



Peer Review of Teaching in Australian Higher Education

A handbook to support
institutions in developing and
embedding effective policies
and practices

Developed through a collaborative project involving:

Centre for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Melbourne

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Section 1:

A framework for peer review of teaching

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1.1 Introduction

One of the ironies of higher education is that while peer review of research is a firmly established and internationally recognised cornerstone of academic scholarship, peer review of teaching — the practice of colleagues providing feedback on one another's teaching — has little or no prominence in university policies and does not feature strongly in academic cultures and practices.

This is true of Australia too. Peer review of teaching is not universally practised in Australian universities. However, there is some evidence that the potential of peer review to contribute to enhancing university teaching is recognised. A number of universities have adopted or experimented with strategies to encourage peer review of teaching, including through incorporation in academic development programs, references in human resources policies and, in some cases, the implementation of systematic programs at institutional, faculty or departmental levels. Despite this, peer review is an infrequent and generally piecemeal activity.

This handbook is the result of a national project to develop a framework to support the effective introduction of peer review of teaching in ways appropriate to the higher education environment in Australia. The project involved extensive consultation with staff from institutions across the sector. It draws upon the experience of people who have developed and implemented peer review programs in their universities, and from people with particular insights into organisational policies and guidelines. The aim of the project was to develop resources to assist universities to design and embed peer review of teaching programs suited to their missions, priorities and contexts.

Australian higher education has an internationally-regarded record of teaching development, evaluation and scholarship. The systematic collection of feedback from students and recent graduates is deeply embedded in practice. Student survey data are used for various purposes by academic staff and their institutions. Indeed for most staff, student evaluation is the main form of formal feedback they receive on the effectiveness of their teaching.

In such an environment the active exploration of new possibilities for teaching evaluation is unsurprising. Staff are looking to enhance the data available to them in order to both inform the development of their teaching and to demonstrate its quality for purposes of appraisal and promotion. Institutions, too, are seeking to promote and demonstrate teaching excellence. Peer review of teaching has been recognised as one such possibility.

The wider uptake of peer review of teaching has the potential to make a valuable contribution to the advancement of higher education — among its various benefits, peer review can play an important role in assisting individuals to enhance their teaching, in recognising and rewarding skills and achievements in teaching, and in developing individuals' academic careers. The more widespread and systematic the use of peer review of teaching, the greater the opportunities to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in universities.

But implementing peer review of teaching within universities is not a simple or straightforward undertaking. The review or evaluation of teaching — as with all review and evaluation — touches on sensitive professional issues. The involvement of academic peers in the process adds subtly to the complexity. Given the potential interrelationships between peer review, teaching evaluation and human resource matters such as tenure or promotion decisions — as obvious examples — it seems inevitable that academics will have concerns and anxieties, at least initially.

Most professionals experience some discomfort when having their professional work reviewed or evaluated, no matter how benign the purposes and no matter the degree of their professionalism — these are normal human reactions. Further, it can be a daunting task for professionals to review the work of their colleagues: to make judgements; to provide appropriate affirmation; and to offer considered suggestions sensitively. None of these challenges, however, is a sufficient obstacle to pursuing the opportunities that peer review of teaching provides to strengthen and complement other activities associated with the enhancement and professionalisation of university teaching.

*“The thought of having someone else look too critically at the way you work is both daunting and exciting”
(p.91)*

1.2 A place for peer review in the evaluation of university teaching

Peer review of teaching in universities involves academic colleagues giving and receiving feedback on their teaching practices and its effectiveness in promoting student learning. Presently, much of the evaluation of university teaching is based on student feedback, yet peer review has the potential to provide valuable insights drawn from an alternative and equally valid perspective.

Peer review capitalises on a valuable and under-utilised resource: the expertise and experience of academic peers. Drawing as it does on the knowledge and insights of university colleagues, peer review can recognise and accommodate diversity in approaches to teaching, curricula and disciplinary contexts.

While often equated with classroom observation, peer review can cover the full range of teaching activities and environments including assessment, the development of teaching and learning resources, curriculum design, online teaching, clinical and other field-based teaching. This further complements systematically collected evaluation from students, which tends to focus on their experience in the classroom.

The focus throughout this resource is on the peer review of individuals' teaching practice. This is inclusive of team teaching, in so far as an individual's contribution to the collective is identifiable. Not included, however, is the potential for peer review to contribute to course review or benchmarking, as in such exercises the object of analysis is the course, rather than the contribution of individual teaching staff.

The principles and framework described in the following pages locate peer review within the wider context for the review, evaluation and development of university teaching and as an integral element of the scholarship of teaching.

"I really looked forward to the opportunity to work with a colleague, and perceived the process as being part of my professional responsibility"
(p.84)

Peer review of teaching in higher education: A framework for Australian universities

The core principles

In Australian universities, peer review of teaching:

1. Has the enhancement of teaching and learning as its primary purpose.
2. Is a fundamental tool for the evaluation and development of teaching, complementing feedback collected from students.
3. Recognises university teachers' shared professional responsibilities for monitoring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.
4. Acknowledges and capitalises on the educative expertise and judgement of university teachers in their fields.
5. Provides feedback that affirms good practice as well as suggests areas in which development might be helpful.

The potential benefits

Peer review of teaching:

Extends beyond classroom teaching and presentation

Peer review has the potential to provide feedback on all key aspects of teaching such as the learning aims and objectives, and the design of curricula, resources and assessment.

Accommodates the full spectrum of university teaching and learning contexts

By drawing upon the insight of colleagues, peer review is readily adapted to diverse teaching and learning environments, such as clinical, field-based and online teaching.

Recognises the influence of disciplines on teaching and learning practices

Central to peer review of teaching is the exchange of ideas, framed by recognised principles of good teaching practice — practice that is inevitably influenced by the field of study. Individuals' conceptions and disciplinary perspectives are an inherent characteristic and feature of peer review.

Strengthens the teaching culture of an institution

The processes of peer review of teaching have the potential to contribute to collegial academic cultures in which critical reflection on teaching is valued and encouraged. Increased communication between staff, and enhanced knowledge of the broader curriculum are among the benefits for the immediate academic environment and the institution more broadly.

Has benefits for each of the parties involved

Both reviewer and the person whose teaching is reviewed benefit from engaging in the process. Engaging in critical reflection on a colleague's teaching yields insights into an individual's own practice, while feedback from peers provides a unique perspective on teaching that other evaluation methods may lack.

The conditions for effective peer review

Effective implementation of institutional programs of peer review of teaching is contingent upon:

Collegial trust and respect

Effective peer review of teaching requires a collegial atmosphere of trust and respect in which all parties approach the process in a professional and sensitive manner.

Supporting guidelines, resources and advice

If the full developmental possibilities of peer review of teaching are to be realised, support and guidance for participants is necessary. Giving and receiving feedback on research is a familiar activity, but the same is not true for teaching.

Peer review being incorporated into policies for staff appraisal, promotion, and special recognition

Staff contribution to the scholarship of teaching through involvement in peer review needs to be recognised and acknowledged by institutional policies. Such policy linkages are necessary to increase participation in peer review. Policies and administrative processes around appraisal, promotion, and other forms of recognition — such as teaching awards — need to explicitly recognise peer review of teaching.

1.3 Establishing principles for peer review

The framework on page 6 proposes principles to underpin peer review of university teaching in Australia. It highlights the range of benefits peer review affords individuals and organisations, and the conditions conducive to effective peer review. Informed by experience and practices from across the sector, the framework is intended as a reference point for use by staff developing programs of peer review in their own institutions. It is not a prescription for a standard approach, and rather emphasises the need for different approaches in different contexts. The framework does, however, describe recognised principles fundamental to peer review of university teaching that are relevant to the contemporary Australian higher education environment.

It is widely recognised that there is a professional obligation upon academic staff to evaluate their teaching, to consider evaluation findings seriously and to explore ways to enhance their teaching and improve student learning. Not only do academic staff have professional responsibilities with regard to their own teaching but they also have wider responsibilities for the quality of teaching and learning within their university, faculty and departmental contexts. Participating in peer review is one means of expressing this responsibility for it represents a quite explicit acknowledgement of a shared commitment to the quality of teaching and, ultimately, student learning.

Internationally there continue to be efforts to define the distinctive characteristics of the ‘scholarship of teaching’. Teaching in higher education is without doubt a scholarly business and it requires scholarship. This scholarship extends to the thoughtfulness, rigour and integrity applied to the review or evaluation of teaching and its effects on student learning. Active participation in peer review — as reviewer, reviewee or both — is one facet of a scholarly, professional approach to university teaching that can assist to maintain and build academic standards.

Effective peer review programs of various forms are found within the Australian higher education sector. Experience has shown, however, that the broad uptake of peer review of teaching depends on embedding the activity within the culture and policies of institutions. For this reason, the emphasis throughout this handbook is on the development of structured

“In preparing for the observation I had the chance to think very carefully about the purpose of my teaching, and make sure that my understandings and philosophy of learning were embedded and articulated in my work”
(p.85)

peer review programs that are tailored to particular organisational contexts, and supported by appropriate policies and procedures.

It is acknowledged that there are challenges and complexities in implementing effective peer review processes. As with all forms of review or evaluation, the potential tensions between differing purposes, especially between developmental and judgemental purposes, must be recognised. The purposes might include the collection of data for use in processes of confirmation of appointment or as part of the case for promotion applications. There is a strong case for establishing peer review processes that are based first and foremost on the developmental objective of helping individuals to develop insights into their teaching, for this explicit emphasis can encourage the most open sharing of views and ideas.

1.4 Using this resource

This handbook is primarily intended for university staff who are considering the implementation of a peer review program at their institution. The handbook does not offer a single prescription, rather a suite of information and resources to inform decision-making.

The handbook is presented as five complementary sections that may be read in sequence or drawn upon individually. Sections 2 and 4 also include several ‘boxes’ — short essays that elaborate or illustrate concepts related to each Section, but which may be read independently from the main body of the text. Quotes from the case studies of Section 5 are distributed throughout the handbook.

Section 1: A framework for the peer review of teaching

This section defines the core principles underpinning the resource. It describes the potential for peer review to make a greater contribution to enhancing teaching and learning in Australia. A one-page ‘framework’ diagram summarises the principles, potential benefits and conditions for effective implementation. Section 1 in many ways serves as an executive summary.

Section 2: Implementing peer review of teaching in universities

This section further describes the benefits associated with peer review of teaching, and details the principal complexities associated with implementation. Drawing upon the experience of universities around Australia, various strategies for program introduction are presented.

Section 3: Practical guides for program design

The ‘Design Guides’ featured in this section present a step-by-step approach to designing a program of peer review of teaching. Four separate guides are provided — the choice of guide depends upon the principal purpose of the planned program. Each guide presents a series of seven decision points, with recommended options and key considerations.

Section 4: Documentation and other support

This section describes the role of identified criteria in peer review, and provides an illustrative list of possibilities, based upon the five criteria employed by the ALTC for the Awards for Australian University Teaching. Section 4 also includes a practical guide to the choice of presentation format for criteria, and advice on the peer review process for program coordinators and participants.

Section 5: Case studies from Australian universities

These case studies capture ‘voices of experience’ from five universities that have in place peer review programs of different kinds. People involved either in program implementation, or as reviewer or reviewee, provide their perspectives on peer review of teaching in practice.

The development of the handbook

The development of this resource involved extensive research into peer review of teaching practice in Australian universities. Staff from 26 universities responded to a survey that explored the type of programs in use, their connection to institutional policies, and the perceived benefits and challenges. In addition, a group of people from eleven universities with extensive personal experience of peer review implementation contributed directly to the establishment of the principles, and provided input into the focus and structure of the handbook. The project also involved review of the literature on the implementation of peer review of teaching in higher education (see Appendix 1, p.112).

“Start small - build a network of support and discrete areas of the organisation willing to trial it on a small scale. Build peer review into expectations for new staff and as part of any induction/foundation work”
(p.82)

Section 2:

Implementing peer review of teaching in universities

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2.1 Describing peer review of university teaching

Who is a 'peer'?

One of the questions often asked about peer review of teaching is: “who is ‘a peer’?” The answer to this question will depend on the kind of peer review activity and the purpose for which it is undertaken. For example, for an academic department seeking to enhance teaching quality through ‘in-house’ measures, a peer would be another teaching member of the department — in this case breadth of teaching experience or seniority may or may not be taken into account when selecting peers. For a university using peer review of teaching to assess promotion applications to senior academic positions, however, reviewers may be restricted to a certain level of experience and seniority. For some programs, ‘peers’ from clinical or industry backgrounds may also be included as reviewers, in others a different perspective on teaching may be provided by choosing peers from a different faculty or discipline. The colleagues appropriate to act as peer reviewers thus depend on the kind of program being used and for what purpose.

Initially, some academics may not be confident of their capacity to review the work of their peers, for they may underestimate the depth of their tacit knowledge of teaching and learning in their field (see also p.16).

What teaching activities can peer review cover?

As described in Section 1, one of the benefits of peer review of teaching is its potential to provide feedback on a broad range of teaching activities. Classroom observation has been the most common focus of peer review. Curriculum design, clinical teaching, fieldwork, online instruction and assessment practices can all be the subject of peer review. This list is by no means exhaustive — any aspect of teaching practice from design, to delivery, to assessment can be the focus of peer review.

“The reviewer need not be terribly experienced as a teacher, but must have empathy for the students being taught” (p.92)

Box 1: A reflection on peer review of teaching and university cultures

The ‘closed door’: the cultures of teaching in Australian universities

In order to be effective, sustained, and accepted as a routine professional activity in a university, peer review of teaching needs to be integrated into the institution’s culture. Student evaluation, for example, has not always been a part of teaching evaluation and development. Although some academic staff may still have doubts about the validity of the results of student feedback, this has nonetheless become an accepted part of the teaching enterprise in most Australian universities.

In many ways the cultures of teaching and research in Australian universities are separate and quite different from each other. While research is the ‘public’ face of what academics do — routinely have peer reviewed and engage in collaborative and collegial practices around — teaching is, generally speaking, regarded and undertaken as a lone enterprise, done behind closed doors, inaccessible to the observation of peers. Within this ‘closed door’ culture, subjects or units are often viewed as being ‘owned’ by the person teaching them, particularly so when that person has been the subject’s architect.

Public research, private teaching

To some extent it is entirely understandable that teaching culture has assumed this veil of privacy and that a large number of academics in Australian universities have never had a colleague sit in on a class, let alone have their teaching formally reviewed. After all, face-to-face teaching does incorporate elements of personal style — social skills, the ability to build rapport, presentation skills, for example, and it is thus understandable that getting feedback from a peer on these personal elements could be challenging for many people. However, it is more difficult to argue this case for the peer review of other aspects of teaching (such as curriculum or assessment design), which do not have the same ‘personal’ connotations.

The other reason why it is not surprising that teaching does not (generally speaking) enjoy the same collegial and collaborative culture as research is that, historically and presently, it is research that is rewarded in the Australian university context. Many academic staff in Australian universities have a deep commitment to teaching and would have no objection to engaging in developmental activities such as peer review of teaching, but even they must be pragmatic about the benefits in spending time enhancing teaching if it were to be at the expense of their research.

Supporting culture change

With the growing interest in interdisciplinarity and the increase in the incidence of collaborative or ‘team’ teaching in Australian higher education, the perception that teaching resides in the ‘private’ domain of academic life may be changing. It may be that teaching is coming out into the open a little more, albeit slowly: anecdotal evidence suggests that academics who routinely engage in team teaching — such as many staff in the sciences — appear far more comfortable with the prospect of having their teaching reviewed by a peer than do academics whose teaching and research is more solitary. In addition, work being done on the teaching-research nexus (Zubrick, 2001; Baldwin, 2005; Krause *et al.*, 2008) may also result in bringing the cultures of research and teaching closer together as the productive links between the two are made more explicit to academic staff. While the cases documented in this project indicate that peer review of teaching works best in a teaching environment that is already collegial and collaborative, one of its many benefits is that it, too, has the capacity to effect culture change in ‘closed door’ teaching environments by increasing contact and communication between colleagues (see also p.19).

The nature of any culture change, especially in large and complex institutions such as universities, is that it evolves over time; however, awareness of the importance of culture and attention to strategies for supporting change is an important part of ensuring the acceptance and effectiveness of peer review of teaching activities.

One area where peer review of teaching is used less commonly is in research supervision. The nature of supervision and the prevalence of the one-to-one model in Australian universities make it a more challenging context for peer review: that is, the teaching environment is likely to be disrupted by the presence of a peer, making it difficult to gain an accurate picture of typical practice. This does not mean peer review of teaching is entirely unsuitable for research supervision, but its appropriateness would need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. For example, peer review may be useful when meetings with multiple supervisors take place, and for review of written examiners' reports or other written feedback to candidates.

What does a typical peer review of teaching program look like?

Just as there are multiple foci for review, peer review of teaching can be conducted in multiple ways and for a variety of purposes. Thus, there is no 'typical' peer review of teaching process. Programs can be voluntary or mandatory, comprise a single review or a series of rolling reviews conducted over a period of time; feedback can be given verbally, in written form or both, and so on — the variations are many. For example, peer review for the purposes of collecting information for human resources decisions such as promotion or probation may differ from a developmental process for new staff. At the same time, these programs may also share features.

The consultation process involved in developing this resource (see p.9) suggests that peer review of teaching programs and activities are frequently divided into two categories: those used for developmental or 'formative' purposes, and those used to make judgements about teaching for 'summative' purposes. However, even peer review undertaken primarily for developmental purposes will include evaluative elements, while that undertaken primarily for judgemental purposes also affords the opportunity to develop and learn. Ultimately, while some peer review of teaching activities fall obviously into one category or the other, it is probable that most sit somewhere along the spectrum between the two, incorporating aspects of both teaching development and evaluation.

"Peer review is now being run locally and is also built into the requirement of our Foundations in Learning and Teaching program for new staff"
(p.82)

Box 2: Academic standards: a growing demand for peer review of grading?

Most assessment of student learning involves an element of judgement on the part of teaching staff. A general trend toward more criterion-based university assessment in Australia belies the critical and continued importance of discretion and interpretation. Even the most fine-grained criterion-based assessment will involve judgement on the part of the assessor. Standards of achievement against criteria are rarely subject to absolute measurement.

This presents a very real challenge for universities. That is, how to successfully combine complex, 'nuanced' — and so difficult to prescribe — assessment tasks, with the need to ensure assessment reliability, and to demonstrate an adherence to agreed academic standards. How to be confident, for example, that an honours grade is determined by the quality of the work, and not by the identity of the assessor.

There is potential for peer review of teaching to contribute in this area. In accepting that academic judgement is an inherent aspect of assessment, it follows that such judgement is simply yet another teaching skill. As such, academic judgement is a skill that can benefit from peer feedback. Indeed, it might be argued that there is no better way to develop academic judgment than through feedback from peers involved in the same activity.

Peer review of grading is only one dimension of the peer review of assessment design and implementation. As stressed in this handbook, peer review of teaching is applicable to the full range of teaching activities. Peer review of grading could complement the wider peer review of all aspects of assessment design. The *Guide for Reviewing Assessment* (Harris, 2005) published by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education offers a set of key questions focussed on the creation of effective and equitable approaches to the assessment of student learning and could be used to assist academic staff to review each other's assessment practices.

2.2 The benefits and the challenges

Benefits for individuals and institutions

Peer review of teaching has the capacity to deliver a range of benefits for both individuals and the broader organisational unit and institution in which they teach. For individual staff members peer review of teaching can provide:

- feedback on teaching for developmental purposes;
- evidence for use in promotion, probation or teaching award applications;
- affirmation of good teaching practice;
- broader knowledge of the curriculum being taught by peers;
- insights into how colleagues teach and ideas for teaching;
- improved relationships with colleagues; and
- opportunities to develop skills in scholarship of teaching.

Staff who have undertaken peer review of teaching activities have commented that the most profound benefits have resulted from their role as reviewer and the opportunity to learn about their colleagues' teaching (Bell, 2001).

For the organisational unit and/or the institution there are also benefits in implementing peer review of teaching programs. Using both peer review and student evaluation mechanisms can increase the volume and broaden the focus of information about teaching available to the institution or unit. This, in turn, may provide a more robust picture of teaching for the analysis of common areas that may require professional development and, thus, a more informed foundation for the design of strategies for teaching development.

Importantly, the introduction of peer review of teaching programs can send clear messages to both internal and external stakeholders that the institution or organisational unit considers the quality of teaching a priority. Peer review can assist in both raising the status of teaching among academic staff as well as displaying a demonstrated commitment

"Observing someone else provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my own teaching and my role in the learning process"
(p.85)

"There seems to have been an increase in the sharing of good teaching practices as a result of the pairings varying every semester, with innovative teaching approaches becoming more apparent across the department"
(p.89)

to the development of teaching to external stakeholders such as prospective students, and audit and accreditation bodies.

Peer review of teaching has many benefits; however, it need not and should not displace student evaluation methods, which are a valuable part of the process of gathering information about teaching. Neither does peer review of teaching replace mentoring schemes or academic development programs; on the contrary, it may be used as one feature within such a program. Peer review of teaching is a complementary method of teaching evaluation and development that is at its most useful when used as one element in a broader strategy for the enhancement of teaching.

Recognising the concerns of staff

Heavy workloads and limited time are challenges identified by academic staff, and these may be an impediment to engaging in peer review of teaching activities. But the reluctance of staff to undertake peer review can also stem from other, less obvious, reasons. A lack of confidence in the collegiality of their immediate teaching environment can make some staff fear an overly judgemental review process while the suspicion that the results of peer review will be used solely for managerial purposes of accountability or to 'get rid' of people are common reasons behind a reluctance to participate.

In addition, as peer review of teaching has not, in the past, been extensively practised in Australian universities, many teaching staff are unfamiliar with the process of both reviewing and having their teaching reviewed by colleagues, as well as the benefits possible. Thus, even long-serving academics may never have had a colleague attend a class or look over teaching materials, even on an informal basis.

Staff concerns about peer review of teaching are both understandable and valid, and the sensitivities involved in the peer review process should always be considered during the design stage of any peer review of teaching program.

"I went into the process with an open mind, but was still a bit intimidated — this is human nature, I told myself, and I would simply have to get over that in order for this to proceed and benefits perhaps to arise"
(p.91)

Getting the policies right

The second area of challenge in implementing peer review of teaching programs relates to organisational issues, particularly the link between policy and practice. In order for peer review of teaching to be implemented in universities in any sustained and coherent way, it needs to be embedded within institutional policy frameworks. The challenge here lies in identifying the relevant policy connections and amending policy accordingly to support peer review of teaching. The extent to which this is necessary depends largely on the organisational context: while a single academic department will need to consider policy issues, these considerations may not be as wide-ranging as those for institution-wide implementation.

2.3 Responsibility, collegiality and leadership

Ultimately, regardless of program or purpose, for peer review of teaching to work well it must be carried out in an atmosphere of trust and respect; in short, it needs a collegial environment to be effective (Handel, 1999; Bell, 2005). Reviewers have an ethical responsibility to approach the evaluation of colleagues with sensitivity and respect. This does not mean refraining from a critical approach; rather, being aware and respectful of what is at stake for a teacher both professionally and personally and always acting honestly and ethically in the process of review.

While it is important for individuals to approach review of their colleagues' teaching in a collegial manner, the workplace and teaching culture of the institution or organisational unit also plays a crucial part in the support of positive and productive peer review of teaching activities. Although local academic workplaces have their own unique cultures and conventions that are the product of a number of variables, there are ways an organisational unit can assist in creating a climate conducive to collegial peer review of teaching.

"A collegial environment where critical self-review is regarded as 'normal and expected' behaviour, valued and rewarded, was established"
(p.108)

Box 3: Academic CVs and peer review of teaching

The purposes of peer review of teaching are seldom solely, or even primarily, to provide 'evidence' of teaching ability or accomplishments. Nonetheless the information gathered and documented during peer review is potentially highly valuable for individuals who are compiling teaching portfolios, nominating for teaching awards or preparing documentation for institutional human resource management processes, such as confirmation/tenure applications and promotion applications.

Whereas research performance has quite well-established quantitative indicators, such as the number and nature of publications and grants, teaching achievements are arguably more subjective and certainly fewer quantitative metrics have been developed. Building and defending a case for effectiveness or excellence as a university teacher is therefore a more challenging task than it is for research performance, at least in terms of the evidence that is collated and presented to support claims that are being made.

The information from peer review of teaching can thus be a rich complement to the other forms of career information that might be presented in academic *curriculum vitae* (CVs) and related documents. Data from student and graduate evaluation of teaching and courses has to some extent been used to compensate for the shortfall in quantitative data on teaching performance. This is partly because student evaluation data are often quantitative and allow comparisons to be made across courses and between individuals. But the data from student evaluation of teaching is an imperfect measure of teaching performance and comparisons or judgements made solely on this basis offer only one perspective.

Despite the potential value of peer review 'data', the inclusion of information from peer review in an application for an academic position or a nomination for a teaching award needs to be done with care. As noted elsewhere, peer review of teaching is not commonplace in academic life. As a result there are few traditions and norms to be followed in reporting and interpreting the information. Information from peer review needs to be incorporated judiciously by people who are using this to support their claims; equally, information from peer review needs to be interpreted carefully by selection panels and similar bodies.

Context is everything here. There are limits to the usefulness of any generalised statements about the place of peer review of teaching in institutional processes, especially the processes that universities have for making appointments, tenure decisions or academic promotion. Universities have highly distinctive policies and procedures, which may include differing criteria for tenure/promotion, differing requirements for the structure of written applications and differing expectations with regard to the nature of evidence that can be used to support the claims individuals make about their academic achievements. The specific requirements of institutional policies need to be examined.

It is possible nonetheless to identify some broad principles, thinking particularly of promotion applications:

- *Teaching activities and achievements are important in academic careers.* An academic's teaching activities and achievements are increasingly expected to be a component of confirmation/promotion applications. Promotion in higher education is no longer principally about research performance. Though research achievements and recognition and standing as a researcher are indeed important, in the case of many universities the contribution to teaching and learning is placed on an equal footing with research performance in the criteria for promotion.
- *Teaching achievements need to be considered within the context of all other academic activities.* The relationships and interactions between teaching and learning, research, community engagement or knowledge transfer and administrative service to universities are highly important and as a general rule individuals should emphasise the points of connection and synergies between them. In other words, academic careers are to some extent holistic despite the tendency to partition the various activities for CV purposes.
- *The rigorous, systematic use of information is essential.* Universities typically and appropriately expect high levels of rigour with regard to the claims made in promotion applications and require supporting evidence or verification by a head of department, Dean or colleague in a similar position (see Box 4, p.20).

Assuming collective responsibility for teaching

Academics may regard peer review of teaching with suspicion or anxiety when first introduced to the idea of undertaking it, particularly if it is aimed at enhancing the quality of teaching. They may feel as though it is implicated that their teaching performance is of concern, and may therefore not participate as fully or enthusiastically as they might.

The consultations undertaken in the development of this resource identified cases where such concerns were allayed by the organisational unit adopting a collective approach to the implementation of peer review of teaching and the improvement of teaching. Thus, while peer review may still take place on a one-to-one basis, there is a broad understanding that the process is being undertaken collectively — and often reciprocally — and the responsibility for enhancing teaching is shared by all members of the teaching community. Ultimately, a high level of communication — the provision of information seminars and written materials, for example — and clear guidelines about how peer review will take place are essential.

Fostering collegiality

One of the many benefits of peer review of teaching is that it has the potential to affect the culture of teaching by increasing the opportunities for staff to engage in structured reflection and conversations about teaching with their colleagues (see also Box 1, p.12). While these conversations will take place as part of individual review processes, they can be augmented by broader discussions at the level of the organisational unit. For example, good results have been reported by heads of department who have instituted department-wide debriefing sessions to discuss both the results of the peer review of teaching process as well as the process itself: this may also be done as part of broader discussions about teaching. These discussions both reinforce the idea of the collective responsibility for teaching as well as offering staff the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process about future peer review activities.

“There needs to be engagement at a range of levels if the program is to be effective”
(p.103)

“In a broader sense I think it assisted in building collegiality: I am relatively new to the university and the experience provided me with the opportunity to work with others outside my teaching area”
(p.83)

Box 4: Advice on the use and interpretation of peer review information as ‘evidence’

Suggestions for including information from peer review of teaching in applications for confirmation, promotion, or teaching awards

1. Develop a statement of your objectives as a university teacher and your educational beliefs. Relate the information presented in your application to this statement.
2. Treat the information from peer review as one element of information presented — it should have a standing on a par with other information provided on teaching achievements and activities, and should be neither elevated above other data nor presented apologetically.
3. Explain in appropriate detail the context in which the peer review took place. This is necessary to assist with the interpretation of the information. Explain the processes, their purposes and any limits to the scope of the peer review activity. It is important to indicate, for example, whether the peer review was voluntary or mandatory and whether it was based on specified criteria or criteria negotiated by reviewer(s) and reviewee. Stress the systematic way in which peer review processes have taken place and the resulting information has been documented.
4. Present the information from peer review even-handedly: identify both strengths and areas for attention if these have been identified through peer review processes.
5. Comment on any action you have taken following peer review, such as enhancements to curriculum, teaching methods or assessment as a result of peer feedback, and the effects of these.
6. ‘Triangulate’ the information from peer review with information from other sources; that is, weave peer review information along with other information

Suggestions for interpreting information from peer review of teaching in applications for confirmation, promotion, or teaching awards

1. Be open to considering information from peer review to be as valid and reliable as information from other sources. Peer review may be conducted by highly experienced, expert teachers.
2. Remember that peer review can take many forms. Some knowledge of the nature of the peer review processes employed is necessary for interpreting the information. It is a reasonable expectation that applicants have offered sufficient explanation of the peer review in which they have participated for the information they have provided on their teaching achievements to be appropriately interpreted. Key questions might be: how was the reviewer chosen?; what is the relationship of the reviewer to the reviewee?
3. Peer review ‘data’ are likely to be qualitative and subjective. This does not undermine their value. In fact, the qualitative and context-sensitive character of peer review information are potentially rich assets in this context — and a distinguishing feature in comparison with standardised student evaluation questions.
4. The information from peer review is unlikely to be quantitative and rarely will it lend itself to direct comparisons between colleagues. Be cautious about any information that purports to ‘rate’ a staff member against colleagues.
5. Peer review processes may not be focused solely on face-to-face teaching. Peer review of teaching can be quite wide-ranging and may embrace curriculum planning, resource development and assessment design. One of the strengths of peer review is that it may consider the integrated package of decisions and activities that surround an individual’s teaching and their teaching career.
6. Look for any actions individuals may have taken following peer review, such as enhancements to curriculum, teaching methods or assessment as a result of critical feedback.
7. In the overall assessment of an individual’s case, integrate the information from peer review with information provided from other sources.

Leadership and peer review of teaching

While the decision for an institution, faculty, school or department to adopt peer review of teaching is likely to fall to the leadership of that organisational unit, some academic staff may be reticent to accept evaluation and development programs that are imposed from above or are regarded as simply tools for excessive and unnecessary accountability and managerialism. Thus, including staff in the decision-making process about how peer review of teaching will be conducted should significantly assist the 'buy-in' of staff to the program and, consequently, affect the degree to which they participate effectively and productively.

Leaders of organisational units who are implementing peer review of teaching programs should also consider their own involvement in the program. The status of the peer review process will be significantly enhanced if the leader of the unit also participates.

2.4 Strategies for effective program introduction

While there are inevitable challenges in implementing peer review of teaching in universities, these can be met through the development of an approach that takes into account the three strands of policy, practice and culture. A survey of Australian universities' peer review of teaching activities (see p.9) provides insight into some of the conditions conducive to the successful introduction of peer review of teaching programs.

Developing appropriate guidelines and policy connections

Staff may be encouraged to engage in peer review of teaching activities if there are incentives for them to do so; that is, if the results of peer review of teaching activities are beneficial or even necessary for promotion, probation or other recognition. Embedding peer review of teaching in university policy and guidelines elevates the status of the activity, giving it credibility and meaning. Aligning peer review of teaching with the institution's policy and process framework demonstrates that the institution takes the validity of peer review of teaching evidence seriously.

"The department set aside time at its annual planning day to discuss whether or not to adopt a peer review program, and, if the answer was yes, what form it would take"
(p.88)

"The university's formal confirmation of appointment/probation processes have been adapted to allow data from the peer review process to be incorporated successfully into the decision-making."
(p.109)

Box 5: A description of peer review in academic development programs

Peer review of teaching is sometimes used in teaching development programs for staff, including both short professional development courses, foundations for university teaching courses, and the increasingly widespread graduate certificate programs in university teaching.

The ways in which peer review of teaching is used in these programs varies. In some programs it involves informal review and feedback on 'demonstrations' of teaching, between pairs or small groups within the program. Some programs include more formal review and feedback from discipline or Department/School colleagues and/or academic development colleagues, with the review taking place in actual teaching contexts.

Some of the many decision points to be considered when introducing peer review of teaching into academic development programs are described below.

The purposes

More often than not, due to the nature of such programs, the primary focus of a peer review component is likely to be developmental. However, once participants have had structured opportunities to receive and give feedback on each other's teaching and act on feedback they have received to make amendments and improvements to their teaching, a program may also include an assessment task that relies in part or in full on peer review in some way.

Whether the purpose is to provide developmental opportunities or a summative judgement for assessment, the review and feedback would ideally be focused on what the individual is doing well, so that this will continue and be further enhanced, as well as identifying areas that may need some attention or improvement.

The reviewers

In some cases, peer review will be carried out by fellow participants in the program. In other cases, the reviewer will be an academic developer who is either coordinating or teaching into the program. In other cases still, the reviewer will be a more experienced colleague in the reviewee's department or school, or, perhaps, from another department or school.

It is also possible to have a combination of reviewers. Decisions about who will act as the reviewer will depend on many factors, including the purposes of the review, whether or not the review is part of a formal assessment requirement of a certificate program, and other contextual factors.

Where a decision is taken to involve participants in reviewing each other's teaching, as in all cases of peer review of teaching, the arrangements will need to be handled sensitively. Early career academic staff may not have the teaching experience to support them in the role of reviewer, and staff who do not have prior experience of peer review of teaching will find the process challenging. If early career academics are to provide peer review, they will benefit from significant preparation and support in order to feel confident and to provide competent and useful review and comment to their peers.

Care should be taken by coordinators to ensure that matters of gender, culture, age, seniority and other factors likely to influence participants' perceptions of the processes and outcomes of peer review are very carefully managed. Ideally, participants are involved in the process of nominating their reviewer(s). In all cases where reciprocal peer review is employed, issues around confidentiality will need to be discussed and agreement reached among the group about what can, and cannot, be shared beyond the reviewer and reviewee.

Focus of the review

There is merit in involving participants in choosing the areas of focus for the review of their teaching. In addition, engaging the group in a discussion, beforehand, about the criteria to be used to frame the review is valuable — not only in terms of clarity and shared understanding, but also in terms of generating discussion about what constitutes effective teaching.

Monitoring, feedback and assessment

It is important to monitor the peer review activities within the program to ensure compatibility of reviewer and reviewee, effective process and outcomes. This may be done informally through e-mail or verbally, or more formally through requiring the submission of progress reports. Where progress reports are required the coordinator is in a position to give feedback to participants on their reflections.

Where peer review activities and/or reports on peer review activities are required as assessment tasks, for example reports on individual observations, critical reflections, or portfolios that incorporate peer review, assessment criteria should be well defined.

Given some of the sensitivities around peer review of teaching, it is important that the institution or organisational unit establishes clear guidelines governing the use of the results of peer review. This includes how peer review reports are used and who has access to them, but extends to such areas as the way human resources committees consider peer review of teaching evidence as part of promotion and probation cases. Institutions might also consider the benefits of involving the staff union in developing policies and guidelines: it may, for instance, be appropriate for peer review of teaching activities to be included in enterprise bargaining discussions.

Ultimately, embedding peer review of teaching in broader university policy and processes adds significantly to the likelihood of its gradual acceptance as part of an organisation's teaching environment. If peer review exists in isolation from the institution's existing policy mechanisms, it is significantly less likely to gain purchase and is thus less likely to be taken up as a regular part of teaching evaluation and development activities.

‘Staged’ introduction of peer review of teaching

As noted earlier, because peer review of teaching has not, in the past, been used extensively in Australian universities, many teaching staff are unfamiliar with the process and associated benefits of having their teaching reviewed by colleagues. This lack of familiarity can result in a reluctance to participate in peer review. For this reason, introducing peer review of teaching in stages can provide an opportunity for teaching staff to gradually become more familiar with the process, encourage a developmental climate for peer review, and may result in increased engagement into the future.

One approach to staged introduction is to begin with voluntary programs, and introduce mandatory participation at a later date. This can encourage acceptance, as even staff who elect not to participate initially are likely to hear favourable reports about the experience from their colleagues who do engage in the voluntary program.

A second form of staged introduction involves implementation of peer review programs for particular staff groups or units, with a view to broadening the scope of the program over time. For example, the first

“Peer review could potentially be a negative experience but it doesn't have to be! It can be a very positive experience that, if the preparation is in place, provides a valuable method of evaluation”
(p.86)

“Adopt a longer period of establishing peer review as a purely formative process prior to any extension into formal probation/promotion processes — maybe three years or so to get it established and valued by the participants for its primary purpose”
(p.109)

stage might involve implementation in a small number of volunteer departments or schools, gradually broadening the number program as interest is generated in other units. Another approach would be to offer all new staff in a particular school or faculty the opportunity to engage in peer review of teaching — with experienced colleagues acting as reviewers — with all staff then encouraged to participate in the following year/semester.

Introducing peer review through inclusion in academic development programs

One effective way to disseminate knowledge and experience of peer review of teaching throughout an institution is to include peer review activities and experiences within targeted programs for new staff or for those looking to develop advanced teaching skills. There are cases where staff who have undertaken peer review of teaching activities as part of accredited programs in university teaching have subsequently proposed and assisted in coordinating successful programs in their home departments (e.g. Case study 2, p.87). The more early-career staff that undertake peer review, the more likely it is that in the long-term, peer review of teaching will gain broad acceptance and be undertaken as a matter of course.

“This year peer review is being offered to staff who are completing the university’s Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education. These members of staff have found it to be a useful and constructive way of developing and reflecting on teaching and learning”
(p.102)

Peer review of teaching ‘champions’

Research undertaken in the preparation of this resource (see p. 9) shows that, in Australian universities, peer review of teaching activities and programs have been most successful when a particular staff member has invested effort into coordinating and supporting the implementation. This has been the case at all levels: in departments, schools, faculties and institution-wide. In some instances this ‘champion’ of peer review of teaching has undertaken this on their own initiative through a personal interest in peer review, while there are also examples of senior management nominating an individual to develop and implement a program.

Appointing one or more members of staff (depending on the scale of the program) to oversee the process of implementation appears to aid uptake of peer review significantly. As well as having a staff member who can advise on and support implementation, it also demonstrates that the organisational unit is committed to the process.

Management-level support

Support from relevant senior management also emerged from the survey results as a common element in the successful implementation of peer review of teaching programs. This is obviously important because it lends legitimacy to peer review, but management-level support also assists in the process of policy amendment and approval and the consequent embedding of peer review of teaching in the organisational unit’s policy and procedural framework.

While management backing for institutional programs of peer review of teaching is crucial, such support comes with a caveat: many academic staff may be resistant to mechanisms that are imposed from ‘top-down’, suspecting them of being for managerial purposes only. Involving teaching staff in the design of programs and consulting them about how peer review of teaching will take place may encourage them to engage in peer review activities.

“The early engagement of faculties in the peer review process would appear to be critical to the success of achieving broad uptake. Faculties need to have control over the process to ensure they see the model proposed as being valid and worthwhile. Academics need to know that all the documents completed as part of the review of their teaching will be regarded as confidential”
(p.103)

Section 3:

Practical guides for program design

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3.1 The value of structured and embedded programs

As discussed in Section 2, peer review of teaching can benefit individuals in a variety of ways. Peer review can provide affirmation and encouragement, and also insights that lead to improvement and further teaching development. The literature and the consultation process involved in this project suggest that where academics do actively engage in peer review it is usually within specific peer review of teaching programs. Given the competing demands on their time, academics need to be convinced of the value of peer review and provided with the appropriate support and incentives to participate.

Individuals may be more inclined to engage in peer review of teaching where it is recognised, endorsed and supported by their institution as an integral aspect of academic scholarship. This requires that peer review be incorporated into the appropriate institutional policies and guidelines. It also requires that programs be appropriate to the particular teaching contexts and needs of individuals. Institutions may implement different programs at different times, in different parts of the university, or for different staff. Such programs complement the informal yet beneficial peer review initiated by individuals.

The benefits to institutions extend beyond the sum benefit to individuals. Peer review can promote the development of a scholarly and collegial teaching environment, where the quality of teaching is recognised as a collective, professional responsibility.

Peer review may be used to complement broader strategies for teaching development, for example, through focus on particular priority areas. It can provide new forms of evidence to support the recognition and reward of good teaching, and to identify aspects of teaching in need of improvement. In addition, staff groups with specific needs can be effectively supported through tailored programs of peer review. Two such groups are staff new to university teaching and staff on sessional appointments.

“The university has taken significant interest in the peer review process and is considering increasing its availability to staff in all faculties” (p.109)

“Some acknowledgement needs to be made of the validity of a collaborative and formative peer review of teaching process, by both staff and management. Only then will teachers see it as a priority and commit to being involved” (p.103)

Guide A

Designing a program for the purpose of enhancing the teaching environment

The emphasis is on encouraging a more open teaching culture, where discussion and sharing of ideas about teaching practice become commonplace.

Programs with this as the principal purpose are likely to involve all teaching staff within an organisation unit (e.g. department) in reciprocal or group review, and to focus on aspects of teaching which are of priority to the unit as well as to the individual. Ideally, individual reviewees determine what is done with any written feedback they receive.

pages 32 -37

Guide B

Designing a program for the purpose of raising the standard of teaching quality

The emphasis is on collecting evidence for recognising and rewarding excellent teaching, and/or for providing feedback and support for improvement as appropriate.

Programs with this as the principal purpose are likely to be institution-wide, and directly linked to human resources policies. They may also be linked to teaching award programs and other forms of special recognition. There is likely to be a requirement for written reports to be made available to heads of units or those involved in providing teaching and learning support for staff.

pages 38-43

3.2 Four design guides: step-by-step planning

There are many specific decisions to be made in the design of a peer review of teaching program and, therefore, many possibilities in terms of the resulting program structure. This section presents a range of step-by-step guides to assist with decision-making during this design process.

The Design Guides A to D each address the following seven key decision points:

1. Whose teaching will be reviewed?
2. What will be the policy regarding participation?
3. What will be reviewed?
4. Who will the reviewers be?
5. What form will the review process take?
6. What reporting will take place?
7. What type of follow up will occur after completion of the peer review process?

The four guides differ in that each is broadly based on a different primary purpose, as described in the overview panel above.

Guide C

Designing a program specifically for new staff

The emphasis is on introducing new staff to the teaching environment, supporting their successful transition, and/or assisting them to prepare for confirmation, as appropriate.

Programs for new staff are likely to involve reciprocal review of classroom teaching, and to involve people teaching in similar contexts or subject areas. Such programs may also form part of broader programs such as foundation or mentoring programs, and so include input from staff in academic development units.

pages 44 -49

Guide D

Designing a program specifically for sessional teaching staff

The emphasis is on ensuring that staff with short term and part time appointments are well equipped and supported in their various teaching roles.

Programs designed specifically for sessional staff are likely to involve pairing new staff with more experienced people with a similar role and teaching in the same subject (e.g. fellow tutors in a chemistry program). Such programs complement induction programs for sessional staff, and are designed to accommodate the restricted time typically available to part time employees.

pages 50-55

These guides are not prescriptions. Rather, at each of the seven decision points, options, recommendations, and considerations are presented that align with the overall primary purpose. The four guides therefore provide parallel entry points to program design.

Guides A and B both seek to enhance the quality of university teaching. They differ in that A seeks primarily to effect a change in the teaching culture, with the assumption that this will ultimately be conducive to enhanced performance. In contrast, B is focussed on raising teaching standards more directly through the collection of evidence, reward and targeted academic development.

Guides C and D each focus on particular staff groups. While both new staff and sessional staff may be included in programs of the type described by Guides A and B, programs designed specifically for these groups are likely to differ in their priorities and processes. The inclusion of Guides C and D also recognises the trend among universities to concentrate peer review programs around such specific needs, whether or not the institution actively encourages more comprehensive involvement in peer review.

Any of the guides may be used to plan institution-wide peer review programs, or for more local initiatives such as department or faculty-based programs.

Policy Point Key

For use with Design Guides A-D (see Step 2, p.31)

- PP1** As incentive to engage in ongoing professional development, staff who complete a program for new staff might receive credit towards other academic development programs, such as a foundations program or a graduate certificate in university teaching. A policy for granting credit might need to be developed.
- PP2** If implementing a mandatory program with exemptions, a policy for exemption from participation will need to be developed. Aspects such as years of teaching experience or evidence of teaching excellence may be considered as criteria, as might completion of teaching qualifications such as a graduate certificate in university teaching. The body or person who is authorised to grant exemptions may need to be identified.
- PP3** In order to encourage staff to undertake peer review of teaching, consideration may be given to having peer review activities acknowledged in the workload model. This is particularly important if the program requires selected staff to undertake specific training in order to be reviewers.
- PP4** If records/reports from peer review of teaching are collected at the level of organisational unit or centrally, policies/guidelines will need to be developed regarding how the reports will be used and stored, and for how long they will be retained.
- PP5** Promotion guidelines and/or policies may need to be altered to include peer review of teaching reports as a source of evidence. Providing evidence from peer review activities may be compulsory (as student evaluations are in many promotion policies) or may be listed as a possible source of evidence of teaching scholarship and the quality of teaching.
- PP6** If peer review of teaching reports are to be used in confirmation and performance appraisal processes, guidelines will need to be developed regarding whether staff can elect to have these reports included in the process, if this is a decision of the head of the organisational unit, or if inclusion of peer review of teaching reports is compulsory.
- PP7** If peer review of teaching reports are to be included in confirmation, promotion and/or teaching award processes, alignment between practice and policy will need to be achieved; that is, the process undergone in the peer review of teaching program should articulate with relevant policies. Thus guidelines will need to be determined regarding:
- who selects the reviewers;
 - on what basis;
 - training of reviewers;
 - how many are required;
 - in what time period the reviews must have taken place (e.g. no more than a certain number of years prior to the application being submitted); and
 - how many reviews may be requested.

How to use the design guides

Step 1: Identify the aims behind introduction of a program of peer review of teaching

The particular aims will be influenced by the organisational context, and by the priorities of those responsible for the initiative. This may involve institution-level decisions and broad strategic planning, or instigation may be more local, involving heads of units or individual staff members. Academic development staff may be directly involved in the design of some programs, particularly when the peer review program forms part of ‘foundation’ (see Appendix 2, p.115) or other teaching-related programs.

Step 2: Using the guide most appropriate to the particular aims, consider each of the decision points presented

The options most relevant to the stated purpose are highlighted at each of the decision points, and related considerations explained. With this information, and with knowledge of the organisational context, the most appropriate options should be identified — even if these are not always among the highlighted recommendations.

While the decision points are presented in a logical order, it is not necessary for decisions to be made in strict sequence.

At appropriate points, reference is made to policy-related considerations. These ‘policy points’, decoded in the Policy Point Key (p.30), highlight the potential to embed the program into organisational culture through appropriate policy support.

*“Discussions were also held with representatives of the university administration about ways of including evidence of teaching quality, based on peer review activity, for probation/confirmation of appointment and promotion. Subsequent changes to university policy enabled this to take place”
(p.108)*

Guide A:

Designing a program for the purpose of enhancing the teaching environment

The emphasis is on encouraging a more open teaching culture, where discussion and sharing of ideas about teaching practice is commonplace.

Programs with this as the principal purpose are likely to involve all teaching staff within an organisation unit (e.g. department) in reciprocal or group review, and to focus on aspects of teaching which are of priority to the unit as well as to the individual. Ideally, individual reviewees determine what happens to any written feedback they receive.

*“In addition to the discipline of thinking critically about lecturing and lecturing styles for the purposes of assessing a colleague and providing feedback, I found it very informative to see how others within my department approached undergraduate teaching”
(p.90)*

Guide A:

Designing a program for the purpose of enhancing the teaching environment

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Points
see page 30

1 Whose teaching will be reviewed?

All staff with teaching responsibilities (which may include research fellows, sessional teaching staff, and professional staff involved in teaching)

Staff new to teaching including sessional staff

Staff new to teaching, excluding sessional staff

Staff new to the organisational unit (e.g. university, faculty, department) and involved in teaching

Staff enrolled in particular academic development programs (e.g. foundation program; Graduate Certificate in University Teaching)

Staff preparing for confirmation or promotion

The inclusion of *all* staff who teach (including senior staff and heads of department) acknowledges that quality of teaching is a responsibility shared by all.

2 What will be the policy regarding participation?

PP2 PP3

Optional

Strongly encouraged

Mandatory

While mandatory programs might ensure that all staff participate, there is a risk that people engage only in order to comply, and that this runs counter to generating a positive teaching culture.

Where a program is voluntary, 'embedding' peer review in university policies can provide staff with incentives to participate; for example, by ensuring that peer review of teaching is listed as a source of evidence for use in staff appraisal and promotion, and other situations requiring documented evidence of teaching effectiveness.

Involvement as a reviewer should also be recognised in such policies; for example, as evidence of 'academic leadership' in promotion policies.

If there are dedicated programs for sessional staff, their participation in additional programs might best be made optional, rather than expected.

(see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20)

Guide A:

Designing a program for the purpose of enhancing the teaching environment

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

3 What will be reviewed?

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the reviewee

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the organisational unit

A combination of the above

Face-to-face teaching only

Peer review of teaching encompasses all teaching activities, including curriculum design, choice of assessment, face-to-face teaching, and the design of web-based resources. Acknowledging this in an institution's personnel policies by extending peer review beyond what occurs in the classroom may assist with raising the status of teaching (see also p.61).

An institution or organisational unit may encourage reviewees to choose their own focus for review, while adding a broad priority area for additional consideration by reviewers.

4 Who will the reviewers be?

PP3 PP7

Local or external?

Colleagues within the same organisational unit

Colleagues from the same discipline or subject area

Colleagues from a different unit, discipline or institution

Staff from a teaching and learning unit

External industry or clinical professionals

A select group or all participants?

All participants in the program are involved as both reviewer and reviewee

Only staff with training in conducting peer review

Only senior staff

Who decides?

Reviewee

Coordinator of program

Head of department

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Each of these reviewers will bring a different perspective to the review. Choosing reviewers from within the same organisational unit (e.g. the academic department) has the benefit of increasing communication between staff about teaching and facilitating a wider understanding of the broader curriculum as staff have the opportunity to see what and how their closest colleagues are teaching.

Focusing peer review on local communities of practice, at least initially, is likely to be most conducive to strengthening the teaching culture

With the appropriate guidelines and support, there is much to be gained by involving all staff as reviewers: there are the benefits gained by the reviewer in terms of insight into a colleague's teaching, and the process is more likely to contribute to a collegial teaching environment.

(see also p.71 and Box 6, p.72)

A program coordinator can assist with planning, logistics, and providing guidance as required. Ideally, the coordinator would be familiar with the unit's culture, structure and people, be trusted by them, and therefore sensitive to the requirements of the unit and needs and priorities of individuals.

Guide A: Designing a program for the purpose of enhancing the teaching environment

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

5 What form will the review process take?

PP7

Will it involve reciprocal partnerships?

Colleagues exchange roles as reviewer-reviewee

Non-reciprocal

How many reviewers per session/cycle?

One peer

Two or more peers

Mixed group of colleagues, in various capacities (e.g. a departmental colleague and a member of a teaching & learning unit)

What is the timing of reviews?

Conducted at regular intervals, such as annually or each semester

At the discretion of individuals, i.e. at the reviewee's request

To be completed within the first year of arrival at the university

To be completed within the first year of commencing teaching

As determined by the timing of the associated academic development program

As determined by the timing of associated confirmation, probation or appraisal processes.

How many review sessions?

This number may vary, depending upon the time period allotted and the number of reviewers involved.

Reciprocal peer review is particularly conducive to the discussion and sharing of ideas.

There are advantages to involving more than one person, in terms of multiple perspectives and encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for the teaching. However, this may not be practicable, due to logistics and staff time. Pair-wise review can be equally effective.

Peer review is most likely to make a positive contribution to the teaching culture if it becomes part of the general pattern of teaching-related activities, and if it involves most staff (not only new staff, or those preparing for promotion).

The time and workload commitments of staff will need to be taken into consideration, however, when determining how frequently reviews are undertaken.

Valuable insights and reflections on teaching can be gained through a single review. However, where staff engage in a series of reviews they are supported in making changes and experimenting with their teaching. This also has benefits for developing a collegial teaching environment, and encourages sustained discussion of teaching between colleagues. The principal disadvantage of such 'rolling' reviews is the demands it places on staff time.

Decision points & options
with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

6

What reporting will take place?

PP4

Who is notified that the process/cycle has been completed?

No one

Coordinator of program

Head of organisational unit

Institution (e.g. through online human resources management system)

What happens to any written records/reports of from the review?

They are confidential; only the reviewee and reviewer retain copies

They are forwarded to the program coordinator

They are forwarded to the head of the organisational unit

They are forwarded to a central administrative office (e.g. a human resources department)

They form the basis of an assessment task within an academic development program

Unless there is some record kept, it is unlikely that high levels of participation will be achieved.

The advantages of written feedback are many: staff have a record of the process to reflect on beyond the feedback meeting; they have a record to refer back to gauge their own improvement over time; and they are able to use written reports as part of teaching portfolios (e.g., for promotion; applications for positions).

(see also Box 3, p.18)

However, the level of confidentiality of reports should be carefully considered as this is likely to significantly affect the participation and attitude of staff toward peer review.

Even if not deemed confidential as such, records and reports from peer review of teaching activities should always be handled sensitively.

Whichever option is selected, the reviewee should be provided with a copy of the reports and given an opportunity to discuss them.

Guide A: Designing a program for the purpose of enhancing the teaching environment

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

7

What type of follow up will occur after completion of the peer review process?

PP4 PP5 PP6

Any action is initiated by the reviewee

Participants in the program meet as a group to discuss the outcomes

The head of department may/will meet with the reviewee to discuss their teaching, using records/reports as appropriate

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's next performance development/appraisal process

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's confirmation process

Advice may be provided to the reviewee on support and development options offered by the teaching and learning unit, as appropriate

Written reflection on the process, and plans for further review and development

Note: may be one or a combination of the above

Peer review of teaching programs for the purposes of teaching enhancement or enhancing the collegial environment are most effective when aligned with other university policies and processes which encourage discussion about teaching.

A unit-wide meeting for discussion and debriefing following the peer review cycle can contribute to the understanding that teaching is a collective responsibility and that ongoing communication about teaching is essential.

"Do not formally link the program to the promotion or PDF process; I speculate that acceptance of the program might be an issue and that certain benefits of the program would be lost. Even if the program is informal, there still needs to be some documentation of the 'who, when, what, and where', for administration purposes. Plan to review the progress of the program in the short and medium term"
(p.89)

"Normally there is a lot of tension and anxiety around teaching and the culture in schools tends to encourage a 'closed door' approach. Peer observation is different"
(p.96)

Guide B:

Designing a program for the purpose of raising the standard of teaching quality

The emphasis is on collecting evidence for recognising and rewarding excellent teaching, and/or for providing feedback and support for improvement as appropriate.

Programs with this as the principal purpose are likely to be institution-wide, and directly linked to human resources policies. They may also be linked to teaching award programs and other forms of special recognition. There is likely to be a requirement for written reports to be made available to heads of units or those involved in providing teaching and learning support for staff.

*“There was a need to obtain data about staff performance in relation to teaching, to support applications for probation/confirmation of appointment”
(p.108)*

Guide B:

Designing a program for the purpose of raising the standard of teaching quality

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

1 Whose teaching will be reviewed?

All staff with teaching responsibilities (which may include research fellows, sessional teaching staff, and professional staff involved in teaching)

Staff new to teaching including sessional staff

Staff new to teaching, excluding sessional staff

Staff new to the organisational unit (e.g. university, faculty, department) and involved in teaching

Staff enrolled in particular academic development programs (e.g. foundation program; Graduate Certificate in University Teaching)

Staff preparing for confirmation or promotion

The inclusion of *all* staff who teach (including senior staff and heads of department) acknowledges that quality of teaching is a responsibility shared by all.

There may be a need to tailor processes and adjust timing to prioritise the needs of individuals preparing for confirmation or promotion.

2 What will be the policy regarding participation?

PP2 PP3

Optional

Strongly encouraged

Mandatory

Where a program is voluntary, 'embedding' peer review in university policies can provide staff with incentives to participate; for example, by ensuring that peer review of teaching is listed as a source of evidence for use in staff appraisal and promotion, and other situations requiring documented evidence of teaching effectiveness.

Involvement as a reviewer should also be recognised in such policies; for example, as evidence of 'academic leadership' in promotion policies.

(see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20)

If there are dedicated programs for sessional staff, their participation in additional programs might best be made optional, rather than expected/required.

Guide B:

Designing a program for the purpose of raising the standard of teaching quality

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

3 What will be reviewed?

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the reviewee

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the organisational unit

A combination of the above

Face-to-face teaching only

Peer review of teaching encompasses all teaching activities, including curriculum design, choice of assessment, face-to-face teaching, and the design of web-based resources. Acknowledging this in an institution's personnel policies by extending peer review beyond what occurs in the classroom may assist with raising the status of teaching (see also p.61).

An institution or organisational unit may encourage reviewees to choose their own focus for review, while adding a broad priority area for additional consideration by reviewers.

4 Who will the reviewers be?

PP3 PP7

Local or external?

Colleagues within the same organisational unit

Colleagues from the same discipline or subject area

Colleagues from a different unit, discipline or institution

Staff from a teaching and learning unit

External industry or clinical professionals

Each of these reviewers will bring a different perspective to the review. Choosing reviewers from within the same organisational unit (e.g. the academic department) has the benefit of increasing communication between staff about teaching and facilitating a wider understanding of the broader curriculum as staff have the opportunity to see what and how their closest colleagues are teaching. However, staff from different faculties or disciplines can bring a unique perspective to reviewing and may be more inclined to concentrate on teaching-related rather than content-related areas. For particular priority areas (e.g. assessment design) or particular subject areas (e.g. music teaching), the involvement of additional 'external' reviewers may be beneficial.

A select group or all participants?

All participants in the program are involved as both reviewer and reviewee

Only staff with training in conducting peer review

Only senior staff

Participants will have more confidence in the process if there is a professional approach to preparing people for their role as reviewer.

(see also p.71 and Box 6, p.72)

A program coordinator can assist with planning, logistics, and providing guidance as required. Ideally, the coordinator would be familiar with the unit's culture, structure and people, be trusted by them, and therefore sensitive to the requirements of the unit and needs and priorities of individuals.

Who decides?

Reviewee

Coordinator of program

Head of department

Guide B:

Designing a program for the purpose of raising the standard of teaching quality

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

5

What form will the review process take?

PP7

Will it involve reciprocal partnerships?

Colleagues exchange roles as reviewer-review

Non-reciprocal

How many reviewers per session/cycle?

One peer

Two or more peers

Mixed group of colleagues, in various capacities (e.g. a departmental colleague and a member of a teaching & learning unit)

What is the timing of reviews?

Conducted at regular intervals, such as annually or each semester

At the discretion of individuals i.e. at the reviewee's request

To be completed within the first year of arrival at the university

To be completed within the first year of commencing teaching

As determined by the timing of the associated academic development program

As determined by the timing of associated confirmation, probation or appraisal processes.

How many review sessions?

This number may vary, depending upon the time period allotted and the number of reviewers involved.

Reciprocal peer review is particularly conducive to the discussion and sharing of ideas. There is also merit, however, in encouraging the involvement of people with extensive experience and specific expertise as reviewers. Such involvement — industry-based professionals and academic development staff, for example — is unlikely to be reciprocal.

There are advantages to involving more than one person, in terms of multiple perspectives and encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for the teaching. However, this may not be practicable, due to logistics and staff time. Pair-wise review can be equally effective.

Depending upon the participant group and primary purpose of the program, the timing of peer review would be determined by the timing of the academic year and human resources processes.

Valuable insights and reflections on teaching can be gained through a single review. However, where staff engage in a series of reviews they are supported in making changes and experimenting with their teaching. The time and workload commitments of staff will need to be taken into consideration, however, when determining how frequently reviews are undertaken.

Guide B: Designing a program for the purpose of raising the standard of teaching quality

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

6

What reporting will take place?

PP4

Who is notified that the process/cycle has been completed?

No one

Coordinator of program

Head of organisational unit

Institution (e.g. through online human resources management system)

What happens to any written records/reports of from the review?

They are confidential; only the reviewee and reviewer retain copies

They are forwarded to the program coordinator

They are forwarded to the head of the organisational unit

They are forwarded to a central administrative office (e.g. a human resources department)

They form the basis of an assessment task within an academic development program

There are benefits to both the individual and the organisation of recording and monitoring participation in peer review. Individuals can authenticate claims of involvement over time, while departments and institutions can evaluate programs in terms of staff engagement, and demonstrate commitment to teaching quality more broadly (e.g. in quality assurance audits).

The advantages of written feedback are many: staff have a record of the process to reflect on beyond the feedback meeting; they have a record to refer back to gauge their own improvement over time; and they are able to use written reports as part of teaching portfolios (e.g. for promotion; applications for positions).

(see also Box 3, p.18)

However, the level of confidentiality of reports should be carefully considered as this is likely to significantly affect the participation and attitude of staff toward peer review.

Even if not deemed confidential as such, records and reports from peer review of teaching activities should always be handled sensitively.

Whichever option is selected, the reviewee should be provided with a copy of the reports and given an opportunity to discuss them.

Guide B: Designing a program for the purpose of raising the standard of teaching quality

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

7

What type of follow up will occur after completion of the peer review process?

PP4 PP5 PP6

Any action is initiated by the reviewee

Participants in the program meet as a group to discuss the outcomes

The head of department may/will meet with the reviewee to discuss their teaching, using records/reports as appropriate

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's next performance development/appraisal process

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's confirmation process

Advice may be provided to the reviewee on support and development options offered by the teaching and learning unit, as appropriate

Written reflection on the process, and plans for further review and development

Note: may be one or a combination of the above

Peer review of teaching programs for the purposes of teaching enhancement or enhancing the collegial environment are likely to be most effective when aligned with other university policies and processes which encourage discussion about teaching.

If handled appropriately, reports from peer review can make a valuable contribution to appraisal discussions, alongside reports from student evaluation.

(see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20)

"A more subtle benefit was simply the discussion — acknowledgment that teaching methods and delivery COULD be thought about more... sounds crazy coming from a lecturer, but we too quickly become concerned about the content of our lectures that we may forget about the way the information is received by students"
(p.91)

Design Guide C:

Designing a program specifically for new staff

The emphasis is on introducing new staff to the teaching environment, supporting their successful transition, and/or assisting them to prepare for confirmation, as appropriate.

Programs for new staff are likely to involve reciprocal review of classroom teaching, and to involve people teaching in similar contexts or subject areas. Such programs may also form part of broader programs such as foundation or mentoring programs, and so include input from staff in academic development units.

“We advise that for new staff, it is important to scaffold the learning of collaborative reflection through activities such as (informal) peer observation, prior to mandating processes requiring formal peer review”
(p.95)

Guide C: Designing a program specifically for new staff

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

1

Whose teaching will be reviewed?

PP1

All staff with teaching responsibilities (which may include research fellows, sessional teaching staff, and professional staff involved in teaching)

Staff new to teaching including sessional staff

Staff new to teaching, excluding sessional staff (see also Guide D)

Staff new to the organisational unit (e.g. university, faculty, department) and involved in teaching

New staff enrolled in particular academic development programs (e.g. foundation programs; graduate certificate in university teaching courses)

Staff preparing for confirmation or promotion

All staff new to teaching can benefit from the support provided by peer review of teaching. Staff new to an institution or unit benefit from peer review of teaching - irrespective of their level of teaching experience - as peer review contributes to their induction into the local teaching environment.

There may be a need to tailor processes and adjust timing to prioritise the needs of individuals preparing for confirmation.

If there are dedicated programs for sessional staff, their participation in additional 'new staff' programs may not be appropriate. This might be influenced by the timing of the respective programs, and by the nature of their employment and salary arrangements.

2

What will be the policy regarding participation?

PP2 PP3

Optional

Strongly encouraged

Mandatory

Ensuring that all new staff experience, and are supported by, peer review will assist them develop skills and will encourage the practice of teaching evaluation. It is also likely to lead to change in university teaching culture, more broadly, over time.

(see also p.24 and Box 1, p.12)

Decision points & options
with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

3

What will be reviewed?

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the reviewee

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the organisational unit

A combination of the above

Face-to-face teaching only

Peer review of teaching encompasses all teaching activities, including curriculum design, choice of assessment, face-to-face teaching, and the design of web-based resources. Acknowledging this in an institution's personnel policies by extending peer review beyond what occurs in the classroom may assist with raising the status of teaching (see also p.61).

Despite this, for staff new to teaching, support for face-to-face teaching is likely to be their highest priority. This should be acknowledged and accommodated in programs tailored to their needs.

4

Who will the reviewers be?

PP3 PP7

Local or external?

Colleagues within the same organisational unit

Colleagues from the same discipline or subject area

Colleagues from a different unit, discipline or institution

Staff from a teaching and learning unit

External industry or clinical professionals

Most programs for new staff will involve people from a range of departments and disciplines. This presents a number of possibilities for review partnerships.

There are benefits to involving more experienced colleagues from the same department, in terms of induction and mentoring. This also provides an avenue for feedback on the teaching 'content', including the appropriate academic 'level' — an area of uncertainty for many new staff.

There are also benefits to partnering new staff with peers in the same program, particularly if supported by a more experienced colleague. If they bring different disciplinary perspectives this too can be a benefit — they may be more inclined to concentrate on fundamental approaches to teaching, as the content will be unfamiliar.

(see also p.71 and Box 6, p.72)

Many new staff value the opportunity to review the teaching of a colleague (e.g. Case Study 1; Case Study 3).

While a coordinator is best placed to facilitate the program, there are several options for identifying reviewers. The program may encourage participants to choose a reviewer from their faculty, or the coordinator may work with departmental heads in developing a list of suitable reviewers from which participants might choose.

A select group or all participants?

All participants in the program are involved as both reviewer and reviewee

Only staff with training in conducting peer review

Only senior staff

Who decides?

Reviewee

Coordinator of program

Head of department

Decision points & options
with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

5

What form will the review process take?

PP7

Will it involve reciprocal partnerships?

Colleagues exchange roles as reviewer-review

Non-reciprocal

How many reviewers per session/cycle?

One peer

Two or more peers

Mixed group of colleagues, in various capacities (e.g. a departmental colleague and a member of a teaching & learning unit)

What is the timing of reviews?

Conducted at regular intervals, such as annually or each semester

At the discretion of individuals i.e. at the reviewee's request

To be completed within the first year of arrival at the university

To be completed within the first year of commencing teaching

As determined by the timing of the associated academic development program

As determined by the timing of associated confirmation, probation or appraisal processes.

How many review sessions?

This number may vary, depending upon the time period allotted and the number of reviewers involved.

Reciprocal peer review is particularly conducive to the discussion and sharing of ideas.

In addition, a priority for staff new to university teaching is to build confidence — therefore it is critically important that the relationship between reviewer and reviewee be supportive, and focussed on discussion of ideas, rather than extensive critical appraisal.

(see also p.75 and Box 7, p.72)

There are advantages to involving more than one person, in terms of multiple perspectives and encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for the teaching. However, this may not be practicable, due to logistics and staff time. Pair-wise review can be equally effective.

Programs for new staff will, by definition, involve staff during their early initial period at the university. In order to convey the importance of participation, however, it is helpful to specify the time-window for completion.

If the peer review is linked to confirmation in any way — even as a possible source of evidence that staff might choose to draw upon — there is obviously a need for the timing of confirmation to be considered in the timing of the peer review program.

Valuable insights and reflections on teaching can be gained through a single review. However, where staff engage in a series of reviews they will be supported in making changes and experimenting with their teaching. Some foundations programs have cycles of peer review and associated group discussion as a feature of the program.

(see also Box 5, p.22)

Decision points & options
with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

6

What reporting will take place?

PP4

Who is notified that the process/cycle has been completed?

No one

Coordinator of program

Head of organisational unit

Institution (e.g. through online human resources management system)

There are benefits to both the individual and the organisation of recording and monitoring participation in peer review. Individuals can authenticate claims of involvement over time, while departments and institutions can evaluate programs in terms of staff engagement, and demonstrate commitment to teaching quality more broadly (e.g. in quality assurance audits).

What happens to any written records/reports of from the review?

They are confidential; only the reviewee and reviewer retain copies

They are forwarded to the program coordinator

They are forwarded to the head of the organisational unit

They are forwarded to a central administrative office (e.g. a human resources department)

They form the basis of an assessment task within an academic development program

The advantages of written feedback are many: staff have a record of the process to reflect on beyond the feedback meeting; they have a record to refer back to gauge their own improvement over time, and they are able to use written reports as part of teaching portfolios (e.g., for confirmation; future position applications).

However, the level of confidentiality of reports should be carefully considered as this is likely to significantly affect the participation and attitude of staff toward peer review.

Even if not deemed confidential as such, records and reports from peer review of teaching activities should always be handled sensitively.

Whichever option is selected, the reviewee should be provided with a copy of the reports and given an opportunity to discuss them.

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

7

What type of follow up will occur after completion of the peer review process?

PP4 PP5 PP6

Any action is initiated by the reviewee

Participants in the program meet as a group to discuss the outcomes

The head of department may/will meet with the reviewee to discuss their teaching, using records/reports as appropriate

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's next performance development/appraisal process

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's confirmation process

Advice may be provided to the reviewee on support and development options offered by the teaching and learning unit, as appropriate

Written reflection on the process, and plans for further review and development

Note: may be one or a combination of the above

For new staff programs, there can be real benefits in a 'debrief' group meeting, where participants are invited to comment on the process, and on what they feel were the benefits to them. Creating an environment where new staff experience and are involved in the open discussion of teaching can have a positive influence on the institutional teaching environment, more broadly.

(see also Box 1, p.12)

If handled appropriately, reports from peer review can make a valuable contribution to appraisal discussions, alongside reports from student evaluation. They can be used to frame discussions of future professional development opportunities and priorities.

(see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20)

"The program is relatively informal and not linked to the performance development framework or promotion process in our department. However, individuals may opt to have their peers write reports/reviews of their teaching for inclusion in promotion applications"
(p.88)

"The greatest benefit is the sharing of ideas after the lesson. Other benefits include confirmation of a variety of approaches to teaching and learning, and receiving feedback on alternative methods"
(p.111)

Design Guide D:

Designing a program specifically for sessional teaching staff

The emphasis is on ensuring that staff with short term and part time appointments are well equipped and supported in their various teaching roles.

Programs designed specifically for sessional staff are likely to involve pairing new staff with more experienced people with a similar role and teaching in the same subject (e.g. fellow tutors in a chemistry program). Such programs complement induction programs for sessional staff, and are designed to accommodate the restricted time typically available to part time employees.

“Initially just academic staff participated in the program, but post-doctoral research staff with larger teaching loads have become involved of late, and it will soon be necessary to review whether the program should also include our casual teachers, postgraduate student demonstrators, and clinical teachers”
(p.89)

Guide D: Designing a program specifically for sessional teaching staff

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

1

Whose teaching will be reviewed?

All sessional staff with teaching responsibilities (which may include postgraduate students, and industry-based professionals from outside the institution)

Sessional staff new to teaching

Staff new to teaching, excluding sessional staff

Sessional staff new to the organisational unit (e.g. university, faculty, department) and involved in teaching

Staff enrolled in particular academic development programs (e.g. foundation program; Graduate Certificate in University Teaching)

Staff preparing for confirmation or promotion

Sessional staff might be included in peer review programs for all staff, of the type described in Design Guides A and B. However, just as foundation and academic development courses are often designed specifically for sessional teachers, specific peer review programs can also be tailored to address the needs of staff on sessional appointments.

Extending peer review programs to include all sessional teachers, not only new staff, offers additional benefits. It is recognised that sessional teaching plays an increasingly central role in universities, and yet existing institutional structures mean that sessional staff often feel isolated from the institutional teaching environment. Peer review programs can contribute to building a collegial and supportive environment for this group.

2

What will be the policy regarding participation?

PP2 PP3

Optional

Strongly encouraged

Mandatory

The sessional teaching workforce in Australian universities is highly diverse in their background, priorities, and teaching involvement. In addition, many sessional teachers have limited time available to commit to their teaching due to professional work commitments or continuing study. For these reasons, mandating peer review may be inappropriate in many situations.

For some sessional teachers, however, opportunities for professional development and to build a teaching portfolio are a high priority.

(see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20)

Guide D: Designing a program specifically for sessional teaching staff

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

3

What will be reviewed?

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the reviewee

Any aspect of teaching as nominated by the organisational unit

A combination of the above

Face-to-face teaching only

For many sessional teachers, classroom teaching is likely to be a priority. Programs need to accommodate this, while also highlighting other aspects of teaching which can benefit from peer review. In particular, sessional staff are often extensively involved in assessment - peer review of grading therefore presents many possibilities for improving the quality and coordination of assessment.

(see also Box 2, p.13)

4

Who will the reviewers be?

PP3 PP7

Local or external?

Colleagues within the same organisational unit

Colleagues from the same discipline or subject area

Colleagues from a different unit, discipline or institution

Staff from a teaching and learning unit

External industry or clinical professionals

There are benefits to basing sessional staff peer review programs within disciplines, or even courses. This helps to introduce new staff to the subject material and course objectives — induction and mentoring is an important issue for sessional teaching, where rates of staff turnover are typically high. In addition, sessional teachers within a course or discipline are likely to be teaching in a common context, such as tutorial teaching in arts, or laboratory demonstrating in chemistry. Involving experienced sessional staff is an important component of such programs.

A select group or all participants?

All participants in the program are involved as both reviewer and reviewee

Only staff with training in conducting peer review

Only senior staff

Participants generally value the opportunity to review the teaching of a colleague, and it is not uncommon for this to be described by participants as the most important aspect of peer review. Therefore there are benefits to providing all participants with an opportunity to take on the role of reviewer. Support for this role will be important, however, particularly in terms of giving feedback effectively.

(see also p.71 and Box 6, p.72)

(see also p.75 and Box 7, p.76)

Who decides?

Reviewee

Coordinator of program

Head of department

Guide D: Designing a program specifically for sessional teaching staff

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

5

What form will the review process take?

PP7

Will it involve reciprocal partnerships?

Colleagues exchange roles as reviewer-review

Non-reciprocal

Reciprocal peer review is particularly conducive to the discussion and sharing of ideas. In addition, for sessional staff teaching in the same course, there is the potential for peer review to foster sharing of specific approaches to content and teaching strategies.

How many reviewers per session/cycle?

One peer

Two or more peers

Mixed group of colleagues, in various capacities (e.g. a departmental colleague and a member of a teaching & learning unit)

There are advantages to involving more than one person, in terms of multiple perspectives and encouraging a sense of shared responsibility for the teaching. However, this may not be practicable, due to logistics and staff time. Pair-wise review can be equally effective.

What is the timing of reviews?

Conducted at regular intervals, such as annually or each semester

At the discretion of individuals i.e. at the reviewee's request

To be completed within the first year of arrival at the university

To be completed within the first year of commencing teaching

As determined by the timing of the associated academic development program

As determined by the timing of associated confirmation, probation or appraisal processes.

For sessional staff programs that involve staff cohorts teaching into the same units or courses, a semester-based approach to peer review is appropriate.

Valuable insights and reflections on teaching can be gained through a single review, however, engaging in a series of reviews may be more likely to lead to improvements in teaching.

The time and workload commitments of staff will need to be taken into consideration, however, when determining how frequently reviews are undertaken. This is particularly pertinent for sessional staff, paid on an hourly basis.

How many review sessions?

This number may vary, depending upon the time period allotted and the number of reviewers involved.

Guide D: Designing a program specifically for sessional teaching staff

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

6

What reporting will take place?

PP4

Who is notified that the process/cycle has been completed?

No one

Coordinator of program

Head of organisational unit

Institution (e.g. through online human resources management system)

What happens to any written records/reports of from the review?

They are confidential; only the reviewee and reviewer retain copies

They are forwarded to the program coordinator

They are forwarded to the head of the organisational unit

They are forwarded to a central administrative office (e.g. a human resources department)

They form the basis of an assessment task within an academic development program

There are benefits to both the individual and the organisation of recording and monitoring participation in peer review. Individuals can authenticate claims of involvement over time, while departments and institutions can evaluate programs in terms of staff engagement, and demonstrate commitment to teaching quality more broadly (e.g. in quality assurance audits).

The advantages of written feedback are many: staff have a record of the process to reflect on beyond the feedback meeting; they have a record to refer back to gauge their own improvement over time, and they are able to use written reports as part of teaching portfolios (e.g. applications for positions).

However, the level of confidentiality of reports should be carefully considered as this is likely to significantly affect the participation and attitude of staff toward peer review.

Even if not deemed confidential as such, records and reports from peer review of teaching activities should always be handled sensitively.

Whichever option is selected, the reviewee should be provided with a copy of the reports and given an opportunity to discuss them.

Guide D: Designing a program specifically for sessional teaching staff

Decision points & options with recommended options in bold

Considerations

Policy Point
see page 30

7

What type of follow up will occur after completion of the peer review process?

PP4 PP5 PP6

Any action is initiated by the reviewee

Participants in the program meet as a group to discuss the outcomes

The head of department may/will meet with the reviewee to discuss their teaching, using records/reports as appropriate

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's next performance development/appraisal process

Reports may/will be included for consideration and discussion as part of the reviewee's confirmation process

Advice may be provided to the reviewee on support and development options offered by the teaching and learning unit, as appropriate

Note: may be one or a combination of the above

Creating an environment where sessional staff experience and are involved in the open discussion of teaching can have a positive influence on the local teaching environment, and the willingness of individuals to seek further input and advice over time.

(see also Box 1, p.12)

If handled appropriately, reports from peer review can make a valuable contribution to appraisal discussions, alongside reports from student evaluation. They can be used to frame discussions of future professional development opportunities and priorities.

(see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20)

3.3 Summary of key decision points in program design

Introducing a new peer review of teaching program in a department or school can be a complex and challenging endeavour. This section describes some of the key decision points involved, decision points that form the basis of the Design Guides A to D.

Identifying the aims of the program

The first step is to identify the primary aim of the program. If the principal purpose is to enhance the teaching environment (see Guide A), there is not likely to be a need to lodge formal written report on an individual's teaching with the head of department. With such a developmental focus, the peer review process might lead to the commendation of various aspects of a peer's teaching by a colleague, and some recommendations for improvement in other areas. The feedback and discussions may be largely informal and verbal and involve exploring options for improvement (see also p.75 and Box 7, p.76).

On the other hand, if the principal focus is on raising teaching quality (see Guide B), a more formalised approach might be taken. There is likely to be a requirement for written reports to be made available to heads of units or those involved in providing teaching and learning support for staff. Some programs might adopt a purposefully judgemental approach, focusing on the levels of performance against set criteria, with less emphasis on exploring strategies for improvement.

Equally, programs might be developed for specific groups, such as new or sessional staff (see Guides C-D).

"Peer review of teaching was conceptualised as primarily and essentially a formative process to guide staff development and establish collaborative relationships"
(p.108)

Voluntary or Mandatory Program

If peer review of teaching is new to a department or school, the initial introduction of a voluntary program may lead to greater acceptance (e.g. Case study 3, p.93). This provides the opportunity for interested staff to explore the opportunities and challenges of peer review, and to informally feed their experiences back to other colleagues. Participants in well-coordinated and voluntary programs may become advocates for peer review (e.g. Case study 2, p.87), particularly if the focus of the program is developmental rather than summative. This may assist in overcoming reluctance and resistance to more widespread implementation of peer review, and to mandated participation.

If the ultimate goal is for all staff to be involved in peer review, and for this requirement to be managed through policies and reporting, a staged introduction can be helpful. For example, voluntary programs could be developed, followed by the introduction of mandatory participation for some staff groups, such as early career staff and/or subject coordinators. In this way, the peer review gradually becomes part of the culture and accepted normal practice of all academic staff. This is likely to be more effective in terms of change management than a sudden mandatory requirement for all staff to participate in a program (see also p.23).

Choosing reviewers

There are a number of decisions to be made about who will review and who will be reviewed. Once again, decisions here are interdependent on decisions in other areas. For example, decisions need to be made about whether or not the reviewer needs to be equal or higher in appointment level, or more experienced in university teaching. Neither might be important, depending upon the aims of the program. It is important that staff are involved in decisions about who is to review their teaching. This might involve individuals nominating a peer, or selecting from an available pool of reviewers. Ownership of, or at least a contribution to, this decision increases the likelihood of accepting, and acting on, peer feedback.

“Work with someone with whom you already have a professional relationship, as you really need to be able to talk to the person and enter the process with the belief that you both have something to offer” (p.86)

Reciprocal or one-way peer review

Another central decision is whether peer review will be one-way or reciprocal. With a one-way program, participants do not exchange roles as reviewer-reviewee. The reviewer may or may not have their own teaching reviewed at all — such as if the reviewer is a professional colleague external to the university, or a member of an academic development unit. Programs of reciprocal peer review typically involve pairs or groups of three. There are benefits to this form of peer review in terms of building trust and encouraging discussion of ideas between participants. It encourages a collegial atmosphere and open discussion, reducing the focus on assessment of performance.

Verbal and/or written reports

When the focus of a peer review program is formative and developmental, it may be that feedback from a reviewee is primarily, or completely, verbal. A written report may or may not accompany or supplement the face-to-face or telephone discussion, however some form of written feedback is highly recommended wherever possible. A confidential written report for the reviewee can be very helpful for reflection, and for incorporation into a teaching portfolio (see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20)

Requirement to lodge a copy of the report 'on file' with the head of department or program coordinator, is likely to affect the nature and content of the report. The reviewer will be influenced by the possibility that the information might be used for management purposes beyond the control of the reviewee. They are likely to be more circumspect and 'guarded' in their comments than they would otherwise be, limiting the usefulness of the feedback to the reviewee.

“The reviewer also needs to be a person with some teaching experience — but they need not necessarily have the same level of experience as the reviewee”.
(p.85)

Confidentiality of and access to reports

Decisions about the level of confidentiality and access to reports on individual's teaching will be related to decisions about the purposes of the peer review program and about the reports that emerge from the process. It is recommended that the reviewee always have access to any report produced as part of peer review of teaching and that wherever feasible, confidentiality is maintained as far as practicable.

Closing the loop

Designed and implemented well, a departmental or school based peer review of teaching program has enormous potential to enhance teaching and therefore student learning and satisfaction, improve collegiality, and raise the status of teaching. To optimise the benefits to enhancing teaching practice, it is critically important that staff have access to relevant resources, and that the department or school encourages further teaching development initiatives. Academic development units can contribute, through providing expertise and resources. Importantly, colleagues can continue to contribute, through ongoing sharing of ideas and strategies (see also Box 1, p.12).

"The approach is collaborative and developmental, and reviews confidential. A focus is placed on encouraging reflection on learning, and on using research into learning to inform and develop reflective teaching practices"
(p.102)

"The project's objectives included developing a model of peer review which would be acceptable across the broad range of university teaching contexts, trialing this model, and developing a suite of resources (review protocol, website) to support its introduction"
(p.102)

Section 4: Documentation and other support

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4.1 Establishing criteria for peer review

One of the strengths of peer review of university teaching is that it draws upon the educative expertise and judgement of academics in their fields. Therefore, in principle, peer review could operate solely on individuals' tacit knowledge of what constitutes good teaching.

Yet there are benefits in making the tacit more explicit — in defining criteria which can serve as a framework for the review process. Such criteria assist the reviewer and, importantly, provide structure for the feedback discussion and/or written report. Selecting and communicating the criteria against which teaching may be reviewed is therefore an important consideration in program design.

The stated criteria and the presentation format send powerful messages to individuals about the intent of a program. First, criteria define the aspects of teaching most valued and considered most amenable to peer review. Second, individuals will assess the relevance and value of the program by the degree to which the criteria apply to their particular teaching contexts.

In addition, the structure of supporting documentation demonstrates the approach intended for the review and feedback process. For example, documents that involve ratings or checklists encourage a summative, 'measurement of performance' approach. By contrast, formats involving only open comments against broad criteria are more likely to invite formative feedback and discussion.

"We agreed to use quite detailed Peer Observation and Review of Teaching comment forms, and these were useful for focussing on specific aspects of teaching"
(p.83)

One of the advantages of peer review as an evaluation and development tool for teaching is its ability to accommodate diversity: diversity in approach, discipline, curricula, and so on. To capitalise fully on the benefits of peer review, academics need the flexibility, where possible, to determine the aspects of their teaching on which they would like the review to focus. Equally, reviewers need sufficient scope to comment on the broad range of activities, approaches and materials presented to them, taking into account unique and specific teaching and disciplinary contexts. Thus, a framework that adequately supports and guides peer review while at the same time allowing sufficient scope to accommodate diversity is necessary.

It is important to note that the criteria selected for peer review should not necessarily replicate criteria as specified for promotion applications or other appraisal purposes. The focus of criteria for peer review should be on activities and achievements that are amenable to peer review. As described in Section 1, peer review complements but does not replace other evidence such as student feedback and other forms of recognition from peers (see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20).

Five broad criteria encompass good practice in university teaching

The criteria developed for the Australian Learning and Teaching Council *Awards for Australian University Teaching* (ALTC, 2008) have been widely adopted by the sector as a definition of the dimensions of effective or excellent university teaching. They cover the core aspects of teaching, and thereby provide a useful framework from which to develop criteria for consideration in peer review.

1. Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn
2. Development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field
3. Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning
4. Respect and support for the development of students as individuals
5. Scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching.

Not all aspects of good teaching are equally amenable to peer review. Peer review needs to be considered as just one of many lines of feedback and evidence of good teaching practice (see also Box 3, p.18 and Box 4, p.20).

Selection of criteria for peer review

In developing criteria that will be of practical use during the peer review process, it is helpful to illustrate the five broad criteria listed on page 62 with more specific examples relevant to the particular teaching context — the following two pages present a range of possibilities. These lists are by no means exhaustive. It might be desirable to include even more specific descriptions — for example, in a program of peer review of sessional teaching within a specific course, highly context specific criteria might be added. It should be possible, however, to locate these under one of the five broad criteria.

Identifying criteria for inclusion might involve one or more of the following approaches:

Program-level planning

- A range of criteria may be identified as most relevant to a particular program, institution, or organisational unit (e.g. department).
- A strategic priority area might be identified (e.g. assessment of coursework units; effective use of subject websites in university teaching)

Individual choice

- Individuals might nominate the criteria of most interest and relevance to them.

Consideration should be given to keeping the ultimate list reasonably short in order to assist the reviewer. One strategy for refining the list can involve discussion between reviewer and reviewee prior to the review (see also p.73).

*“A willingness to establish in advance what the reviewee hopes to get out of the review process can be very helpful in shaping the reviewer’s approach to the reviewing task”
(p.90)*

Selection of criteria for peer review

The following is an eclectic, illustrative list which:

- includes items ranging in specificity from general principles to specific activities and skills;
- includes related and overlapping items;
- is not exhaustive;
- includes some items relevant to specific contexts (e.g. classroom teaching) and other more generic items; and
- presents items drawn from a range of sources, including various peer review programs in Australian universities.

1. Approaches to teaching that influence, motivate and inspire students to learn

For example:

Effectively encouraging student participation

Generating student interest in the subject

Use of examples relevant to students' interest and experiences

Incorporating current and relevant 'real-world' examples

Modelling of critical thinking and problem-solving

Use of activities that require students to take a critical approach to the task

Demonstrating enthusiasm for learning in the discipline

Effective communication skills

High-level interpersonal skills

Rapport and engagement with students

Skilful presentation of ideas and information (including effective use of audiovisual material)

Structure of the learning activity

Developing students' scholarly values

Encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning

Helping students become reflective learners

Management of the audience

Effectiveness of questioning techniques

Facilitating links between practice and theory (*for clinical/practical demonstrations*)

2. Development of curricula and resources that reflect a command of the field

For example:

Effective use of teaching and learning resources

Current research is integrated within the teaching

Demonstrated command of the subject matter

Evidence of sound planning of learning opportunities for students

Content is relevant, accurate and current

Appropriate use is made of online learning opportunities

The learning encouraged supports the development of the desired graduate attributes

Expectations are clearly communicated to students

Clear communication of learning task and assessment objectives

Effective use of interactive technologies in the design of learning tasks

Engagement of community expertise and experience in the design of curricula and resources

Learning activities and resources accommodate the skills, knowledge and experience of commencing students

3. Approaches to assessment and feedback that foster independent learning

For example:

- Assessment tasks align with the stated learning outcomes for the subject
- Students have opportunities to practice the skills to be assessed
- Students have opportunities to self-assess in preparation for major assessment tasks
- Timely and constructive feedback is provided
- The tasks allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills
- Appropriate involvement of external expertise in student assessment
- Suitable methods are used to identify and monitor student progress
- The teaching encourages reflective practice and self-assessment
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for monitoring their own learning
- Assessment encourages and rewards creativity

4. Respect and support for the development of students as individuals

For example:

- Effective strategies for monitoring students' progress
- Involving students in the development of the curriculum and/or teaching activities
- There are opportunities for students to seek advice and assistance from the teacher
- Consideration is given to the diverse learning needs of students
- An inclusive and supportive learning environment is fostered
- Students are afforded respect, and thereby encouraged to respect peers and staff
- Consideration of students' aspirations and priorities
- Equal opportunities exist for all students

5. Scholarly activities that have influenced and enhanced learning and teaching

For example:

- Evidence of reflective practice with regard to teaching and learning
- Contribution to the advancement of teaching and learning in the discipline
- Leadership in curriculum renewal
- Leadership in the enhancement of assessment practices, including academic standards
- Support for the development of the teaching of peers
- Fostering a scholarly approach to teaching among peers
- Rigorous and thoughtful investigation of student learning
- Knowledge transfer activities that enrich the curriculum

4.2 Selecting a presentation format

There are various options for the presentation of criteria in peer review documentation:

1. Open comments (see p.67)

Reviewers are invited to comment, generally and/or against specific criteria.

2. Structured comments (see p.68)

Comments are encouraged under broad headings.

3. Agreement ratings (see p.69)

The criteria are presented as statements, and reviewers are asked to indicate their level of agreement.

4. Performance ratings (see p.70)

Reviewers are asked to indicate level of achievement in terms of a rating.

Not all formats, however, are equally conducive to collegial feedback and discussion. Not only are scores or ratings inadequate in expressing the complexity and range of teaching activities, they are not particularly conducive to encouraging conversation about and reflection on teaching.

On balance, formats that invite comments are favoured in order to encourage dialogue and participants' confidence in the process. Structured comments — such as those presented in terms of 'what works well' and 'areas for change' — can be particularly helpful in prompting the reviewer to provide constructive feedback.

It is also worth considering the use of different documentation for different stages of the process. For example, a detailed list of criteria encouraging constructive comments might be used both during the review and to assist in the feedback discussion. A more open format, however, might be adopted for the written report. The reviewer would then draw upon their previous notes, without being constrained by them.

Note: two other ALTC-funded projects have developed resources to support peer review of teaching, focusing on e-Learning environments and the use of online tools for reporting. See Appendix 3, p.115, for links to project details.

1. Open comments

Reviewers are invited to comment, generally and/or against specific criteria

Benefits

- Simple to prepare documentation.
- Applicable to any teaching context.

Limitations

- Reviewers are provided with no guidance on what to consider (Example 1).
- Reviewers are not encouraged to identify both positive aspects and areas for improvement. There is a risk, therefore, that they concentrate solely on one or the other

Example 1

Please provide your thoughts and comments

Example 2

Please provide your thoughts and comments

Criterion 1

Criterion 2

Criterion 3

etc ...

Overall comment(s)

2. Structured comments

Comments are encouraged under broad headings

Benefits

- Encourages both affirmation and constructive suggestions.
- Explicitly encourages discussion (Example 3).

Limitations

- Can be time-consuming and overwhelming for the reviewer if they feel obliged to complete/discuss a large number of criteria, across each field (column). This can be addressed through careful selection of criteria (i.e. not too many) and/or encouraging reviewer and reviewee to select those aspects most relevant for comment and discussion.

Example 3

	Comments & observations	Questions for reviewee	Suggestions
Criterion 1			
Criterion 2			
Criterion 3			
etc ...			
Overall comment(s)			

Example 4

	Aspects done well	Aspects that could be improved	Suggested action(s)
Criterion 1			
Criterion 2			
Criterion 3			
etc ...			
Overall comment(s)			

3. Agreement ratings

The criteria are presented as statements, and reviewers are asked to indicate their level of agreement

Benefits

- Enables very explicit statements of 'good teaching' in a form familiar to staff from student evaluation forms (e.g. "The teacher seeks feedback from students regarding their learning during their session").

Limitations

- Does not encourage explanation or suggestions.
- Encourages numerical scoring, thereby suggesting a more summative approach than may be desirable for the particular program.

Example 5

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Statement 1					
Statement 2					
Statement 3					
etc ...					

4. Performance ratings

Reviewers are asked to indicate level of achievement in terms of a rating

Benefits

- Many criteria can be rated in a short time, which may be appropriate in some specific situations.

Limitations

- Does not encourage explanation or suggestions.
- Encourages numerical scoring or grading, thereby suggesting a more summative approach than may be desirable for the particular program.

Example 6

	0	+	++	Not Applicable
Criterion 1				
Criterion 2				
Criterion 3				
etc ...				
Overall rating				

Example 7

	Very effective	Reasonably effective	Not very effective
Criterion 1			
Criterion 2			
Criterion 3			
etc ...			
Overall rating			

4.3 Advice for program coordinators

Preparing staff for the role of peer reviewer

Ideally, a person in the role of peer reviewer will bring to the process:

- a level of teaching expertise and judgement;
- a commitment to maintain confidentiality;
- sensitivity to the different contexts and career needs of others;
- the ability to maintain an open and friendly approach, focussed on the other person's needs rather than their own expertise; and
- the ability to give honest feedback in constructive and positive ways.

Source: A guide to formal peer review of teaching at the University of Wollongong.

By its very nature, peer review draws upon individuals' knowledge of learning and teaching, within their disciplines and in the university context, more broadly. For many staff — including many excellent university teachers — this knowledge is implicit and not derived from formal training in educational theories. It is for this reason that all academics involved in university teaching, irrespective of their career stage, are able to review the teaching of their colleagues.

Despite this, there are recognised benefits to providing support for reviewers. First, many staff question their preparedness for the role, particularly if they do not have qualifications in education. Second, there are sensitivities associated with peer review, and it is therefore important to alert all participants to these. And third, if peer review is used for the purposes of performance assessment, additional preparation of reviewers is recommended to ensure that the review process is robust. This may require institutional policy and practice requirements.

The design of the peer review program and its associated documentation plays an important role in supporting staff for the role of peer reviewer. In addition, specific preparatory courses can be valuable (see also p.71 and Box 6, p.72).

"Members of staff can undertake the process independently or request support through the teaching and learning unit. Workshops are offered to help academics engage with the process and improve their skills in giving feedback"
(p.102)

Box 6: An example of a preparatory program for reviewers

The development of skills and attitudes for peer review includes the desire and ability to offer constructive criticism in a supportive manner to a respected colleague. Reviewers are making a judgement on the basis of evidence and their awareness of effective teaching and learning practices, which may vary within and across disciplines.

A suggested peer review preparatory program would cover broad principles of higher education teaching and learning relevant to all disciplines, and the core aspects of peer review:

- purposes;
- principles and values;
- processes, including observation of face-to-face, videoconference and online teaching, curriculum review; and;
- skills including observation, writing feedback, giving and receiving verbal feedback, and critical reflection.

Sketch of a program structure

Aim

To provide an introduction to peer review of teaching and support potential reviewers and reviewees in undertaking peer review through an experiential learning process.

Workshop (3hrs)

- Discuss the key principles of higher education teaching and curriculum design across the disciplines
- Discuss the principles and uses of peer review of teaching
- Work through the process of observing teaching, writing feedback, and giving and receiving verbal feedback.
- Discuss some examples of peer review of curriculum materials.

Peer review activity

Participants plan, undergo, and reflect upon a peer observation of their own teaching, or a review of their curriculum materials according to requirements.

Follow-up discussion

Participants attend a follow-up meeting to debrief on their peer review activities and discuss any further action.

Guidance for communication between reviewer and reviewee

While program design will address decision points such as the identity of reviewers, and reporting processes (see also Section 3, p.27), participants will also have questions about the nature of the communication expected.

For example:

- Do participants liaise directly to arrange a time and place for the review, or is this the responsibility of the program coordinator?
- Beyond communicating the logistics, is there expected to be a discussion or other communication prior to the review? If so, for what purpose?
- What form will communication take after the review? If written feedback is expected, is there a template?
- Is there training or guidelines available to assist staff to give and receive peer feedback?

As a general principle, a meeting prior to the review is necessary if the review involves observation of teaching. The reviewee has an opportunity to explain the context of the teaching, and highlight the principal aims of the session. In addition, this can be an opportunity to discuss the criteria which are most relevant, and perhaps for the reviewee to nominate aspects upon which they would particularly like feedback (see also p.63).

*“I met with my colleague prior to the peer review and we spoke about what aspects would be reviewed. I explained to her the context of the session ... This meeting made us both very relaxed”
(p.84)*

A combination of verbal and written feedback is preferable in most circumstances — the verbal feedback provides the opportunity for valuable discussion, while a written report ensures that the reviewee has a record on which they can reflect further, and which they might utilise in the future. The need to prepare a written report also encourages the reviewer to carefully consider their feedback in light of the criteria and, therefore, in light of the principles of good university teaching (see also p.58).

If the review involves observation of teaching, it is optimal to meet for feedback and discussion immediately or very soon after the review (see also p.75 and Box 7, p.76).

Jot things down during the observation but don't spend too much time writing, get to interact with the students, talk to them, and talk to your colleague to find out about the learning taking place.... After the observation write up the details of the session whilst they are fresh in your mind"
(p.86)

4.4 Advice for participants

Advice on giving, receiving and using feedback

Feedback and peer review of teaching

The term 'feedback' is often used in coaching and management literature to refer to the process of a practitioner or manager providing information on performance to a client or employee, respectively and the feedback often focusses on skills practice. Peer review of teaching recognises the complex and subjective nature of educational interaction, thus feedback is of a more personal form, going beyond behavioural change to the human interactions at the heart of teaching. Offering and receiving feedback can, therefore, be quite challenging as both involve highly developed interpersonal skills.

Giving feedback on teaching means describing what the peer reviewer sees, hears and senses happening in the teaching situation or in the curriculum or other documentation, as well as how that fits with what the reviewer understands about teaching and learning. For example, it may mean communicating how the reviewer feels about the teaching climate (comfortable, threatening, challenging) as this can provide significant input into discussions about the learning environment being set up by the reviewee.

The nature of effective feedback

Central to effective feedback is a focus on the reviewee's professional development. Feedback should be useful to the reviewee in developing strategies for change to their teaching, where needed. This is most effectively achieved through the reviewer acting as a 'critical friend', as distinguished from being critical of the reviewee's teaching. The notion of a critical friend assumes a level of honesty within a supportive relationship. Research in this area aligns with common sense and indicates that feedback is more effective when the reviewer is respectful, supportive and empathetic.

Feedback should also be as specific as possible, indicating what was observed as well as judgements about what was observed.

"In a way, the best thing for me was confirmation from a colleague that I was doing the right things. The constructive feedback given to me was very useful. My reviewer was able to suggest practical ways that I could improve on in my practice"
(p.105)

Box 7: Feedback tips for reviewers and reviewees

Feedback tips for reviewers

Give particular emphasis to what the reviewee wants to achieve.

Ask open questions during verbal feedback.

Choose words carefully. In particular, note that appending a positive comment with “but ...” is likely to negate the positive feedback. When seeking to provide affirmation, avoid adding qualifying comments, and instead deal with these separately.

Seek ways to affirm the reviewee’s work, identifying what works well and why.

Feedback tips for reviewees

It is important to listen carefully to verbal feedback. Interrupting to rebut comments during verbal feedback should be avoided as it distracts from listening and considering the comments.

Active listening means fully engaging with the communication, and includes seeking clarification of what the reviewer means, as necessary. For example: “You said some of the points could have been clearer. Can you give me an example?” or “I’m glad you think it was effective. Was there anything specific you thought was effective?”

Feedback is more likely to be effective if it is manageable. If a reviewee is forced to confront a large number of major issues at one time, they may feel overwhelmed. A general rule of thumb is that a feedback session should provide supportive feedback and address two to three main areas where there may be need for development (see also Box 7, p.76)

Principles of good practice in providing feedback

There is broad consensus in the writing on peer review of teaching that feedback is optimised when:

- Feedback is descriptive and evidence-based. Feedback means literally “feeding back” to the teacher what the peer has observed (seen, heard, read) with examples of these observations.
- The spirit of feedback is developmental. Regardless of the major reason for peer review, the purpose of feedback is to assist the improvement of teaching.
- Feedback is focussed on the goals and objectives set by the reviewee and explained/discussed with the reviewer. Feedback on other areas is given if the reviewer considers such feedback useful.
- Verbal feedback is supported by written feedback. Written feedback provides substantial information for reflection before and/or after the verbal feedback session(s).
- Feedback is appropriate to the skill level of the teacher. Early career academics might find feedback on technical skills useful. Experienced academics can find feedback useful if it challenges them to articulate the reasons behind their effective practice.
- Feedback is timely. Feedback is more effective when it is given as soon as possible after the review.
- The setting for feedback discussion is neutral, where neither reviewee nor reviewer feels intimidated by the surroundings and where confidentiality is assured.

This section draws on the following sources: Bell, 2005; Brinko, 1993; Brookfield, 1995; Devlin, 2007; Handal, 1999; Piccinin, 2003; Showers, 1985.

*“(As a reviewer) I think you need to be able to listen well. You need to be able to recognise how students are reacting and you need to be honest”
(p.104)*

Section 5: Case studies from Australian universities

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5.1 Insights from current practice

A survey of 26 Australian universities in late 2007 (see p.9) found that peer review of teaching was not a common professional activity in Australian universities, and that broad-scale or university-wide formalised programs were rare. It is therefore likely that relatively few academic staff have engaged in peer review of teaching activities in any systematic way.

Despite this, there are numerous examples of localised programs within universities, varying in purpose and the range of staff involved. Peer review of teaching is a feature of academic development programs in some universities, including programs for new staff and award courses, such as graduate certificates in university teaching. There are also examples of localised programs within departments or schools, which involve both new and more experienced staff. The focus of these programs is typically upon classroom teaching, with such programs sometimes described as 'peer observation programs', 'teaching circles' or 'teaching partnerships'.

In addition, many universities mention peer review of teaching in their policies around staff appraisal, confirmation and promotion. Typically peer review of teaching is listed as one possible source of evidence for inclusion in applications and teaching portfolios. Rarely, however, is participation in peer review a requirement for promotion or related purposes.

The following five case studies present the experiences of staff involved in selected peer review of teaching programs from five Australian universities. The cases illustrate some of the diversity possible in program origin and design, and highlight some of the benefits and challenges for individuals engaging in peer review, and for institutions seeking to develop effective and sustainable programs.

The five case studies presented are not intended to illustrate particular models, and therefore do not include detailed descriptions of the program. Rather, the focus is on the experiences of individuals involved in implementation or as participants.

Each case includes multiple perspectives:

One person involved in program implementation commenting on: initiation of the program; key features of the approach taken; and remaining challenges and lessons learned.

Two to four staff who had participated in the program commenting on: their experience as either reviewer or reviewee in terms of: initial expectations; any benefits experienced; challenges or difficulties; and insights and advice for others.

The contributors to the case studies were encouraged to be candid in their accounts — accordingly neither individuals nor institutions are named in these examples.

Case study 1: An institution-wide initiative developed through collaboration between faculty representatives

A special interest group, with membership from across the institution, collaborated in the development of resources and protocols for peer review that would be relevant to all teaching contexts. Members of the group have subsequently encouraged local peer review initiatives in their faculties or school, and continue to form a community of practice for the development of teaching and learning initiatives. Peer review has also been included in the Foundations program for new staff, and is emerging as a feature of policies such as the institution's teaching and learning plan. Most reviews originally involved observation of classroom teaching, but there is interest in broadening the focus to include curriculum design — an issue of particular relevance to the institution as it engages in curriculum renewal.

“I recognised that some colleagues were interested in peer review and realised there was an opportunity to gain momentum by capitalising on this interest.”

Case study 1 (cont'.):
An institution-wide initiative developed through collaboration between faculty representatives

An implementation perspective

1. What led you to implement peer review in your institution?

I recognised that some colleagues were interested in peer review and realised there was an opportunity to gain momentum by capitalising on this interest. I also have experience of peer review from my previous work in the UK and it seemed to me that here was an opportunity to introduce initiatives that had worked quite well before.

2. How did you get the program started? (and, if relevant, how did you expand it?)

The project started by firstly discussing ideas with the colleagues who initially showed interest and getting a feel for what they meant by peer review (this ranged from punitive to formative). Then a special interest group was created with the membership of all the Associate Deans Learning and Teaching. This group critiqued materials before settling on a set of generic materials, protocols and pro-forma suitable for our context. The next stage involved me working with departments or teams to introduce the materials and get the process going. Whilst not expansion exactly, an interesting outcome has been that the original group (known here as the Peer Observation of Teaching Special Interest Group — POT SIG) has gone on to meet regularly as a community of practice interested in issues of the day relative to enhancement.

3. Please describe what you believe are the key features of the approach you have taken

Collaborative, inclusive, and formed around colleagues with the responsibility to implement the activity at the local level.

4. What is working well?

Peer review is now being run locally and is also built into the requirement of our Foundations in Learning and Teaching program for new staff. The unexpected outcome already described (POT SIG).

5. What challenges remain?

Uptake by a larger body of staff, especially experienced staff, during a time of tremendous local upheaval (restructure and curriculum renewal). But that said, some of this is a POT opportunity and we have been encouraging colleagues to use some of the review materials and 'critical friends' approach in their deliberations about the redesign of the curriculum.

6. What advice would you give to someone planning to implement a program of peer review of teaching?

Start small - build a network of support and discrete areas of the organisation willing to trial it on a small scale. Build peer review into expectations for new staff and as part of any induction/foundation work. Gain the confidence of leaders in the processes. Get it written into the learning and teaching plans. Sell the idea on the back of other demands (e.g. presenting a united front to AUQA). Make it more than just individual peer-to-peer and incorporate team aspirations as part of the process.

Case study 1 (cont'.):

An institution-wide initiative developed through collaboration between faculty representatives

A reviewer's perspective

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

I have been involved in informal peer observation before and found it useful, so I thought it would provide a good opportunity to get some new ideas for teaching, plus feedback on my own teaching, in a non-confrontational environment

2. How did you feel about your role as reviewer?

A bit apprehensive, as the two people I was reviewing were both much more experienced than I was at teaching - but I was also looking forward to it as I expected to learn from watching them. I didn't expect to make many constructive comments but we agreed to use quite detailed Peer Observation and Review of Teaching comment forms, and these were useful for focussing on specific aspects of teaching.

3. Please describe any benefits to you from your experience as reviewer

It was beneficial to watch other teachers and see the different methods of teaching, which provided me with new ideas for my own classes, as well as giving me positive reinforcement about my own methods. The process itself was also useful in terms of making me think about each of the questions I had to answer — it forced me to focus on issues sometimes overlooked in my own teaching, as I am too busy trying to convey information to students and ensuring they understood this within a very short time frame. In a broader sense I think it assisted in building collegiality: I am relatively new to the university and the experience provided me with the opportunity to work with others outside my teaching area.

4. Were there any difficulties or challenges associated with your role?

No, but I worked with colleagues whom I trusted and respected. This was important as I wanted their feedback — good or bad — and assumed they wanted mine. I could have reviewed someone I didn't know at all, but I think it would be difficult to review someone you knew, but with whom you didn't have a 'connection' - or positively disagreed with.

5. What qualities are important to be effective as a reviewer?

To truly engage with the process and think about the questions you are being asked to answer. Be honest, even if it is your friend you are reviewing, and be prepared for constructive comments to be given and received.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer other peer reviewers of teaching?

Read through and really think about the questions on the peer review forms. If you are designing your own questionnaire, this will need a lot of planning. Attend more than one class if you can, and certainly attend for the duration of a class so as to get a feel for the overall structure and interaction, not just the delivery of content.

Case study 1 (cont'.):

An institution-wide initiative developed through collaboration between faculty representatives

Three reviewees' perspectives

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

Person 1: I hoped to get independent feedback on my teaching methods: I expected that I would be offered suggestions for improvement on weaker areas and encouragement for stronger aspects of my teaching.

Person 2: I have always had two schools of thought when it comes to peer review. The first involves a feeling of hesitancy and nervousness - of course you want to do a good job and seek approval and acknowledgment for a job well done. Previously I had a negative experience of peer review where a message was delivered in an unprofessional, uncaring way, so I guess when thinking about the peer review, part of me cringed. The second involves a feeling of excitement - I know that I prepare well and that I am an organised person. I know I put a lot of effort into my teaching. So I am excited to showcase what I do and how I do it. It is a feeling of wanting confirmation or acknowledgment of a job well done.

Person 3: I really looked forward to the opportunity to work with a colleague and perceived the process as being part of my professional responsibility.

2. How did you feel about having your teaching reviewed?

Person 1: Beforehand I was nervous about having another lecturer from my division sit in on my classes. However, on the day, I barely noticed their presence.

Person 2: I felt comfortable and relaxed. In this particular case, I met with my colleague prior to the peer review and we spoke about what aspects would be reviewed. I explained to her the context of the session (i.e. gave her a unit outline, the learning outcomes for the session, and the method/s I would be using). This meeting made us both very relaxed. I was also peer reviewing my colleague — so we spoke about her session and its content. I think that the mutual peer review was terrific — as it did not 'single' out one person — we were both undergoing the same process. We both enjoyed the preparation, the delivery, and the debriefing session afterwards - loved it. I really love evaluation as I believe in continual improvement. Anything that makes me a better teacher is worthwhile.

Person 3: I look at learning as a partnership and I considered that I was working with a colleague to help develop this partnership. I felt comfortable because my partner and I had taken the time to organise our roles and work through the focus of our observation.

Case study 1 (cont'.): An institution-wide initiative developed through collaboration between faculty representatives

Three reviewees' perspectives (cont'.)

3. What were the benefits to you?

Person 1: I was given some useful suggestions on how to improve my teaching by an encouraging observer with substantial teaching experience. It was encouraging to hear that much of my teaching was successful - that positive reinforcement was very beneficial.

Person 2: The opportunity to see another teacher, the content of her course, and how she delivered, which enabled me to compare and contrast my teaching with hers, and fostered greater self-reflection. The opportunity to improve from feedback. I received acknowledgement that I am good at teaching, including my organisational skills and use of resources. My colleague stated she also learned from aspects of my teaching — this was a great compliment.

Person 3: In preparing for the observation I had the chance to think very carefully about the purpose of my teaching, and make sure that my understandings and philosophy of learning were embedded and articulated in my work. I had the chance to engage in a dialogue with a colleague - exploring areas for development in my teaching in a supportive framework. Observing someone else provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my own teaching and my role in the learning process. I learnt new things from my colleague and started to develop a constructive professional relationship.

4. Did you make use of the feedback and, if so, in what way?

Person 1: I did make use of feedback — as much of it related to my response to student queries and my management of the class - it was easy to put into practice.

Person 2: The exercise was a catalyst for reflecting on my practices. I feel I approach teaching in a more thoughtful way now.

Person 3: The feedback is something that I am giving priority to in my day-to-day work.

5. What qualities does the reviewer need to bring to the process?

Person 1: The reviewer needs to bring a positive mindset, and an understanding that the reviewee might be nervous or apprehensive about having someone sit in on their classes. The reviewer also needs to be a person with some teaching experience — but they need not necessarily have the same level of experience as the reviewee.

Person 2: Sensitivity — humour — an ability to give feedback in a positive way. It is great to do it with someone you work with. They get to see how you operate and I think it improves interrelationships with colleagues.

Person 3: Teaching partners need to listen, see the process as helpful, be encouraging, and know how to bring a critical perspective to the situation in a manner that works for the benefit and best interests of those involved in the process.

Case study 1 (cont'.):

An institution-wide initiative developed through collaboration between faculty representatives

Three reviewees' perspectives (cont'.)

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer colleagues engaging in peer review of teaching?

Person 1: I would encourage colleagues to become involved in the review process — it is worthwhile and beneficial. And, more so than student reviews, the feedback is likely to be impartial and any criticism kindly meant.

Person 2: Go for it. It is really worthwhile. It is a bit daunting at first — but it can only make you a better teacher. My advice is to meet with your peer reviewer to discuss the evaluation first, and have the reviewer be involved in the session if you can (team teach or establish a type of participant observation exercise). I think it helped a lot that my reviewer did not take notes during the session but wrote these after the session. This put me at ease and it didn't feel like a sterile activity where a detached person sat at the back of the room with a clipboard. I want to have peer review as a regular source of evaluation for myself. It would be great to also video tape the session (provided there was permission from students etc) to provide a recording that I could deconstruct later. Peer review could potentially be a negative experience but it doesn't have to be! It can be a very positive experience that, if the preparation is in place, provides a valuable method of evaluation.

Person 3: Take time to plan the teaching together: have two or three short meetings where you have a coffee and informally talk about the session and identify a focus for the observation. Work with someone with whom you already have a professional relationship, as you really need to be able to talk to the person and enter the process with the belief that you both have something to offer.

Jot things down during the observation but don't spend too much time writing, get to interact with the students, talk to them, and talk to your colleague to find out about the learning taking place. At the end of the observation talk and informally debrief.

After the observation write up the details of the session whilst they are fresh in your mind.

Case study 2: Collaborative development of a department-specific program

An initiative of a science department that arose following the involvement of staff members — including the head of department — with peer review of teaching in a graduate certificate program. Design of the program involved a collaborative approach involving all academic staff in the department. The approach involved non-hierarchical pairings and reciprocal classroom observation, once per semester. Records of participation were kept, but written reports were optional and confidential. There were plans to review the program, and consideration given to involving a broader group of staff such as clinical teachers and sessional demonstrators.

“The various permutations as to how peer review might be initiated and then run in an ongoing fashion were presented to departmental staff and a unanimous vote led to its adoption.”

Case study 2 (cont'.): Collaborative development of a department-specific program

An implementation perspective

1. What led you to implement peer review in your institution?

Two members of the department undertook a postgraduate teaching qualification, run internally by the university. Peer review of their teaching was intrinsic to the educational program of this postgraduate certificate and both members of staff were convinced of the value of such an approach. The head of department, who participated in this educational process as an adviser to one of the members of staff, could see the value in peer review. It was at his suggestion that the possibility of initiating an ongoing peer review program was investigated.

2. How did you get the program started? (and, if relevant, how did you expand it?)

The department set aside time at its annual planning day to discuss whether or not to adopt a peer review program, and if the answer was yes, what form it would take. An expert in peer review from the university was invited to this event to 'facilitate' the process. The various permutations as to how peer review might be initiated and then run in an ongoing fashion were presented to departmental staff and a unanimous vote led to its adoption. During this planning session, with the help of the facilitator, staff also decided upon the various parameters that would constitute our peer review program.

3. Please describe what you believe are the key features of the approach you have taken

The time demands are small; a maximum of two hours over and above the normal workload per semester. The program is relatively informal and not linked to the performance development framework or promotion process in our department. However, individuals may opt to have their peers write reports/reviews of their teaching for inclusion in promotion applications. The only formalities in the process are that a set of guidelines is provided for staff members to follow; and that the department manager maintains a spreadsheet documenting who observed whom, doing what (i.e. lecture/tute/clinical teaching etc.), where, and when. There is no hierarchical approach to the pairings and within five years all staff will have observed each other's teaching.

Case study 2 (cont'.): Collaborative development of a department-specific program

An implementation perspective (cont'.)

4. What is working well?

The informality of the process is non-threatening, thus participation has been undemanding on the individual and has probably led to the program being well adhered to thus far. A number of staff have elected to have more formal reports written against their future promotion applications. The level of seniority appears not to have been a problem, despite level As having been paired with level Es at certain times. There seems to have been an increase in the sharing of good teaching practices as a result of the pairings varying every semester, with innovative teaching approaches becoming more apparent across the department. Finally, it would be nice to think that as the Quality Of Teaching scores for the department have steadily increased over the period (becoming amongst the best in the faculty last semester), the 'osmosis' of improved teaching practices through the peer review program, has contributed to this.

5. What challenges remain?

To maintain the interest and commitment to the program when the workload of this department ramps up, as our new postgraduate degree is due to come on line in 2011. To keep the process fresh, once every staff member has observed every other staff member within the next two years or so; it is anticipated a full review of our program will be required, followed by a collective restatement of our desired outcomes from the program. Initially just academic staff participated in the program, but post-doctoral research staff with larger teaching loads have become involved of late, and it will soon be necessary to review whether the program should also include our casual teachers, postgraduate student demonstrators, and clinical teachers.

6. What advice would you give to someone planning to implement a program of peer review of teaching?

Get the entire organisation/department/group to agree on an appropriate format for the program; in our experience, collective ownership appears to be important to compliance. Involve someone with expertise in peer review to facilitate the establishment of clearly defined boundaries for their peer review program. Do not formally link the program to the promotion or PDF process; I speculate that acceptance of the program might be an issue and that certain benefits of the program would be lost. Even if the program is informal, there still needs to be some documentation of the 'who, when, what, and where' for administration purposes. Plan to review the progress of the program in the short and medium term.

Case study 2 (cont'.): Collaborative development of a department-specific program

A reviewer's perspective

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

I had limited expectations of the program, although I was interested in the opportunity it created to see the undergraduate lecturing styles of my colleagues: something that would not typically occur otherwise.

2. How did you feel about your role as reviewer?

I had no particularly strong feelings: the review process was department-wide, and so simply felt to be a standard part of the teaching strategy for our department.

3. Please describe any benefits to you from your experience as reviewer

In addition to the discipline of thinking critically about lecturing and lecturing styles for the purposes of assessing a colleague and providing feedback, I found it very informative to see how others within my department approached undergraduate teaching. You rarely get an opportunity to make comparisons between your own teaching approach and that of your colleagues; yet the review process provides this. If nothing else, it can provide reassurance that your teaching approach is not completely at odds with those of others in your department!

4. Were there any difficulties or challenges associated with your role?

Providing feedback on a colleague's teaching style can feel somewhat awkward initially, and requires an appropriate degree of tact. In addition, appreciating the difference between a true deficiency in lecturing style versus a simple difference from your own style, can be challenging. Remembering to point out positive aspects can also be difficult: as scientists who are often involved in the peer reviewing process for manuscripts, it is all too easy to spend the lion's share of the time concentrating on negative points to the exclusion of the many positive ones, thereby giving a rather unbalanced assessment.

5. What qualities are important to be effective as a reviewer?

A willingness to establish in advance what the reviewee hopes to get out of the review process can be very helpful in shaping the reviewer's approach to the reviewing task. Also, having an open mind to different teaching styles is probably an obligatory quality.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer other peer reviewers of teaching?

Whilst on paper the process may appear to represent a one-way interaction — the reviewer providing feedback to the reviewee — the potential for the reviewer to gain much from the process should not be underestimated.

Case study 2 (cont'.): Collaborative development of a department-specific program

A reviewee's perspective

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

Initially - guarded scepticism. The thought of having someone else look too critically at the way you work is both daunting and exciting. No matter who was doing the reviewing, there was a possibility that something could be picked out about the way I present my material that would be worked up and improved (I think I would prefer a recognised 'good' reviewer to maximise the chance of this). I went into the process with an open mind, but was still a bit intimidated — this is human nature, I told myself, and I would simply have to get over that in order for this to proceed and benefits perhaps to arise.

2. How did you feel about having your teaching reviewed?

The procedure went very much as expected: a reviewer was appointed who attended one of my lectures. I gave the lecture, attempting as much as possible to ignore the reviewer's presence, although this was not really possible, and perhaps my game was lifted a tad during delivery. The reviewer sat quietly and took notes. Afterwards, we discussed those notes. My 'feeling' about this process did not deviate from my expectations, as outlined in the first answer given above.

3. What were the benefits to you?

To be honest, I did not benefit greatly from this experience — nothing in particular was identified as weak, and no specific hints/tips were forthcoming. A more subtle benefit was simply the discussion — acknowledgment that teaching methods and delivery COULD be thought about more... sounds crazy coming from a lecturer, but we too quickly become concerned about the content of our lectures that we may forget about the way the information is received by students. (More beneficial was my reviewing of someone else — there I was able to pick up a couple of tips).

4. Did you make use of the feedback and, if so, in what way?

The specific feedback did not lead to anything concrete, but the overall discussion and thinking about the process was probably beneficial.

Case study 2 (cont'.): Collaborative development of a department-specific program

A reviewee's perspective (cont'.)

5. What qualities does the reviewer need to bring to the process?

A spare hour (or two) of time, a willingness to engage in the process, perhaps some belief that the process is (potentially) worthwhile, and perhaps an altruistic attitude. The reviewer need not be terribly experienced as a teacher, but they must have empathy for the students being taught, so that feedback from their point of view can be clearly articulated to the reviewed teacher.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer colleagues engaging in peer review of teaching?

Just do it... and keep an open mind because you might just gain something from the process. I would add that it is a two-way street — even if you don't gain, the other person (reviewer or reviewee) might just gain by watching another or by being watched.

Case study 3: Optional peer review within a mandatory professional development program for new staff

An academic development team with responsibility for the institution's Foundations program introduced peer review as an optional element, seeking to embed collegial feedback within the teaching culture of the institution into the future. The introduction of an incentive scheme led to high rates of participation. The scheme emphasised that the program was about learning through observation, rather than concentrating on the direct feedback received by the reviewee. That is, the benefits were described in terms of benefits to the reviewer, and then the mutual benefit derived from subsequent discussion of these observations.

“The most striking outcome for us has been the uptake. While peer observation remains optional among the suite of activities in the foundation program, almost all participants now elect to be involved.”

Case study 3 (cont'.):
Optional peer review within a mandatory
professional development program for
new staff

An implementation perspective

1. What led you to implement peer review in your institution?

The aim of our compulsory foundation program for new sessional and continuing staff is to promote the scholarship of teaching and develop the skills of the reflective practitioner. The program, which caters for 80-120 staff annually, has been running now since 2003. Members of staff attend a two-day intensive workshop and are asked to nominate three extension activities from a suite of options (each three hours long) that need to be completed over the following six months. A peer review activity was one of the available options for these extension activities, however the take-up rate was very low.

2. How did you get the program started? (and, if relevant, how did you expand it?)

The academic development team conducted an internal project over six months called 'Approaches to academic development'. This provided an opportunity for the team to unpack our own individual motivations, articulate what we wanted to achieve, and work out what we needed to do to change. The resulting report highlighted that the team believed that the cohort of staff we were meeting in our foundation program was critical to the reinvigoration of the teaching and learning environment. However we agreed that unless communities of practice were established, we would lose this impetus of development. We also agreed that this particular group — i.e. staff new to teaching - was unlikely to be at the stage where they would be comfortable inviting colleagues into their class for the purpose of critique. Various approaches — including peer observation - were investigated as alternatives, aimed at creating new opportunities for staff to talk about and develop their teaching.

A system of reciprocal peer observation as an out of session activity for our foundation program was devised. Each academic visits the teaching and learning environment of the other for an hour, not for critique, but to see what can be learned from watching another. The third hour is spent doing a debriefing activity, where participants share what they have learned from the peer observation experience.

Case study 3 (cont'.):
Optional peer review within a mandatory professional development program for new staff

An implementation perspective (cont'.)

3. Please describe what you believe are the key features of the approach you have taken

The key feature of the approach is its incentive system, based on a peer observation system available at Harvey Mudd College [HMC] in the US (we learnt about this through discussions with newly-appointed staff who had recently transferred from HMC). After staff have completed their peer observations, they are invited to share a meal for their debrief, for which the learning and teaching unit reimburses each participant up to \$20. The rationale for this funding approach was that, as a provider of academic development sessions, the unit would normally invest a considerable amount of time and money organising spaces, materials, catering etc for a session - something which would not be required for the peer observation activity. Peer observation offers staff members meaningful advice about teaching and learning that would be almost impossible to deliver in any other form of workshop activity. We believed that these outcomes would provide sufficient evidence to warrant the slightly unorthodox incentive system.

4. What is working well?

The most striking outcome for us has been the uptake. While peer observation remains optional among the suite of activities in the foundation program, almost all participants now elect to be involved. This strong ground swell of interest in teaching development through observation of peers augurs well for establishing new communities of practice that will support the continuing development of these teachers as scholars of teaching and learning.

5. What challenges remain?

The challenge now is to convince the university to offer and fund peer observation as an ongoing academic development activity so that all academic staff can participate bi-annually (this is the format by which HMC offers peer observation). As the university requires evidence of peer review as part of the promotion process for academics — it is predicted that participants, having been involved in several peer observation events, will approach the idea of formal peer review with a much more positive mindset than those who have never visited the classrooms of others.

6. What advice would you give to someone planning to implement a program of peer review of teaching?

My advice for someone planning to implement program of peer review of teaching would be to consider seriously the needs of a cohort and its stage of development. We advise that for new staff, it is important to scaffold the learning of collaborative reflection through activities such as peer observation, prior to mandating processes requiring formal peer review.

Case study 3 (cont'.):
Optional peer review within a mandatory
professional development program for
new staff

A reviewer's perspective

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

When I first began my involvement with peer observation programs, my expectation was that I would learn some new teaching techniques. I also expected that I would be able to give my colleagues suggestions and guidance on how to develop as a teacher.

2. How did you feel about your role as reviewer?

I always feel very positive about my role as a peer observer: you go into the peer observation process trying to identify the positive things that your colleague does while teaching. At all times the person I observed found the experience to be valuable. Normally there is a lot of tension and anxiety around teaching and the culture in schools tends to encourage a 'closed door' approach. Peer observation is different - it is about encouraging someone, giving concrete advice and, in my experience, the reviewee always recounts the occasion as a very significant event in their development as a teacher. So, for a small investment of my time, I can have a big impact on somebody's development as a teacher — and that's a good feeling!

3. Please describe any benefits to you from your experience as reviewer

I have learned about different teaching techniques. The experience expanded my view of teaching through being exposed to different disciplines and also expanded my view of the student experience in other disciplines. For example I recently observed a colleague who teaches the same group of students as I do, but in a different course. From the observation I realised that the experience of a 'tutorial' for the students in our two courses was completely different. Another benefit I gain from being a peer observer is that it increases my profile in the university as an expert teacher.

4. Were there any difficulties or challenges associated with your role?

In contrast to being a peer reviewer, the role of peer observer presents little difficulties or challenges. This is because the activity is collegial and formative rather than summative.

Case study 3 (cont'.):
Optional peer review within a mandatory professional development program for new staff

A reviewer's perspective (cont'.)

5. What qualities are important to be effective as a reviewer?

The role of a peer observer is to help identify the positive things a teacher does. Teachers in an interactive classroom are probably thinking about hundreds of tasks in their head simultaneously, and in most cases they perform the majority of these very well. Naming these positive outcomes, helps the teacher build a positive self image and an understanding of what works. So for me, the qualities of a good peer observer are that they are tactful, have a positive attitude, want to encourage others, are good listeners and observers, and that they have empathy - not only for the teacher, but also for the students. I think peer observers also need to have a desire to want to help people develop as teachers.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer other peer reviewers of teaching?

When you are given the opportunity to form a peer observation partnership make sure you set up the dates as soon as possible. It is better if the less experienced person is observed first so that they can see what type of feedback is expected (if you go the other way round you will find that they will not write as much). Take lots of notes during the session and give these to the teacher straight away - this is not about keeping records - the positive experiences you've noted should be fed back to the teacher immediately. When you meet for your shared meal you can discuss and clarify any points then.

Case study 3 (cont'.):
Optional peer review within a mandatory
professional development program for
new staff

A reviewee's perspective

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

My initial expectations of the peer review process were negative. Whilst a second opinion on my teaching methods was something that I saw as a positive, there was a degree of uncertainty about getting it from a relative stranger. As someone with very little experience in the higher education sector, I expected there would have been a review process early in my teaching career. When the option for a peer review was suggested, I was not particularly excited, but happy to go ahead with the procedure as I really have had little feedback from other teaching professionals on my ability to manage a teaching environment.

2. How did you feel about having your teaching reviewed?

Mostly nervous due to a natural low self-confidence, and uncertainty about how it would go, however there was most definitely a degree of curiosity about the results. During the review itself, I tended to focus on the class and tried to ignore the presence of the reviewer. After a time, and after developing a bit of a rhythm in the class (which was largely demonstrative of test procedures and lots of questions from the students), the presence of the reviewer was genuinely put aside.

3. What were the benefits to you?

Increased confidence, most certainly. To have a higher education professional take the time out of their teaching and research schedule to review my delivery and reaction to the class was beneficial, as it highlighted certain things I was not aware of doing, and it allowed someone to focus on my teaching instead of on the material I was delivering. Students give reasonable feedback, but it could be argued that their responses are affected by what they are being taught. For example, a student who detests mathematics will potentially have this influence their opinion of their maths teacher. However, to have someone experienced in teaching review my classroom conduct, focussing on that conduct and not so much the material itself, was of great benefit. I guess this is an opinion also influenced by the generally positive feedback also, which is certain to increase confidence. If the feedback had been purely negative, it would not have assisted confidence very much at all.

Case study 3 (cont'.):
Optional peer review within a mandatory
professional development program for
new staff

A reviewee's perspective (cont'.)

4. Did you make use of the feedback and, if so, in what way?

Yes, there were four sheets of constructive criticism to work with. This included technical things like facing the class instead of 'talking away', as well as certain characteristics such as a positive response to how questions from the class were addressed. Some aspects of the class could have been more interactive, and this was noted. In the class itself, a student actually picked up on some results that did not make sense, which I had not noticed. Although this was perceived as a negative point personally, it was noted as a positive by the reviewer, as the students were evidently engaged and understanding the material. This way of looking at what was perceived as a personal failure was a wonderful way to review the outcome for students.

5. What qualities does the reviewer need to bring to the process?

An ability to separate the material from the teaching! This was done very well by my reviewer. As subjects get more technical and out of the reviewer's field of expertise, then the ability to divide the teaching from the class topic is going to be important. It would really have torn confidence to shreds if the feedback was entirely negative too, so an ability to draw out some positive points from the worst of teaching is important if the staff member is to remain teaching effectively. This is not to say that the process must be sugar-coated, but where teaching is lacklustre, then improvement must start from what is being done correctly, or a teacher with a lot of self doubt would be further discouraged from being able to conduct themselves in the classroom. This would not benefit the teacher, and much less the students.

**Case study 3 (cont'.):
Optional peer review within a mandatory
professional development program for
new staff**

A reviewee's perspective (cont'.)

**6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer colleagues
engaging in peer review of teaching?**

It should take place regularly and be conducted by both someone within the field and outside the field. The reviewer should preferably have a professional distance, but this is difficult as peers in one's own field (i.e. faculty) are most likely to be known. Reviewees should not over-prepare, as it is counter to the intention of the process. It is tempting to suggest that the process is randomised, and can occur anytime without the reviewee knowing, but this is too draconian.

It should definitely be done by other teaching staff whether within the institution or from a similar institution. Criticism from a colleague, fellow teacher, or staff from the university's teaching and learning unit, is respected, especially when someone gives up their time. However, if it were a faceless 'professional reviewer' from an outside private entity, the likes of which are involved in reviewing quality and safety procedures in most business and government agencies, it would be confrontational and counter-productive.

Case study 4:

An institution-wide and flexible approach supported by policies and resources

With the support of university leadership and an external consultant, a group of 40 volunteers from across the institution collaborated to develop a protocol for peer review that would be appropriate to their various teaching contexts. The resulting model was voluntary, and participants had a high degree of control over the process, choosing their partners for peer review and nominating which aspects of their teaching would be reviewed. A suite of supporting resources were made available for use by individuals, department or faculty groups, or for incorporation into programs such as the university's Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education.

“A flexible process has been developed and therefore peer review can be integrated into formal qualifications or undertaken by individuals or groups within a faculty.”

Case study 4 (cont'.): A university-wide and flexible approach supported by policies and resources

An implementation perspective

1. What led you to implement peer review in your institution?

There was strong support from university leadership for the introduction of some form of peer review of teaching. I also had some limited prior experience of the value of peer review based on a small-scale pilot project.

2. How did you get the program started? (and, if relevant, how did you expand it?)

A university-wide pilot project was conducted, with assistance from an external consultant. The project's objectives included developing a model of peer review which would be acceptable across the broad range of university teaching contexts, trialling this model, and developing a suite of resources (review protocol, website) to support its introduction. Various recommendations for ways in which peer review could be embedded in existing university policies were also developed.

3. Please describe what you believe are the key features of the approach you have taken

The approach is collaborative and developmental, and reviews confidential. A focus is placed on encouraging reflection on learning, and on using research into learning to inform and develop reflective teaching practices. Peer review acts as a tool for ongoing development embedded in a wide range of university policies and activities. Those wishing to participate can access the full suite of resources online through the university's website. Members of staff can undertake the process independently or request support through the teaching and learning unit. Workshops are offered to help academics engage with the process and improve their skills in giving feedback.

4. What is working well?

A flexible process has been developed and therefore peer review can be integrated into formal qualifications or undertaken by individuals or groups within a faculty. This year peer review is being offered to staff who are completing the university's Graduate Certificate in Tertiary Education. These members of staff have found it to be a useful and constructive way of developing and reflecting on teaching and learning.

Case study 4 (cont'.):
A university-wide and flexible approach
supported by policies and resources

An implementation perspective (cont'.)

5. What challenges remain?

There is a need to encourage more members of staff to participate in the peer review process, particularly those who have been with the organisation for some time. Some acknowledgement needs to be made of the validity of a collaborative and formative peer review of teaching process, by both staff and management. Only then will teachers see it as a priority and commit to being involved.

6. What advice would you give to someone planning to implement a program of peer review of teaching?

The early engagement of faculties in the peer review process would appear to be critical to the success of achieving broad uptake. Faculties need to have control over the process to ensure they see the model proposed as being valid and worthwhile. Academics need to know that all the documents completed as part of the review of their teaching will be regarded as confidential. There needs to be engagement at a range of levels if the program is to be effective.

Case study 4 (cont'.):
A university-wide and flexible approach
supported by policies and resources

Two reviewers' perspectives

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

Person 1: I was expecting it to be difficult for other teachers to allow me to spend time in their classes, but so far other teachers have encouraged me to come and sit in on their lessons.

Person 2: My initial thought was to go with an open mind and maybe take something away from the experience.

2. How did you feel about your role as reviewer?

Person 1: Initially I felt compelled to only look at the good aspects of how someone taught, but as I watched, I realised I could learn much from identifying how they might improve.

Person 2: I know how I teach but was a bit unsure as to what to expect.

3. Please describe any benefits to you from your experience as reviewer

Person 1: I have learned that there are many ways of handling a class and that different teaching styles suit different class dynamics.

Person 2: Sometimes you see things that you might be able to use in your own teaching.

4. Were there any difficulties or challenges associated with your role?

Person 1: The time factor was always an issue and it is always difficult to provide negative feedback to a colleague.

Person 2: Sometimes you have to bite your tongue because you see things you might not agree with.

5. What qualities are important to be effective as a reviewer?

Person 1: I think you need to be able to listen well. You need to be able to recognise how students are reacting and you need to be honest.

Person 2: To have an open mind.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer other peer reviewers of teaching?

Person 1: Spend as much time as possible in the other person's class, be open-minded, and don't disclose everything you have discovered if you don't wish to, as it is you who is learning from this experience, not the teacher you are observing.

Case study 4 (cont'.): A university-wide and flexible approach supported by policies and resources

Three reviewees' perspectives

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

Person 1: My initial expectations were to think of this exercise as a positive way of improving my classroom skills.

Person 2: My initial expectations were that the peer collaborative review would be a useful and easy enough exercise, although I was quite apprehensive about what it might involve. My main concern was that it would require additional work from me and that the other person (i.e. reviewer) might not have the time to review me. Another concern was when to conduct the peer review, so that it did not interfere with class activities already planned for the semester.

Person 3: I was a bit nervous about my shortcomings, but also felt excited about receiving the feedback.

2. How did you feel about having your teaching reviewed?

Person 1: I was nervous about one of my peers coming in to my class to review my teaching and was hoping to receive some constructive criticism that could be implemented.

Person 2: I was quite anxious about having my teaching reviewed by another person (in particular a teaching colleague) because the last time it had been reviewed was when I was doing professional practice while at university. I was quite nervous about the possibility of the peer review showing up some of my weaknesses. However, after going through with it, I was so glad I had done it, and felt a sense of achievement. The process made me feel confident and competent about being a teacher.

Person 3: Excellent, I know I don't do everything right, so I always look for constructive criticism.

3. What were the benefits to you?

Person 1: There was some confirmation that 'I'm not doing too badly', and that with a few changes in relation to how I manage my classroom, I should expect good results from my students.

Person 2: The benefits were that the experience provided an opportunity for a colleague to observe me in a non-threatening environment and allowed me to demonstrate some of my skills as a teacher. To have my colleague confirm these skills was very rewarding. In a way, the best thing for me was confirmation from a colleague that I was doing the right things. The constructive feedback given to me was very useful. My reviewer was able to suggest practical ways that I could improve on in my practice.

Person 3: Constructive criticism, suggestions for improvement.

Case study 4 (cont'.):
A university-wide and flexible approach
supported by policies and resources

Three reviewees' perspectives (cont'.)

4. Did you make use of the feedback and, if so, in what way?

Person 1: I made use of the feedback. I received some great tips on how to ask the right questions so as to enable the students to come up with the answers to their own questions.

Person 2: I made full use of the constructive feedback provided to me. One recommendation was to add colour and movement to my power point presentations to make them more interesting and another was to make connections between current events/occurrences and the learning themes, so as to help students better understand difficult concepts. I have actually integrated these suggestions into my current practice and believe that these are helping me improve my teaching.

Person 3: A particular thing that was brought to my attention was my manner of teaching - maybe it was a bit too aggressive. I instantly changed my teaching style.

5. What qualities does the reviewer need to bring to the process?

Person 1: The reviewer needs to be able to express him or herself in a way that is easily understood and not offensive. They also need to have a lot of teaching experience I think, to be able to offer a credible opinion.

Person 2: The reviewer needs to be honest and upfront when providing feedback and must be knowledgeable about the relevant field, so as to be able to suggest constructive and practical ways for improving practice. He or she must also be empathetic and easy to get along with. It is important that the reviewer and the reviewee know each other and be very clear about their respective roles and responsibilities before the review process starts.

Person 3: The person reviewing has to have an open mind to the other person's teaching practices and ideas.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer colleagues engaging in peer review of teaching?

Person 1: The only advice I could offer would be to identify both the good and the bad about someone's teaching and convey this information in a way that is useful.

Person 2: I would advise them that the peer collaborative review process is a very useful way for teachers/ academics to reflect on their teaching with a view to improving their practice. To make it effective, both the reviewer and the reviewee must be fully aware of the objectives and the intended outcomes of the exercise, and commit to operating within the agreed protocols of the review. It is very important to provide honest and constructive feedback and both parties should maintain an open and honest communication at all times. It is also important that reviewers provide both positive and constructive feedback so that the reviewee learns something from the exercise.

Case study 5: A faculty-based program influencing university policy and practice

The establishment of a new medical school offered a unique opportunity to embed peer review into the local teaching culture, from the outset. The 35 staff were nearly all new to university teaching, and as a school were trialling innovative teaching approaches — taking advantage of the ‘clean slate’ afforded when creating curriculum anew, and addressing the challenge of highly dispersed physical locations (11 sites across the state). All staff were involved and, as new staff whose primary university responsibilities revolved around teaching, they also shared a need to developing evidence of their teaching performance for purposes of appraisal and confirmation. The program was championed by the Director of the Medical Programme, and supported by the central academic development unit.

“I wished to shape the culture of a new school to include and foster openness to collegial scrutiny about methods of learning and curriculum content.”

Case study 5 (cont'.):
A faculty-based program influencing
university policy and practice

An implementation perspective

1. What led you to implement peer review in your institution?

I wished to shape the culture of a new school to include and foster openness to collegial scrutiny about methods of learning and curriculum content. Also it was a school where a large number of staff had major commitments to teaching and curriculum development, and less time available for research, than would have been the case in an established school with a mature staffing profile. Therefore there was a need to obtain data about staff performance in relation to teaching, to support applications for probation/confirmation of appointment.

2. How did you get the program started? (and, if relevant, how did you expand it?)

From reading the literature on peer review, I was aware that one of Australia's leading authorities on peer review worked at the university. Discussions with this person and one of her colleagues led to the establishment of a series of training sessions to up-skill and encourage the use of peer review among the teaching staff. Discussions were also held with representatives of the university administration about ways of including evidence of teaching quality, based on peer review activity for probation/confirmation of appointment and promotion. Subsequent changes to university policy enabled this to take place. The school was used as a trial site for implementing processes of peer review able to provide evidence for probation/confirmation of appointment. Also documentation was gathered about processes used in other medical schools.

3. Please describe what you believe are the key features of the approach you have taken

Peer review of teaching was conceptualised as primarily and essentially a formative process to guide staff development and establish collaborative relationships. A collegial environment where critical self-review is regarded as 'normal and expected' behaviour, valued and rewarded was established. Regular training in the theory and process of implementing peer review of teaching was provided. An adapted form of peer review was used to produce evidence of excellence in teaching for the 'summative' purposes inherent in probation/confirmation of appointment processes.

Case study 5 (cont'.): A faculty-based program influencing university policy and practice

An implementation perspective (cont'.)

4. What is working well?

The 'first wave' of new staff coming into the school have adopted the philosophy and implemented the process effectively. The university's formal confirmation of appointment/probation processes have been adapted to allow data from the peer review process to be incorporated successfully into the decision-making. The university has taken significant interest in the peer review process and is considering increasing its availability to staff in all faculties.

5. What challenges remain?

There is a risk that the demands of the more formal documentation for the confirmation of appointment process will dominate the views of staff about this activity, and it will be increasingly seen as merely an administrative requirement, rather than fulfilling its true function of guiding critical self-review of teaching activity. Within the university, some heads of schools and deans regard the process with some significant reservations. Whilst the school is in a growth phase, maintaining the level of energy that is needed to bring new staff up to speed with this (and other processes) is challenging.

The adoption by the wider university has been a mixed blessing, as our new school now has the university's most experienced peer reviewers, and they are likely to be being called upon to contribute to helping implement peer review in other faculties and schools

6. What advice would you give to someone planning to implement a program of peer review of teaching?

Adopt a longer period of establishing peer review as a purely formative process prior to any extension into formal probation/promotion processes — maybe three years or so to get it established and valued by the participants for its primary purpose.

Case study 5 (cont'.):
A faculty-based program influencing
university policy and practice

A reviewer's perspective

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

My expectations were fairly open, but I was probably not particularly expecting much.

2. How did you feel about your role as reviewer?

I felt privileged to be considered worthy of the trust, and burdened at the same time. It is a big responsibility.

3. Please describe any benefits to you from your experience as reviewer

I improved my teaching technique, learnt from the presentation content. I also developed an observational perspective to my own teaching, and self-criticism.

4. Were there any difficulties or challenges associated with your role?

The challenge was to focus not only on criticism but also on giving praise wherever warranted.

5. What qualities are important to be effective as a reviewer?

Being critically analytical not analytically critical. Being open to alternative approaches / new ideas. Being supportive, and having a positive attitude toward the exercise.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer other peer reviewers of teaching?

Ensure prior consultation with the teacher being reviewed regarding what they are trying to achieve. Go along as a reviewer, with the intention to learn yourself.

Case study 5 (cont'.):
A faculty-based program influencing
university policy and practice

A reviewee's perspective

1. What were your initial expectations, prior to involvement in the program?

The sharing of ideas. Overall growth in learning and teaching strategies for all.

2. How did you feel about having your teaching reviewed?

I was very receptive to having my teaching peer reviewed; it makes sense to have a teacher's perspective as well as the students' perspective.

3. What were the benefits to you?

The greatest benefit is the sharing of ideas after the lesson. Other benefits include confirmation of a variety of approaches to teaching and learning, and receiving feedback on alternative methods.

4. Did you make use of the feedback and, if so, in what way?

I made use of the feedback by reviewing the lesson plan and adjusting the time for each microskill.

5. What qualities does the reviewer need to bring to the process?

Ideally the reviewer needs a good grasp of the teaching and learning process, and an understanding of the learning outcomes for the lesson, enabling the reviewer to give quality feedback. However the reviewer can also learn by reviewing another lesson. The reviewer needs to have an open mind.

6. Based on your experience, what advice would you offer colleagues engaging in peer review of teaching?

Get involved in the process and do as many as you are able to. Approach this as personal and professional growth and not as mere "assessment".

Appendix 1

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Appendix 2

Glossary

Academic development unit

An organisational unit of a university with responsibility for providing professional development programs, support or other resources for teaching staff. In Australian universities, such units are variously named (e.g. teaching and learning unit; centre for professional learning). Such units may be directly involved in formulating institutional policies, and/or in providing learning support for students.

Foundation programs

Term widely used to describe academic development programs for staff new to teaching and/or new to an institution. Such programs vary in length, and may be university-wide or based within faculties or schools. They may be optional or mandatory.

Graduate certificate programs in university teaching

Many Australian universities offer award courses in university teaching, specifically designed for academic staff and other staff involved in university teaching. These are often at graduate certificate level and undertaken part time. In some institutions such courses are mandatory, while elsewhere they are optional. They may cater for diverse levels of experiences, or be primarily for new staff. These programs have various names, such as Graduate Certificate in University Teaching, or Graduate Certificate in Higher Education.

Teaching portfolio

A term used, generally, to describe the artefacts and records of a person's teaching, or more specifically to refer to a written description of a person's teaching philosophy and list of accomplishments. The term is sometimes used interchangeably with 'academic CV' or 'teaching CV'.

Appendix 3

ALTC-funded projects on peer review of university teaching

The following projects were undertaken during 2007-8, with outcomes complementary to this handbook.

- **Embedding peer review of learning and teaching in e-learning and blended learning environments**
(University of Technology Sydney, Curtin University of Technology, Queensland University of Technology, RMIT University, University of South Australia)
http://www.carrickinstitute.edu.au/carrick/webdav/site/carricksite/users/siteadmin/public/grants_priority_uts_peerreview_summary_07.pdf
- **Peer Review of Online Learning and Teaching**
(University of South Australia, Queensland University of Technology, Monash University, RMIT University, Griffith University, Edith Cowan University, University of Tasmania, University of Southern Queensland, Lancaster University - UK)
http://www.altc.edu.au/carrick/webdav/site/carricksite/users/siteadmin/public/grants_priority_unisa_peerreview_summary_2008.pdf