

Review of peer observation practices of teaching at the University of Peradeniya

Peer observation at the university level is a collaborative, progressive, professional activity in which academics provide constructive feedback to each other by observing each other's teaching. It provides an opportunity to reflect on one's own teaching practices and improve teaching-learning process. The overall process of peer evaluation is an exercise which should be done with integrity, mutual understanding and respect.

Guidelines of peer observation of teaching

- It is recommended to conduct one peer observation for each academic staff member per academic year.
- There should be two peer observers, one from the Department and the other from another Department of the faculty, but the Department has the flexibility to decide on the peer observers.
- It is also recommended to extend the peer evaluation to include practical lessons as well if possible.
- Only the quality of the lecture should be evaluated not the content.

Selection and assigning of peer observers

- All staff members including probationers of a Department can be considered as peer observers.
- Department is responsible for selecting the pool of observers, including the outside-observers at the beginning of academic year and this pool can be changed each academic year if necessary.
- Random assignment of peers is suggested as suitable in order to maintain objectivity throughout the process.

Period of observation

- The observers should remain at the lecture from start to end.
- The visit should be a pre-arranged one, not a surprise visit.

Peer observation process

- **Pre-observation:** Observation forms should be given to the evaluators prior to the observation day. In addition to the observation criteria, the observation form can include a short description of the lesson with course title, topic, name of the lecturer, date, time duration and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of the lesson. There should be a space to write comments and suggestions for improvement from the observers. The observers can discuss with the observed if further clarifications are needed. (Sample observation form is provided)
- **Observation:** Each evaluator observes the lesson and fill the observation form separately.
- **Post-observation:** Both observers sign the form and hand it over to the member being observed, to be signed and given to the Head of the Department. If necessary, a short discussion between observers and the observed can be conducted at this time.
- Faculty Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) can create a google document for the faculty in which evaluators can enter observed good practices while confirming confidentiality. This will enable all the staff of the faculty to see good practices and inculcate them to one's own teaching.
- Overall rating should not be implemented as the sole purpose of peer evaluation is to improve teaching. Evaluation form should have only three columns (satisfactory, needs improvement and remarks) avoiding the scale of rating.

Responsibilities

Observers/Evaluators

- Attend the lecture, observe and fill the observation forms and write comments for improving teaching.
- Handover the completed signed observation forms to the Head of the Department after getting the signature of the observed.
- Enter good practices into the google document created by the IQAC of the Faculty while maintaining confidentiality.

Head of the Department

- Head is responsible for preparing the observation schedule at the beginning of each academic year

- He/she is also responsible for selecting pool of outside-observers with the consent from other members of the Department.
- Random assignment of observers for each staff member.

Departmental Quality Assurance Coordinator

- Responsible for implementing peer observations according to the schedule prepared at the beginning of semester.
- Maintaining records of peer observations at the Department.

Faculty IQAC Coordinator

- Opening a google document to enter good practices at the faculty and make it accessible to all academic staff members.
- Monitoring the peer evaluation process with the assistance of the Departmental Quality Assurance Coordinators.