is on the act of observing, there is no expectation that the person whose practice is being observed is debriefed. Nevertheless, it is good practice for the observer to offer the opportunity to have a debriefing conversation. Similarly, it is good practice for the person being observed to offer the observer the opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

How do I go about offering a session?

If you want to offer a session which can be observed then this can be posted on the *Blackboard* Catalogue. This will ask for the 'event' description, time and date, and how many observers can be accommodated. Staff can then search the catalogue and book onto the event, and when the event is 'full' it will close.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Peer Group?

The peer group is a collection of individuals who will work together through the peer observation process.

Who is in the Peer group?

It is up to each School how the peer group is established. For example, group members can be allocated by the Director of Teaching, or the peer group can be made up from colleagues who work closely together. The size of the Peer group should be chosen with some criterion. It should be of at least 3 individuals, but probably not larger than 5 for one-hour meetings. A larger group should arrange for longer duration meetings.

What is the purpose of the peer group?

Peer group is a supportive system of individuals who will help each other through the peer observation process. The group will;

1. Initiate a discussion around areas of activity they wish to learn more about and then identify individual sessions or conversations with individuals
2. Offer support and help each other with the process
3. Meet and reflect on the observation process

Do I have to observe people on my peer group? No, you don't have to observe the practice of your peer group, however you can do so if they have a practice you wish to observe.

How do I find people to observe? The peer group will assist each other in this, but support from others will be available, DoTL, course directors as well as Advance HE Fellows and University Teaching Fellows. You can or get in touch with the CHERPPS Director Prof Fabio Arico (f.arico@uea.ac.uk).
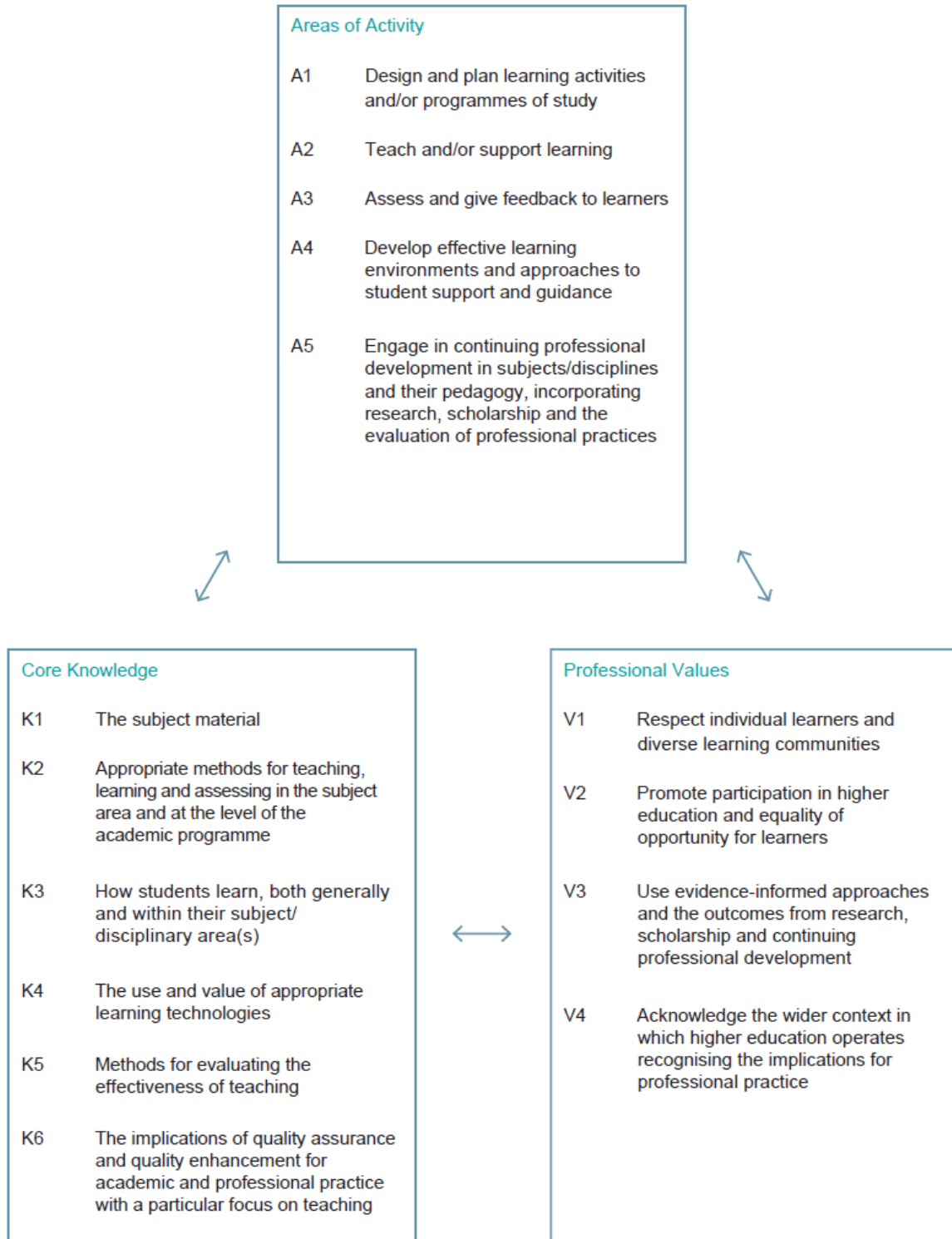
Who allocates people to a peer group?
This will be decided by each individual school

How many observations do I have to do?
One per academic year

Appendix 1 UKPSF framework which can be used up to January 2024

Dimensions of the Framework

Areas of Activity

A1   Design and plan learning activities and/or programmes of study

A2   Teach and/or support learning

A3   Assess and give feedback to learners

A4   Develop effective learning environments and approaches to student support and guidance

A5   Engage in continuing professional development in subjects/disciplines and their pedagogy, incorporating research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices

Core Knowledge

K1   The subject material

K2   Appropriate methods for teaching, learning and assessing in the subject area and at the level of the academic programme

K3   How students learn, both generally and within their subject/ disciplinary area(s)

K4   The use and value of appropriate learning technologies

K5   Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching

K6   The implications of quality assurance and quality enhancement for academic and professional practice with a particular focus on teaching

Professional Values

V1   Respect individual learners and diverse learning communities

V2   Promote participation in higher education and equality of opportunity for learners

V3   Use evidence-informed approaches and the outcomes from research, scholarship and continuing professional development

V4   Acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates recognising the implications for professional practice

Appendix 2 The new UKPSF document can be found here.
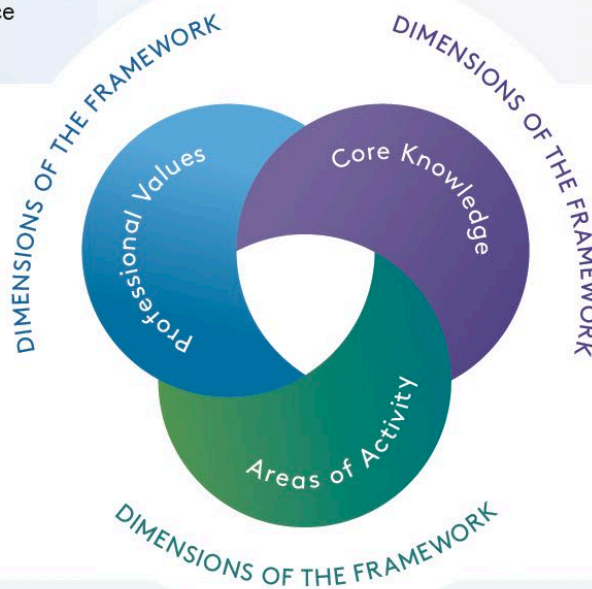
Professional Values

In your context, show how you:

V1 respect individual learners and diverse groups of learners

V2 promote engagement in learning and equity of opportunity for all to reach their potential

V3 use scholarship, or research, or professional learning, or other evidence-informed approaches as a basis for effective practice

V4 respond to the wider context in which higher education operates, recognising implications for practice

V5 collaborate with others to enhance practice

Core Knowledge

In your context, apply knowledge of:

K1 how learners learn, generally and within specific subjects

K2 approaches to teaching and/or supporting learning, appropriate for subjects and level of study

K3 critical evaluation as a basis for effective practice

K4 appropriate use of digital and/or other technologies, and resources for learning

K5 requirements for quality assurance and enhancement, and their implications for practice

DIMENSIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK — DIMENSIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK — DIMENSIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

Professional Values · Core Knowledge · Areas of Activity

Areas of Activity

In your context, demonstrate that you:

A1 design and plan learning activities and/or programmes

A2 teach and/or support learning through appropriate approaches and environments

A3 assess and give feedback for learning

A4 support and guide learners

A5 enhance practice through own continuing professional development