

## **Revised Implementation Guidelines on Peer Support of Teaching**

### **Introduction**

1. With reference to the existing schemes adopted by faculties/departments in the EdUHK (University) and the practice of overseas universities, a set of Implementation Guidelines on Peer Support of Teaching (Guidelines) and a standardized report form have been developed to facilitate the smooth implementation of peer support of teaching in the University. The Guidelines have been implemented with effect from 2014/15 as an option along with the existing schemes used by faculties/departments.

### **Principles of Peer Support of Teaching Scheme**

2. Peer support of teaching at the University:
  - (a) should be collaborative and developmental, not judgmental;
  - (b) should seek to contribute both to professional development of colleagues and to quality learning of students. It is not for the purpose of performance appraisal;
  - (c) should aim at identifying and disseminating good and innovative practice whilst maintaining participant confidentiality;
  - (d) is highly encouraged for quality enhancement purposes though colleagues' participation in peer support activities is voluntary; and
  - (e) the outcomes are restricted for the use of colleagues being observed/reviewed and they would have the discretion to decide on the use of the outcomes as deemed appropriate.

### **Objectives**

3. Peer support of teaching aims at:
  - (a) providing a supportive and collegial framework for academic and teaching colleagues to
    - i) reflect on their professional practices;
    - ii) receive constructive feedback;
    - iii) share good/innovative practices in ways that are developmental and non-judgmental;
  - (b) promote peer dialogue about teaching; and
  - (c) develop a culture that values peer feedback as positive and developmental experience.

## Activities

4. Peer support activities, apart from peer observation of teaching, encompass a broad range of teaching and related activities with a view to enhancing teaching quality and/or staff professional development. Examples include:
  - (a) trying out innovations in course delivery (e.g. skills in conducting a lecture, classroom management);
  - (b) designing curriculum and pedagogical innovations (e.g. integrating research into teaching and assessment);
  - (c) embedding new technology in teaching (e.g. using mobile devices for teaching);
  - (d) implementing new approaches of assessment (e.g. online assessment, online feedback to students), etc.
5. Depending on the development needs and priorities, faculties/departments/teams may work out/adopt/participate in various activities as appropriate, and the frequency of these activities, for example, some activities may form part of the induction for a new colleague in the first year of service at the University.
6. Participation of the activities is voluntary; however, all academic and teaching staff members are encouraged to participate in peer observation or peer support activities at least once every academic year.

## Approaches

7. Faculties/departments/teams/individual colleagues may decide the selection and pairing methods. Two different modes of pairing are suggested:
  - (a) **Mentor-Mentee Mode** to pair up a more experienced colleague with a less experienced colleague
    - This mode targets at new colleagues below the rank of Professor who are in their first year of service at the University, or academic/teaching staff who demonstrate a need for coaching (e.g. based on the students' feedback from SET, SSCM) A mentor from the same department is to be assigned to the colleague by the relevant Head of Department (HoD)/Unit;
    - Colleagues could also invite Teaching Awardees (e.g. recipients of President's Award for Outstanding Performance in Teaching, Faculty Teaching Award, and Excellence in Teaching Award, etc.) to be their mentor; and
    - This mentor-mentee relationship will remain for the full academic year.

- (b) **Peer Support Mode** to take on the form of a professional learning community and mutual / reciprocal learning among colleagues with different experiences
- Colleagues could form peer support teams by mutual consent. The pairings can be reciprocal (“A” is peer for “B” and vice versa) or one way (“A” is peer for “B”, “B” is not peer for “A” but is peer for “C”).
- (c) In general, the partnership will remain for the full academic year. Colleagues may then decide whether they would continue the partnership or choose new partners.

### **Role of Teaching Awardees**

8. To build up an atmosphere of sharing good practices, initially, teaching awardees would open up their classes for sharing with colleagues. At a later stage, they would form a pool of mentors who would conduct class observation by invitation. Departments may consider providing resources and support (e.g., workload recognition) to the teaching awardees who are invited to offer peer support of teaching. A maximum of 6 mentees per academic year may be taken as a reference number subject to individual mentor’s availability and workload consideration. The teaching awardees may be involved in one or both of the mentor-mentee mode and the peer-support mode.

### **Focus**

9. The focus of class observation could go beyond the traditional approach of observation of a teaching session, and may be directed on activities or aspects that would benefit most from the involvement of, and comment by a peer.

### **Themes**

10. The themes or issues to be considered in the scheme may reflect:
- (a) generic themes or issues (e.g. current development or common concerns at faculty/department/programme/course level); or
  - (b) personal concerns of the teacher (e.g. comments raised during peer support in previous years, issues arising from student feedback etc.).

## Processes

11. The processes should be well planned, and normally involve four key stages:-

(a) Preparatory discussion

The preparatory discussion between the mentors and mentees should be arranged in advance to enhance mutual understanding of the context and expectation, setting up of relevant rules, sorting out the focus (themes and issues to be covered, and the frequency of the activities, etc.

(b) Observation/review by the peer

The observation/review should be conducted according to the mutual agreement between the colleagues and their peers prior to the observation session/activities. The peer should make notes on the observation/review (e.g., evidences on the strengths, good practices, areas for development and overall quality of teaching etc.) to facilitate post-observation/ review.

(c) Post-observation/ review

Feedback discussion between the colleagues and their peers should take place within a reasonable time after the observation/activity as mutually agreed. The discussion is meant to facilitate critical reflection, provide constructive feedback, suggest areas for development and ways for improvement, and develop enhancement actions/plans for follow up, etc.

(d) Record keeping

*Department Level*

It is advisable for departments to keep a record of participation of their colleagues in relevant activities and, where appropriate, identify good practices for dissemination for quality enhancement purposes.

*Individual Level*

Colleagues and their peers should keep a record of the feedback for future reference.

## Report Form

12. A standard form (**Attachment A**) is developed to facilitate colleagues to record the activities and qualitative comments. Colleagues may also use other report form provided by their department, if deemed appropriate.

## **Recognition for Mentors**

13. A Certificate of Appreciation would be issued by LTTC to the Teaching Awardees who have participated in the Scheme. For mentors who are not Teaching Awardees, it would be at the discretion of individual department/unit to decide if any kind of recognition/appreciation would be given, for example, votes of thanks/appreciation through email, tea gathering, etc.

## **References**

1. Peer support of teaching – University Policy Statement, University of Dundee
2. Peer Observation Record Form and Formative Feedback Form, University College London
3. Policy Statement of Peer Support for Teaching Scheme, Manchester Metropolitan University
4. Guidelines and Forms of existing schemes in departments, EdUHK

*Revised in August 2016*

**PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING****DEPARTMENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

- *The form is for recording the activity and feedback. The teacher and the peer may keep the completed form for personal record and their own reference.*
- *Please add extra sheet(s) as appropriate.*

**PART I – Information on Activity***The teacher may provide details on the activity below:***Programme Name:** \_\_\_\_\_**Course Name and Code:** \_\_\_\_\_**Date of Session:** \_\_\_\_\_**Time of Session:** \_\_\_\_\_**Venue:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Nature of Session/Activity:**

☐Lecture  
☐Tutorial  
☐Field experience visit  
☐Thesis supervision session  
☐Others, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

**Medium of Instruction:** \_\_\_\_\_**Number of Students Enrolled / Present:** \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_**Part II –Feedback on Teaching***The teacher and the peer (observer / reviewer) may fill in the sections alternately during the process:***Section A – Preparatory Discussion [to be completed by the teacher]**

1) Information provided before the observation session:

- ☐ Session plan
- ☐ Course outline or scheme of work
- ☐ Other resources, please specify:

2) Theme / Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Specific questions and issues to seek comment from the peer:

## PEER OBSERVATION OF TEACHING

DEPARTMENT: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section B – Review, Reflection and Action

1) Summary Comments **by the peer:**

Examples of issues to comment upon:

- Overall quality in relation to the course intended learning outcomes
- Significant learning and teaching approach(es)/method(s)
- Commendations and recommendations for development in specific aspects such as:
  - Clarity of course intended learning outcomes
  - Structure of session linking learning outcomes with learning and teaching activities
  - Content (currency, relevance, addressing student needs/prior knowledge)
  - Delivery and pace
  - Communication and teacher-student interaction
  - Learner support
  - Use of information technology and learning resources

2) Recommendations for Dissemination as Good Practice **by the peer and the teacher**

3) Reflection and Proposed Action with Timeline **by the teacher**

Name of Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Peer (Observer / Reviewer): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_