

Peer-Supported Review of Education (PSRE)

Scope

This policy applies to all who are involved in any education activity on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes i.e. including Visiting Lecturers and PhD students. *All references to 'staff' in the policy are to be read as including everyone within this scope*

Date approved/re-approved

Approved by Senate 2010, re-approved 15 July 2016

Date for review

To be evaluated and reviewed on a periodic basis, with allowance for minor annual updates and changes by Education and Student Committee, as required

To be read in conjunction with

Guidance on Peer-Supported Review of Education

Policy on Peer-Supported Review of Education (PSRE)

CUL Policy on Peer-Supported Review of Education

Rationale

Peer-supported review of education is a collaboratively developmental activity which focuses on improving/developing/sharing aspects of performance through non-judgmental peer input or advice. The review focuses on practice (i.e. what is observed) rather than on the individual; and each partner to the reviewed event reflects on the review to draw conclusions for improvement of his/her own practice.

The benefits of this process are that there can be:

- recognition of aspects of teaching and/or assessing that are working well
- identification by individual staff/teams of their development needs
- dissemination of good practice and expertise amongst colleagues through dialogue on education practice
- evolution of a mutually-supportive environment for the development of education skills and a focus on teaching excellence.

In addition staff may use evidence from their review when applying for promotion and for internal and external teaching awards.

Model

Staff who have engaged previously in peer review of teaching know that a person may learn as much from observing another's teaching as from being observed. The present model of PSRE recognises this, being an explicitly collaborative process engaged in equally by both partners in the review, with a view to enhancing the education practice of each partner.

Scope

The focus of peer observation of teaching is often only on face-to-face classroom activity. However this does not take into account the complexity of a modern lecturer's role, which includes much input outside the seminar/lecture room such as:

- designing and planning learning and assessment activities
- providing transferable and timely feedback to students on their performance
- developing responsive learning environments in which students can (individually or in teams) work effectively and with flexibility
- managing online, flexible and distance learning

There are a range of activities within each area that might be explored: guidance is available on these, as explained below. Further guidance is available from LEaD on request.

Managing the Process

Guidance for Schools is provided here: https://www.city.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/68987/peer_review_guidance.pdf ; Schools may also publish additional guidance on local implementation. PSRE applies to all staff involved in activities facilitating students' learning ie including hourly paid/visiting staff and research students as well as lecturers at all levels of seniority. Staff training will be available.

It is recommended that Schools (through a designated manager) identify pairs for this process early in each academic year to ensure that staff are able to plan their review(s) throughout the year. However, recognising that staff may wish to obtain peer support from someone with specific expertise, managers should respond positively to any reasoned request from staff to use a specified substitute review partner (whether or not the substitute is within their own School). Pairings may be reciprocal in successive PSRE events within the same academic year; this may be desirable where the relevant staff are engaged in longer term collaboration in relation to an aspect of their education practice.

Timing

In order for this process to be developmental in its effect it should not be viewed as a one-off event but as an on-going process which may involve a series of reviews throughout the year. It is expected that all academic staff would engage in at least one review annually.

Process

1. Briefing

This is a very important stage. Both partners should decide on the scope and manner of the review and record this: see optional template at <https://www.city.ac.uk/about/education/quality-manual/8-programme-evaluation-and-review#tab=tab-3> Form 1. It is essential that both review partners have a clear idea of which aspects of the education-related work/practice are to be reviewed and **how**. Where a face-to-face education event (ie seminar or lecture) is chosen for review, the observing partner should be provided at this briefing stage with all necessary information and documents. In relation to all review events, a clear brief should be provided at this stage as to which areas to concentrate on in the review, and the nature of the outcomes sought. A date should be fixed for the event to be reviewed and for the de-briefing discussion.

2. Reviewing

- *Seminar/lectures*: the review should be of sufficient duration (normally, the whole seminar/lecture). The observing partner should approach the task as 'objectively' as possible, focusing on 'facts' (e.g. description of behaviours), bearing in mind that judgmental evaluation is *not* what is required. The review should adopt the perspective agreed in the briefing session. An optional template for the reviewing partner's use during the review may be found at <https://www.city.ac.uk/about/education/quality-manual/8-programme-evaluation-and-review#tab=tab-3> Form 2.
- *Review of documents, processes, online material, etc*: all relevant documents/links should be made available to the review partner at least two weeks before the de-briefing session (see below) takes place. It is likely that review of documents etc will take place by each partner individually in his/her own time (although depending on the nature of the task, this may be done jointly).

Peer-supported review may be based on a collection of evidence, so available student feedback or other forms of evidence on the reviewed event/artefact may be considered also.

3. *De-briefing*

Confidentiality must be guaranteed (except where something occurs that could place CUL at risk of legal proceedings – for example, abuse or discrimination - in which case the reviewer should seek advice from their line manager). Since the review is a supportive partnership aimed at benefiting the practice of each partner, both partners should adopt a questioning, non-judgmental approach, thus generating discussion of points arising from the review. Discussions should centre on the matters identified in the briefing, although each partner may also raise other aspects that are appropriate for debate in this context. Both partners should remember that their focus is on stimulating and supporting the review **by the other** of his/her own education practice.

4. *Reflective record*

Either at the end of the de-briefing or shortly afterwards, each partner to the review should write a brief paragraph recording his/her reflective thoughts and conclusions for his/her own future education practice (including details of any enhancements s/he will make and/or other steps s/he will take) and send a copy of this electronically to LEaD via <https://forms.city.ac.uk/forms/54931> (also linked <https://www.city.ac.uk/about/education/quality-manual/8-programme-evaluation-and-review#tab=tab-3> Form 3). Returns filed in this way will be anonymous. The reflective records will be reviewed by LEaD to identify transferable learning points which will feed into a future CUL teaching and learning event.

An optional template for the individual's own record is available <https://www.city.ac.uk/about/education/quality-manual/8-programme-evaluation-and-review#tab=tab-3> Form 3.

Monitoring

When participating in annual appraisal, the member of staff should confirm to his/her appraiser that s/he has participated in peer review, together with the date(s). Entirely at the option of the member of staff being appraised, if s/he would like to discuss any aspect of the review (e.g. particular strengths or areas for development), s/he may include this in his/her appraisal form.

The appraiser does **not** need to be given the staff-member's reflective record of the review.

Again entirely at the option of the member of staff, s/he may include details of his/her PSRE in his/her standard academic CV in a box designated for this purpose. (Guidance for this can be found just below the standard CV Guidance notes available at the link to the standard academic CV here <https://www.city.ac.uk/staff-hub/human-resources/organisational-development/appraisal.>)

Professional and School Requirements; Issues of Concern

For some departments/Schools, there may be professional body or other School policy requirements that senior staff are engaged in reviewing education practice. Separate, explicit arrangements for this should be made where relevant.

Likewise, if concerns have been raised about an individual's education practice (e.g. through student evaluations), then additional review arrangements may be required by managers in accordance with existing related procedure.

Continuing Professional Development

Engaging in PSRE constitutes continuing professional development and for any level of fellowship of the Higher Education Academy would count as an activity contributing to good standing.

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