



Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry & Health Sciences

Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences: Peer review of teaching

Stage 1: Preparing for review

This form is to be completed by the reviewee and provided to the reviewer prior to the review for discussion. The completed form, like all others, is to remain confidential for all but the reviewee and reviewer.

Reviewee	Reviewer	Review date, time and location	Subject, year level and course	Type of teaching practice or resource to be reviewed <i>eg. Lecture, LMS site</i>
Focal areas for the review <i>eg. Facilitation of small group activities, lecture delivery, provision of feedback to students, assessment design, etc.</i>				
Contextual information about the subject and students <i>eg. Approximate number of students in the subject, student mix, previous feedback, or learning and teaching challenges and opportunities to be considered.</i>				
Contextual information about the teaching practice or resource to be reviewed <i>eg. Topic and objectives of the teaching session or resource, relationship of the session or resource with the subject as a whole, and other learning and teaching activities.</i>				



Stage 1: Preparing for review: Supporting notes

Use the supporting notes below to help you get the most out of your experience of a review as a reviewee, reviewer or both.

1. Read the document *Introduction to Peer Review of Teaching at MDHS*

Before you engage in peer review of teaching at MDHS, read *Introduction to Peer Review of Teaching at MDHS*. This document includes important information about the purposes and overall structure of peer review, expected time commitments, minimum expectations and more.

2. Establish focal areas of your peer review

What do you want to gain from the peer review? Are there challenges in your practice that you want to address? Are there aspects of teaching that you want to learn about, put into practice or refine? Or do you want to gain examples and ideas about how your peers approach their teaching? Some example focal areas include promoting small-group work in class, supporting engagement in online learning and teaching activities, or providing effective feedback to students.

3. Select a partner for peer review

There are many ways to select a partner for peer review. You can commence the process as a reviewee looking for a potential reviewer (the most common approach) or as a reviewer looking for a potential reviewee. Selection of your partner depends largely on the aspect of your teaching that you wish to review, the expertise that you wish to draw upon, and trust between the partners. Of paramount importance is that you commence the review with a focus.

You may start by recruiting a partner from your department who will have insight into the concepts and content of the subject you teach and for whom you can reciprocate a review. A reviewer will need content knowledge if, for example, you want feedback on explanations you give about a particular concept to first-year students or links you wish to draw between related concepts. On the other hand, content expertise may not be necessary if you seek feedback on techniques to engage students in a large class. You may find it useful to gain the insights of a colleague from an entirely different discipline. You may also find it useful to select a partner at a different academic level or with more teaching experience. While a more junior partner may offer valuable fresh perspectives, a more senior partner may be able to offer greater knowledge and experience with different techniques.

Ideally, peer review is reciprocal, ie. colleagues act in turn as reviewee and reviewer. The Faculty does not mandate this, yet this has the advantage of 'rounding out' your experience. While much is to be gained from receiving feedback, you may find the experience of watching others in action or reviewing their teaching-related materials highly useful. Working reciprocally can also make for a less anxious experience for novice reviewees and reviewers. A 'three-way' process whereby two relatively inexperienced staff may team up with a more experienced staff member is also possible. This three-way process may also be suitable for subjects that are co-coordinated or co-taught by two or more staff.



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There is no limit to how often you partner with the same person. It is recommended, however, that pairings should last not more than two years. The change of partner is recommended to broaden your experience, and it offers opportunities to learn different perspectives, approaches and techniques. Over time, it will be helpful to choose partners from a range of specialities, teaching styles, subject expertise and levels of seniority.

As noted earlier, while an individual may choose to enter a peer review partnership with a supervisor, both partners will need to carefully consider potential issues associated with this; it is imperative that both partners feel comfortable with their choice of partner and that they will be able to freely provide, receive and discuss feedback in an open and constructive manner with them.

For further reading about possible pairings for peer review, consider the tips offered by Harris (2010). That can be accessed here:

http://files.digitisation.unimelb.edu.au/playpen/Peer_review_guide_web_optimised.pdf. If you have difficulty selecting a partner for peer review, please contact your Director of Learning and Teaching.

4. Document plans for the review

Prior to commencing a review, the reviewee should document the focal areas for the review and contextual information that can help the reviewer prepare for the review. The reviewee should also document arrangements as established with the reviewer regarding times, dates and locations. The template provided and the examples included within it can support this documentation. An example of a completed plan can also be found in Farrell, K. (2011), Collegial feedback on teaching: A guide to peer review (http://files.digitisation.unimelb.edu.au/playpen/Peer_review_guide_web_optimised.pdf).

5. Clarify reviewee and reviewer roles

Reviewees have the prerogative to determine the focus of the review and set ground rules for the process.

This means the reviewee should:

- Consider and document focal areas for the review,
- Discuss their plan for the review with their partner. This will involve clarifying the focus of the review and resolving any questions about how it might take place. Included in this discussion should be the timeline for feedback, details about how the review will be recorded and any arrangements following the review,
- Be open to the feedback that is given by the reviewer (even if you may not agree with it),
- Reflect upon the review and feedback, and adapt your teaching practice as appropriate.

Reviewees are entitled to expect that their review partner will respect confidentiality, will abide by any agreed arrangements, and will not share review materials with a third party.

"I got more out of being a reviewer, and observing others, than as someone being observed. It helped me focus on teaching techniques, style, delivery – the 'how' of good teaching. Watching others gave me suggestions on how to improve, not just what to improve."
Odilia Wijburg, Senior Lecturer,
Microbiology and Immunology



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Reviewers have a number of roles to play. The expectation is that a reviewer will:

- Consider their availability to undertake the review and set aside time for discussion prior to activity, time for the review, and time to give verbal and written feedback,
- Refer to a written document from the reviewee that sets out arrangements, the context of the subject, the teaching session, and the key areas of focus. The template provided is designed to enable documentation of such areas. The reviewer may also use this as the basis for clarifying the focus of the review and resolving any questions about how it might take place. Included in such a discussion should be the timeline for feedback, details about how the review will be recorded and any arrangements following the review,
- Commit to conducting the review as agreed with their partner,
- For observation of teaching: Observe as unobtrusively as possible. Without exception, reviewers are silent observers. While they may be introduced to the class, during a class, a reviewer will not speak, address the students, participate in learning activities or give opinions on the teaching or the material presented,
- Provide feedback in a constructive, honest, supportive and respectful manner,
- Act as a sounding board for ideas, discussions, approaches about teaching and learning,
- Challenge their own and their partner's thinking about teaching and learning, and,
- Respect confidentiality, and not share any materials provided to them, or generated in the course of the review, with a third party. The reviewer must recognise that materials generated during the review process (plans, reports, notes) remain the property of the reviewee, and are not to be given to a third party without the reviewee's express consent.

Questions and Support

If you would like to discuss any aspects of the peer review of teaching please contact either your school's Director of Learning and Teaching or Tim Beaumont, Learning and Teaching Academic Development Fellow, the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (timothy.beaumont@unimelb.edu.au).