

PEER OBSERVATION AND REVIEW



GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

Peer observation can lead to teaching being seen as a topic for communal discourse and a sense of community may be developed, encouraging all teaching staff to consider teaching as a scholarly activity (Chism, 2007)

Introduction

What is peer observation and review?

Peer observation and review (POR) concerns CCCU staff who teach or facilitate learning. It consists in observing and/or reviewing each other's authentic practice to learn from one another and to focus on individual needs. As well as being a learning activity for your own professional development, it allows you to contribute to your peers' development and learning. This includes the positive action of working with peers beyond the course team, to include colleagues from other disciplines as well as non-academic staff such as professional services. The POR process also aims to build self-awareness, provide a safe learning environment which encourages innovation and improves teaching practice to support an outstanding experience for students and apprentices.

Authentic Practice is a term used to recognise a variety of situations as not all observations will be carried out in a classroom teaching situation. Authentic practice can be one-to-one tutorial, supervision or feedback session and instruction, online design and delivery, design of assessment guidance, etc. These can be reviewed through various means by the reviewer.

What POR is not!

The POR scheme is not a performance management tool. You are, however, encouraged to discuss with your line manager (or person responsible for your development) what you have learned from the POR experience as either/both the observer and observee. You may also discuss what you might share as good practice, any development opportunities you are interested in, so that you can be continually supported in your continuing professional development (CPD).

What are the benefits of a peer observation and review scheme?

There are many benefits to observing and/or reviewing others' practice as well as having your own teaching and facilitating of learning observed or reviewed. Indeed, in many situations it is the person observing/reviewing who benefit the most.

Some of these benefits include:

- Taking part in a professional conversation between colleagues across the university about their teaching, learning and assessment practices
- Exploring new ideas and strategies to develop your own practice
- Sharing good practice
- Encouraging self-assessment through critical reflection
- Contributing to the collective efficacy of the whole School, Faculty and University
- Providing support in preparing to write your Advance HE Fellowship claims and UCAP/PGCAP submissions

POR Policy and Requirements

The [POR Policy and Principles](#) states that for academics there is an expectation that you take part in a minimum of two POR activities per academic year: one in the observer/reviewer role and one being observed or reviewed. POR activities may take place across Faculties, Schools or course teams, but also with colleagues from Professional Services. Each School/Faculty may organise the POR scheme in different ways and you should refer to the person with designated responsibility for this according to your own school or faculty.

Each year, departments, schools or faculties can identify, if they wish, any specific foci for that year, e.g. enhancements to assessment practice, use of Technology Enhanced Learning. The list of themes below is designed to provide ideas, but is not exhaustive:

- Inclusive practice
- Active Learning
- Developing assessment feedback practice
- Embedding academic literacy
- Embedding professional skills development
- Developing blended learning
- Expanding the use of technology enhanced learning
- Developing the web accessibility of resources

Shared and Personal Responsibilities

Faculties and Schools

- Foster a culture of trust
- Enable staff to take part in the POR scheme
- Provide opportunities for sharing of good practice
- Provide opportunities for staff to take part in relevant developmental activities associated with the POR scheme

All staff with responsibility for Learning and Teaching Improvement and Development

- Provide contexts and focus to enable staff to make the most of POR activities, *e.g. ensure staff are aware of course, School/Faculty improvement plans*
- Acknowledge general outcomes from the POR scheme to inform enhancement to courses, *e.g. share at Boards of Study*

All Staff Teaching and/or Supporting Learning

- Engage positively in the POR scheme through:
 - observation/review activities
 - critical reflective practice
 - professional conversations
- Maintain professional integrity *e.g. confidentiality*
- Share general outcomes of POR activities to enhance courses
- Be proactive in discussing POR experiences and any developmental opportunities with appropriate colleagues

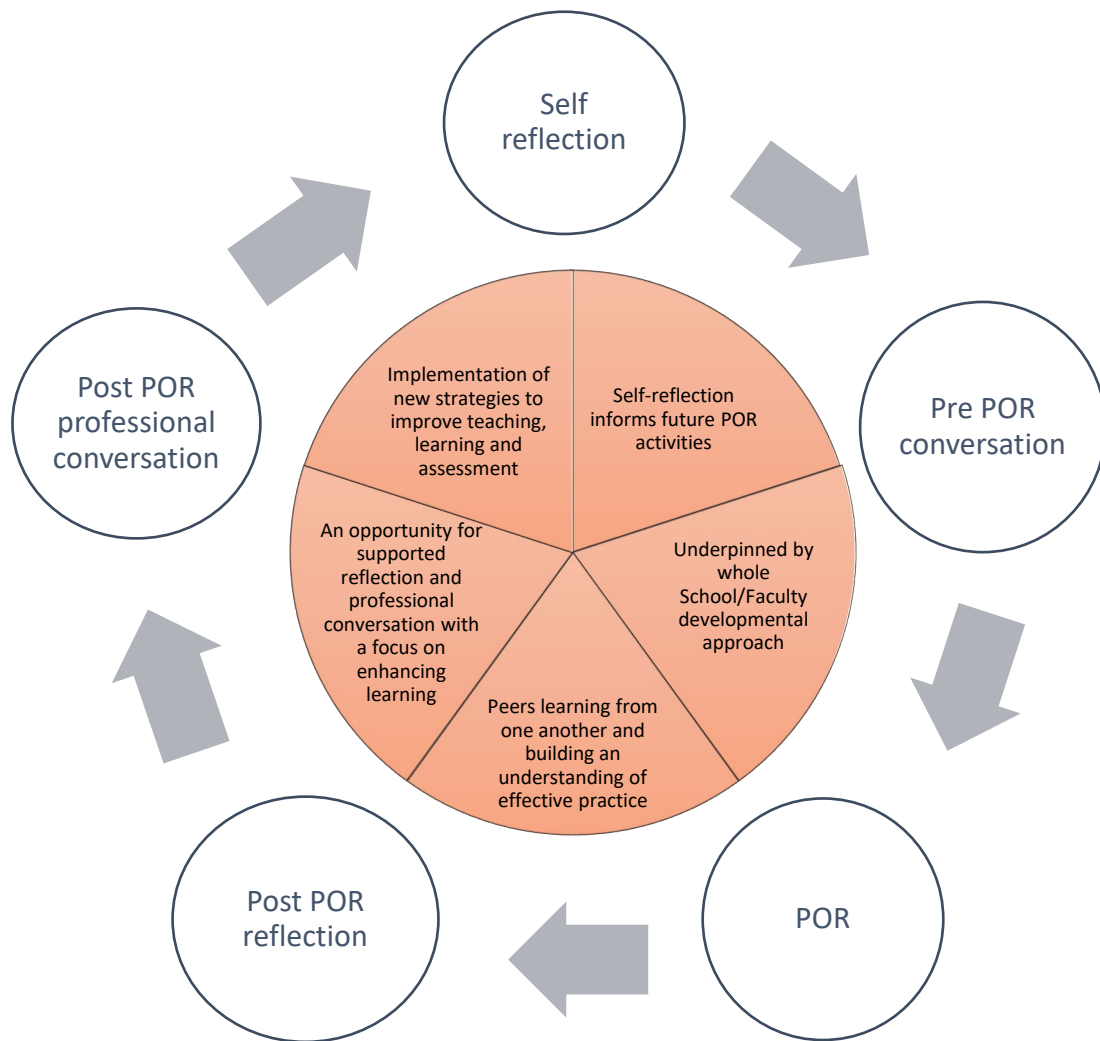
“The POR process helps to validate your creative teaching and learning strategies while disseminating good practice. Process can be across faculties”

Edith Lewis- Senior Lecturer Social Work, Faculty Academic Developer – Learning and Teaching



The POR Process

The stages of peer observation and review



1. Before the POR activity

Observing or reviewing

- Consider how this observation/review may be useful to you rather than rely solely on the needs of the person being observed/reviewed. Remembering that observing and reviewing others' practice can provide one of the richest activities to inspire ideas and inform future practice.
- Discuss and agree with your colleague being observed/reviewed what they would like feedback or further conversations about, e.g. checking learning as occurred; use of technology for enhancing learning; managing groups to create an inclusive environment.

Being observed or reviewed

Sharing your classroom e.g. lectures and seminars, or other types of practice, such as online delivery/webinars, assessment feedback and tutorials is an opportunity for an exchange of ideas. It is also an opportunity to get support from colleagues when you have an area of practice you particularly wish to develop.

- Discuss and agree with your peer what you would most appreciate feedback or conversations about, which is aimed at supporting and improving student/apprentice learning, e.g. checking learning as occurred; use of technology for enhancing learning; managing groups to create an inclusive environment.
- Provide basic information about your session/practice:
 - Timetable/rooming
 - Course details/level of course
 - Session plans/learning outcomes
 - Context of group
 - Access to the online resources that you wish them to review



2. During the POR activity

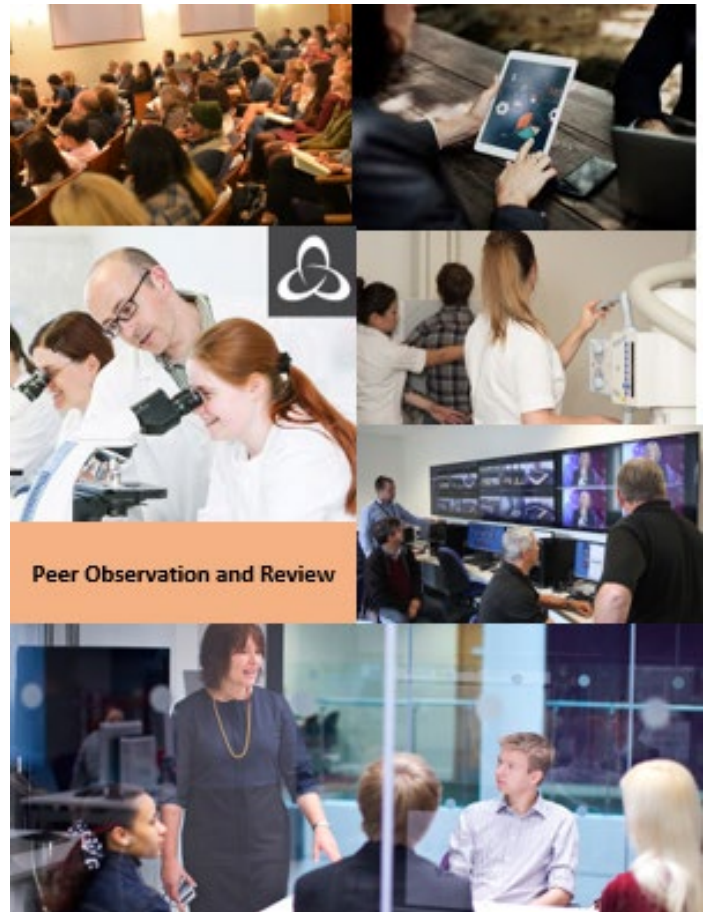
There are several considerations for both the observer/reviewer and observee/reviewee:

Observing or reviewing

- Remember that this activity is a developmental activity for both colleagues. As the observer/reviewer, you have as much to gain as to give. Take notes to help you with:
 - The post POR professional conversation
 - Your own personal critical reflection of own practice
- The emphasis is on the learning and teaching and not your own preferences with regards to learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

Being observed or reviewed

- If you are being observed in your classroom environment, decide how should you introduce your observer
- If you have other authentic types of practice being observed or reviewed (e.g. online delivery; review of online feedback), consider how you will give access to this to the observer/reviewer and the implications for data protection for your students or apprentices.




POR forms (which includes guidance for the observer/reviewer) can found at:
<https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-enhancement/docs/POR/POR-Form.docx>

3. Post the POR activity

Post POR Professional Conversation

- Maintain confidentiality. However, should you wish to share good practice that you have observed or reviewed, you may seek permission from your colleague to do so.
- Timescale – when arranging the POR activity, agree the post professional conversation date and time too. You should aim to make this no more than 14 working days after the activity has taken place.
- The professional conversations that take place post the POR activity should be developmental and not judgemental.
- The conversations should focus on improving the learning experience and not on personal teaching and learning strategy preferences/approaches.
- Those observing/reviewing should be prepared to share what they have learned through this experience.
- Discussion around areas/ideas for development should form a major part of the conversation for the greatest effectiveness of the POR activity.
- Actions for development (this can be for both parties) should be discussed to ensure this important part of the POR activity is not forgotten.

 There are reflective prompts for both the observer/reviewer and observee/review available at Along with the POR activity report, these will ensure you get the most out of your professional conversations. <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/learning-and-teaching-enhancement/docs/POR/Reflections-post-POR.docx>



4. What Next?

Too often CPD activities are well received and generate a lot of ideas and inspiration which don't turn into action. To avoid this, act now and plan your next steps using the stages below to help you:

1. What did you decide during your joint professional conversation that you would like to develop? What is your goal?
2. What are you already doing or what skills/knowledge do you already have in this area?
3. What support is there for you to help you achieve your goal?
 - Workshops – search on StaffSpace using the search term LTE to see all the workshops that Learning Teaching Enhancement run.
 - Faculty – speak to your line manager or persons with responsibility for your development to discuss what opportunities they might be able to help you with e.g. appropriate conferences, sharing of good practice, faculty opportunities.
 - Sharing of good practice – look at [PRISM](#), the CCCU sharing of good practice for the whole University.
 - Speak to other professional services, e.g. sustainability, learning development, well-being, enterprise and employability.
 - Include potential CPD as part of your 'Positive Performance Conversations' with your manager.
4. Commit to the action. Below are just a few examples to turn ideas into action:
 - book a workshop;
 - make arrangements to see your line manager/person with responsibility for your development;
 - contact your Faculty Director for Learning and Teaching (FDLT) to share your practice;
 - look on the PRISM site



Further Reading

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